



October 23, 2023

Dear Jessie Lake Property Owner,

Re: Zebra Mussels discovered in Jessie Lake

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) is an issue that most counties in Minnesota, as well as many other states, are dealing with. Itasca County is no exception. We have an AIS Program in place with funds from the State of Minnesota to address AIS. There are many distinct species that we look for and are monitoring.

Zebra Mussels have been discovered in Jessie Lake. The intent of this letter is to give you the information that you need to understand the situation, try to contain the spread of Zebra Mussels to other bodies of water as well as what it means to have Zebra Mussels on your lake. Below are some answers to questions you may have.

How did we get Zebra Mussels? We will probably never know exactly how Zebra Mussels were introduced to Jessie Lake. We do know how we can help prevent spreading it to other lakes. To date, Zebra Mussels have been identified in about 5% of Minnesota lakes. Unfortunately, more are being identified every year.

AIS can be introduced to a lake in several ways: boats, trailers, bilge pumps, live wells, bait water, docks, lifts, swim rafts, float planes and recreational gear. The introduction of AIS is almost always unintentional.

How is this going to impact Jessie Lake? While the expected impact on Jessie cannot be known at this time, we do have a large body of knowledge about how Zebra Mussels have impacted other lakes. Zebra Mussels tend to attach themselves to surfaces such as rocks, docks, boat lifts and weeds. They like shade. You will not find mature Zebra Mussels "floating" in the water. Zebra Mussels filter the water to feed and therefore, large populations tend to increase water clarity. Because of the increased clarity, weed growth is increased in deeper water. You can read more information about Zebra Mussels as well as other AIS by visiting the Itasca County AIS website at www.ItascaAIS.Info.

Can we get rid of Zebra Mussels? Research is on-going to determine if there is a safe way to eradicate Zebra mussels. Currently there is no effective method available for large, open water infestations. Eradication or control measures are not an option for the newly discovered Zebra mussel population in Jessie because the population is too dispersed.

What can I do? You can help prevent the spread of Zebra mussels to other lakes as well as help prevent the spread of other aquatic invasive species to Jessie Lake.

- **Practice Clean, Drain, Dry.** This means that when you land or launch your boat, thoroughly inspect it. Remove weeds and mud. Drain all water. Empty live wells and bait buckets. When your boat leaves a lake with Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) such as Zebra Mussels, dry your boat and boat trailer in the sun for at least five days or decontaminate it before launching it in another lake. You can call the Itasca County AIS Program at 218-256-4243 or visit www.ItascaAIS.Info for the location of the closest mobile thermal decontamination unit.
- **Dry for 21 days.** If you purchase any type of used equipment for the lake such as a used dock, boatlift, swim-raft, or other recreational items that sit in water, dry for at least 21 days before putting it into your lake. This is a law in Minnesota. This will greatly reduce the likelihood of AIS being transmitted.
- **Ask your guests that bring their owned or rented boats etc. to help:** If your guests are coming to enjoy the lake and they bring boats, personal watercraft, or recreational gear, ask them if they were recently in infested water. Ask them to practice **Clean, Drain, Dry**. Some of the recreational gear can include paddleboards, sailboats, buoys, scuba gear, water carpets, inner tubes, canoes, kayaks, fishing gear, certain Muskie lures, waders, waterfowl hunting gear and other related items that may sit in infected waters or hold standing water. Let them know that Itasca County AIS will provide them with free courtesy decontaminations for all their equipment at the County's mobile decontamination sites.
- **Hire Certified Lake Service Providers.** If you hire someone to launch or land your boat or take in our put out your dock or lifts, hire from the DNR Permitted list of Lake Service Providers whose employees have been trained in AIS and take precautions.
https://webapps15.dnr.state.mn.us/ais_business_training/lake_service_provider_permits/public_website_list
- **Determine where your rented boat trailer has been.** If you rent or use someone else's trailer to launch or land your boat, learn where the trailer was before putting it into Jessie Lake. If necessary **Clean, Drain, Dry**.
- **Watch your private landing.** If you have a landing on your property, do not let others use it unless you know where their boats and trailers have been.

Want to learn more? Watch this 10 minute Itasca County AIS video. It is a great way to spend 10 minutes to more fully understand Zebra Mussels as well as other aquatic invasive species. The YouTube address is: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XkOjL4Q-qgU>

Thank you for your help preventing AIS spread in Itasca County.

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