

For immediate Release

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Zebra Mussels Identified in Magog Bay, Lake Memphremagog

On July 23rd, Memphremagog Conservation Inc (MCI), released a study confirming that there are zebra mussels present in Magog Bay which is located at the northern edge of Lake Memphremagog in Quebec, Canada. The full study in French can be found at:

http://www.memphremagog.org/FCKeditor/ckfinder/userfiles/files/Centre_de_documents/EN/rapportmz-finalv2.pdf.

Zebra mussels are an invasive species; they are a small freshwater mollusk that attaches to firm surfaces and can clog pipes and other underwater infrastructure. They are also filter-feeders, consuming microscopic aquatic life that is the base of the food web for our lakes. Their feeding habits can impact the native species that also consume those food sources.

“Currently we have not found any zebra mussels in the US portion of Lake Memphremagog,” says Kendall Lambert, Administrative Director of the Memphremagog Watershed Association, “Every year, we work closely with the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (VTDEC) and a group of local volunteers to patrol our lake and survey for aquatic invasive species. Our patrollers will be on the lookout for zebra mussels.”

The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (VTDEC) has also received the report from MCI. Josh Mulhollem, Aquatic Invasive Species Management Coordinator at VTDEC, indicated that the Department “... will be ramping up sampling efforts for zebra mussels in Memphremagog over the next couple months, will be expanding our educational campaign in the region, and will be convening a meeting of all involved stakeholders to discuss steps going forward. And although no zebra mussels have been found in the southern part of Lake Memphremagog, we encourage all visitors to the lake to take extra caution in draining and drying watercraft and equipment after leaving the lake.”

It is illegal in the state of Vermont to transport aquatic invasive species, including zebra mussels. Act 67, which came into effect in 2017, states that if a certified attendant at a

watercraft decontamination station identifies a vessel or trailer as requiring decontamination, boaters are obligated to comply. Failure to do so can result in fines and the involvement of law enforcement.

This year, the City of Newport received just over \$17,000 in grant money from the state of Vermont to support a high-tech boat washing station with State-trained greeters at the city dock. The city has also invested in a hydro-raking operation to control the infestation of the invasive Eurasian watermilfoil around the boat launch that impedes navigation.

“There are a lot of factors which contribute to whether or not zebra mussels can thrive in a lake. Right now, we simply don’t have enough information to know how or if they might spread,” says Ms. Lambert. “It’s about early detection, planning, and spread prevention.”

VTDEC works hard, in collaboration with many partners, to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species. The Department oversees the [Public Access Greeter Program](#), which is a trained network of municipal staff and other volunteers that provide informational materials on invasive species to boaters, inspect watercraft for invasive species and vectors of invasive species, and, in some cases, provide courtesy watercraft decontaminations. Because early detection is a key component of any successful aquatic invasive species management effort, VTDEC also coordinates the [Vermont Invasive Patrollers](#) (VIP) program. Dozens of lakes around the state are monitored annually by dedicated VIPs to aid in identifying incipient populations of invasive plants and animals, and their work has been invaluable to statewide management of aquatic invasives. For years, both programs have been active on Lake Memphremagog.

All users of our lakes, whether boating, fishing, or wading, need to CLEAN, DRAIN, and DRY everything that has been in the water, especially before moving to another water body. This is more important than ever with the possibility of spreading zebra mussels, as juvenile zebra mussels are microscopic and are suspended in water. Users can wash their boats at the City Dock in Newport.

You can contact Kendall Lambert at klambert@mwavt.org or Josh Mulhollem at Josh.Mulhollem@vermont.gov with questions or visit <http://dec.vermont.gov/watershed/lakes-ponds/aquatic-invasives/gallery> for more information on specific invasive species.

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