

## Zebra Mussel Programs

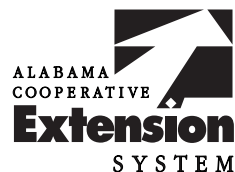
To report zebra mussel sightings or for more information contact the Southern States Zebra Mussel Program in your area.

Alabama Sea Grant Extension  
Auburn University  
Marine Extension and Research Center  
4170 Commanders Drive  
Mobile, Alabama 36615  
Phone: 334-438-5690

Louisiana Sea Grant College Program  
Louisiana State University  
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Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70803  
Phone: 504-388-6710

Mississippi Sea Grant Advisory Service  
Coastal Research and Extension Center  
2710 Beach Boulevard, Suite 1-E  
Biloxi, Mississippi 39531  
Phone: 601-388-4710

The Tennessee Valley Authority Zebra Mussel  
Hotline  
1-800-538-2526



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Alabama Sea Grant Extension Program  
Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station  
Auburn University College of Agriculture  
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# BOATERS: Beware OF Zebra Mussels

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# BOATERS: Beware OF Zebra Mussels

**Z**ebra mussels are native to the streams and rivers of the colder areas of Europe. They were first found in the United States in the Great Lakes region during the mid 1980s. They have readily adapted to our warmer, southern waters and can even tolerate brackish waters. Zebra mussels have no known natural predators, multiply rapidly, feed on phytoplankton (microscopic aquatic plants), and settle on any hard surface—even on top of each other—forming dense colonies. They filter feed very effectively and hoard the food they cannot immediately consume by binding it with a mucus that makes it unavailable to other animals. Their feeding is so efficient they can disrupt freshwater food chains and may cause major changes in some fish populations.

## What Does This Mean To You As A Boater?

Zebra mussels can settle on any hard surface and rapidly reduce the inside diameter of an intake pipe, which can block the flow of water in an outboard motor. This can ultimately cause the motor to overheat. When attached to a boat hull, they cause the boat's engine to work harder lowering fuel efficiency.

## How Are You Involved?

Boaters are one of the major contributors to the spread of zebra mussels from infested waters to uninfested waters. Zebra mussels attach themselves to any solid surface not protected by antifoulant paints. This includes any surface that may get wet, such as boat hulls, motors, swim platforms, trim tab plates, and electronic transducers. A boat moving from one lake or river to another, even over land, can accidentally carry zebra mussel larvae (veligers) that are microscopic in size. They can survive and be transported in standing water found in the live well, bilge, boat decking, trailer frame, or marine toilet. Veligers can also be found in the water of motor cooling systems and can even be transported in bait buckets.

## What Can You Do?

If you use the water as a boater, angler, water-skier, scuba-diver, or canoeist, you can help prevent the transport of zebra mussels to your favorite waterbody by doing the following.

## Know Your Enemy

Adult zebra mussels are small mollusks (clam-like animals) about the size of your fingernail, but can grow up to 2 inches long. They have a zebra-striped pattern on the shell. Veligers cannot be seen with the naked eye. Veligers attached to a boat hull will feel rough like grit or sand.

*Before leaving any body of water, follow this checklist:*

Inspect your boat, trailer, and all boating equipment that gets wet. Remove any plants and animals that are visible.

Drain water from the motor, live well, bilge, and transom wells while on land.

Empty your bait bucket on land. Never release live bait into a body of water, or release aquatic animals from one body of water into another.

## Clean Your Equipment

Wash and dry your boat, trailer, tackle, and other boating equipment to kill veligers that were not visible at the boat launch. This can be done on your way home or once you have returned home. Adult zebra mussels can survive up to 14 days out of water when conditions are right, so it is important to:

- Rinse your boat and equipment that normally gets wet with hot tap water.

*Or*

- Use a solution of 1/2 cup salt to 1 gallon of hot water. Salt will kill the mussels. However, you must thoroughly rinse with fresh water to prevent corrosion from the salt.

*Or*

- Spray your boat and trailer with high-pressure water.

*Or*

- Dry your boat and equipment for at least 5 days before launching somewhere else.

Report any sightings to the appropriate agency in your state.

## Zebra Mussels Can Cause These Problems for You and Your Boat

- Increased water resistance which decreases speed and efficiency.
- Damage to painted surfaces that are not protected by antifoulant paints.
- Increased maintenance and repair.
- Engine failure from damage to moving parts or from overheating.
- Unexpected expense because most insurance will not pay for zebra mussel induced damage since it is listed as a preventable problem.