



By Carolyn Lee

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Another summer has almost concluded, as boaters leave Enders Reservoir for their hometowns or other states.

As they move out, no intruders brought from other lakes have been found in the lake. No zebra mussels or quagga mussels have been discovered.

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC) has been inspecting boats and educating boaters for several years concerning the invasive species.

The goal is to prevent the spread of the zebra and quagga mussels, which can cause significant ecological problems.

They're often found attached to solid objects, such as submerged rocks, dock pilings, and water intake pipes.

They are transported in bilge, ballast or live well water and attached to boat hulls and boat trailers.

The mussels reproduce rapidly, and once established, they cannot be eliminated.

There are a number of lakes in Colorado that have been invaded by the mussels.

That's one reason the Invasive Species Project at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln provides free voluntary inspections of boats in Nebraska. Information is also handed out about the importance of the "clean, drain and dry" process when moving boats between waterways.

That process cuts down the possibility that mussels from Colorado could find their way to Nebraska waters.

Caleb Huber, a fisheries biologist for NGPC in North Platte, said last week that summertime monitoring for the mussels has been ongoing in all major reservoirs in the state.

"All of the reservoirs in southwest Nebraska were negative" for the mussels, with the last readings done in August, he said.

The monitoring will be done "in perpetuity," Huber added.

He had received a call regarding mussels in Swanson Reservoir, he said, but those were found to be an Asian mussel, "not near the problem that zebras or quaggas are," although they are also invasive, Huber noted.

"I'm glad they called," as all information is important, Huber said.

Both zebra and quagga mussels have light and dark alternating stripes. They are less than one-half inch in length, on average.

Huber said zebra mussels are apt to attach to hard surfaces, while quagga mussels attach to softer surfaces.