

Quagga and Zebra Mussels, Invasive Species

By: Roy Wagner – ALA Patrol Supervisor

Zebra and Quagga Mussels are threatening lakes throughout the United States. January 2007, during a check in Lake Mead by Metropolitan Water District divers, Quagga Mussels were found in the intakes of the aqueduct system that carries water to Southern California. The Quagga Mussel is a relative of the Zebra Mussel and the two species can be found together.

This infestation signals the arrival of this dreaded species to the West coast. The Zebra and Quagga Mussels were first observed in the Great Lakes approximately 20 years ago and since then they have spread across the United States. The mussels are very prolific and create problems for drinking water systems, boats, docks and the fresh water ecosystem. The mussels cluster by the millions in and around water intake pipes and feed voraciously on phytoplankton. They also create waste products that consume oxygen and release toxic by products.

These mussels can be spread by attaching themselves to boats and boat trailers. Additionally the larvae can survive in the bilge, internal engine areas, and bait tanks of the boat. Chlorination can kill the larvae and copper sulfate has been shown to kill the adults. The mussels can also be dried out to kill both larvae and adults. If your boat has been to any infested water body, including Lake Mead or the Colorado River please towel dry the bilge and bait tank, leave the boat out of the water for at least 14 days and inform the ramp attendant that your boat was in infested waters. Please help us to keep this pest from Lake Arrowhead.

For many years, ALA has had a pro-active education policy regarding all boats that launch into our lake. In previous years, ALA has tried to inspect any boat that came to our lake from the eastern United States. Since this species has found its way into Lake Mead and the Colorado River, it is only a matter of time before we may see the mussels in Lake Arrowhead. In 2007, ALA instituted a pro-active inspection program with guidelines designed to prevent the introduction of mussels into Lake Arrowhead. According to experts, there is no known practical way to eradicate these mussels. The most important action we can take is to attempt to prevent them from entering Lake Arrowhead. With our launch ramp inspection program, ALA will be asking you to fill out a questionnaire, ask you questions and performing inspections of the boat and trailer. WE NEED YOUR HELP. Please assist the employees at the ramp as they try to assist all of us in controlling this menace from being able to enter Lake Arrowhead.

Information for this article was taken from a Jan 22, 2007 newspaper article written by the L.A. Times Staff

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