

# Zebra Mussels Confirmed in Lake Roosevelt

By Robert Lee, Boardmember

## What Happens Next?

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) recently confirmed there are zebra mussels in Lake Roosevelt. Based on the sizes of mussels found by RALALA divers and the DNR, the infestation has likely existed for at least two to three years.

The map shows search areas and where mussels were detected. Divers caution that other areas may still be affected. They emphasize that their ability to find tiny mussels that blend in with the surroundings is also affected by vegetation and water clarity. RALALA has also received multiple reports of mussels attached to docks and boat lifts. All were in the general area where divers found mussels.

## What to Expect

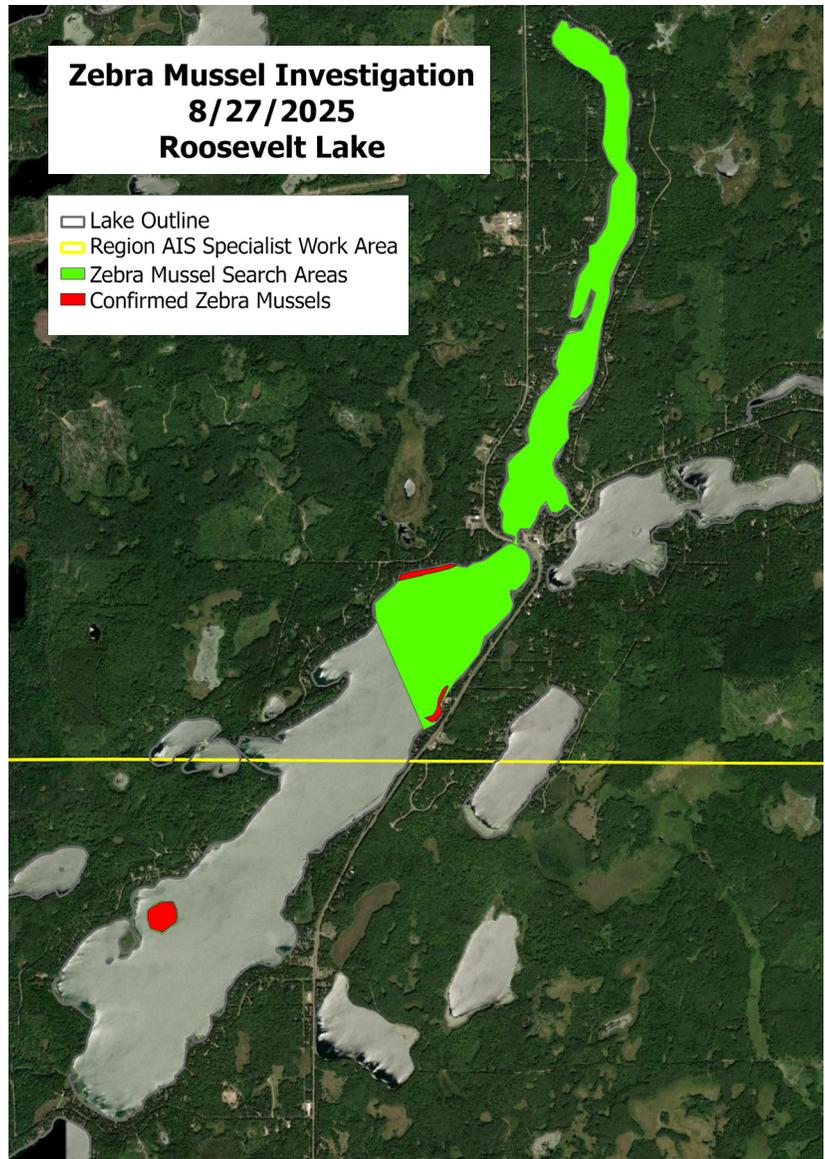
Effects of zebra mussel infestation vary from lake to lake, but here are a few things you might expect:

- Zebra mussels will make the lake clearer because they consume phytoplankton, zooplankton and decaying matter. The clearer water allows sunlight to reach deeper and encourages aquatic plant growth at greater depths, including invasive species such as Eurasian watermilfoil.
- A lower survival rate of fish fry and minnows due to less food supply may eventually result in fewer adult fish.
- Some studies have linked zebra mussel infestations to higher mercury levels in fish.
- Dead mussels and their waste on the lake bottom may contribute to algae blooms.
- The mussel population is likely to expand over time. Many lakes see cycles in which the population explodes and later subsides when the food supply is exhausted. Eventually the population stabilizes.
- Roosevelt will be officially listed as an infested lake. The DNR posted notification signs at Roosevelt and Lawrence boat ramps.

## What You Can Do

According to the DNR, there currently is no treatment that meaningfully reduces an established zebra mussel population. However, there are limited actions you can take:

- Expect mussels to attach to docks and lifts. Scraping them off will not reduce the population, but may be necessary to keep equipment functioning. Use gloves and take caution—the shells are sharp.



- If possible, store your boat on a lift. Cleaning mussels off a boat or motor may be a difficult recurring job. At a minimum, tilt outboard motors clear of the water so veligers (juvenile mussels) cannot enter the cooling system and cause serious damage.
- Depending on infestation density, wear gloves when handling docks and lifts and watershoes when wading in the lake.
- State law requires that any dock or lift used in Roosevelt must be stored on land for at least 21 days before it can be moved to another lake.

## Prevention and Monitoring

- Inspectors at ramps will look for mussels on watercraft and equipment, including bilges, live wells, ballast tanks and jet propulsion systems. More boats may require decontamination.
- The RALALA Board continues to research ways to reduce the impact of zebra mussels and to prevent spread to nearby waters. The RALALA Board will share updates when new information becomes available.