10/24/22

Dear RLAA members,
We have some unfortunate news to share. Zebra mussels have been found in Fish Lake. Preventing introduction of new aquatic invasive species has been a top priority of FLARA (Fish Lake Area Association) for the past 10+ years. They have worked hard in conjunction with Three Rivers, Hennepin County, and the city on launch inspections and various educational efforts.

Zebra mussels can negatively impact lakes by attaching to docks, lifts, swim ladders, boats, and irrigation intakes. Additionally, the loss of food particles that they filter from the water can be disruptive to the food chain, impacting fish and other animals. Zebra mussels are spread when they attach to boats or lake equipment, or when water containing microscopic larvae is transported. A fact sheet from the MN DNR can be found here:
https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/natural_resources/invasives/aquaticanimals/zebramussel/fact_sheet-zebra_mussels.pdf

Due to the risk from nearby infested lakes, Three Rivers and FLARA have both operated zebra mussel detection plates at various points on the lake for several years. On September 29th, Three Rivers discovered a single zebra mussel on a sampling plate near the boat launch. This prompted a more extensive search by Three Rivers and MN DNR scuba divers. Several adult and juvenile zebra mussels were found at all four search sites. The presence of both adults and juveniles, as well as the distribution, indicates they have likely been present in Fish Lake for a couple of years.

Because of the lake-wide distribution on Fish Lake, no treatment attempts are feasible. Three Rivers attempted a treatment at Lake Independence when zebra mussels were first detected there and isolated to the boat launch area, but even that effort was unsuccessful. Signs will be installed by Three Rivers at the Fish Lake boat launch, alerting lake users to the presence of zebra mussels.

Fish and Rice lakes are connected by culverts under Weaver Lake Road. Water exchange between the lakes offers opportunity for zebra mussels to migrate during the egg and development portion of their lifecycle. Fertilized zebra mussel eggs are the diameter of a human hair (50-100 µm), making large scale filtration of lake water unworkable – such fine filters would continually clog with other organic debris and would be unable to handle the water volume. There is no practical way to prevent excess Fish Lake water from flowing downstream.

Despite zebra mussels having colonized the Great Lakes and many other lakes and rivers, the long-term environmental impact is still emerging. If zebra mussels spill over into Rice Lake, expect an environmental rebalancing including clearer water, more abundant aquatic plants, less food available for other aquatic creatures, and sharp shells on shorelines and on marine equipment. Unfortunately, blue green algae may thrive since zebra mussels don't consume that particular type of algae.

What you can do:

- As you remove lake equipment this fall, please inspect it for zebra mussels. If you find any on your equipment, please email ricelakeassoc@comcast.net and Brian.Vlach@threeriversparks.org with your address
- Always clean, drain, and dry boats and equipment when removing from Rice Lake to prevent spread to other waterbodies

- Continue to take the same precautions bringing boats or equipment into Rice Lake. We are still at risk of other AIS being introduced, like starry stonewort. Nearby Medicine Lake is currently battling starry stonewort, which grows very dense and makes boating, swimming, and fishing very difficult.
- If you haven't already, please visit Hennepin County's https://lakepledge.com/ site to learn more about preventing AIS as a lake resident, and take the pledge.

RLAA will continue to communicate more information as it becomes available. The RLAA board can be reached at ricelakeassoc@comcast.net

Cordially,

Your volunteer RLAA Board