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Date: July 16, 2015

## **Quaggas confirmed in Crooked Lake**

Conway, MI - Routine surveys recently led to the discovery of quagga mussels in Crooked Lake, near Conway. Quagga mussels are an invasive species that are known to cause severe disruptions to our native lake ecosystems and can be destructive to water related infrastructure. In response to this discovery, Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council highly recommends that all boaters decontaminate their boats before they leave Crooked Lake to prevent the spread to other inland lakes.

"This find does not mean Crooked Lake is infested with quagga mussels," said Kevin Cronk, Director of Monitoring and Research for Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council. "At this point, they have only been found at a few locations near the Little Traverse Township boat launch off of US31." Regarding the magnitude of this discovery Cronk commented that "This is the first inland lake in our service area, beyond Lake Charlevoix which has an open connection with Lake Michigan, where quaggas have been documented." In fact, when reporting the infestation to the Midwest Invasive Species Information Network, the Watershed Council found that this was the first report of a quagga mussel infestation in an inland lake for the entire State of Michigan.

The quagga mussels were discovered during an aquatic plant survey being conducted on Crooked Lake last week. "When I saw the mussels I had a suspicion they were quaggas," said Matt Claucherty, an AmeriCorps volunteer for the Watershed Council. "I wasn't 100% sure because they had never been found in Crooked Lake before." A sample was collected and sent to Ashley Baldrige, PhD, a Research Benthic Ecologist at the NOAA Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory for confirmation.

Quagga mussels are a small freshwater bivalve mollusk that grow to around four centimeters in adulthood. They are a close relative of the invasive zebra mussel, both species introduced into the Great Lakes region roughly 30 years ago. Since that time they have steadily spread, though quagga mussels have outcompeted zebras and are now the dominant bivalve in the Great Lakes. Quagga mussels have the ability to rapidly colonize the waters they inhabit, adhering to hard surfaces or clustering together in sandy or mucky areas.

Quagga mussels cause a variety of problems for people and the lake ecosystem. They clog water intake structures, pipes, and screens, leading to substantial increases in operation and maintenance costs. Their sharp shells can litter shorelines, creating hazards for those recreating on beaches and other shoreline areas. Perhaps the most serious consequence of their

introduction is the impact that they will likely have on the Crooked Lake ecosystem. Quagga mussels compete directly with fish and other aquatic organisms for food, disrupting the natural food web and nutrient cycle of the lake. Furthermore, Crooked Lake is located at the upper end of the Inland Water Route, which means that, if not held in check, the invasive mussels will drift down and infest other water bodies, such as Burt Lake.

“Our main concern is that quagga mussels will be transported to other inland lakes in our area in or on the boats and trailers going in and out of Crooked Lake” said Cronk. “Even boats that are in the lake for a short period of time can pick up quagga mussels and spread them to other lakes or streams.”

To avoid spreading the quagga mussels to other lakes, boats, trailers, waders and other fishing and boating equipment should be properly cleaned, dried or disinfected after use. Although some invasive species, such as Eurasian watermilfoil are readily visible to the human eye, many others like the quagga mussel are too small to be readily noticed. You can help control the spread of these aquatic invaders by taking simple actions every time you remove your boat from the water regardless of whether you know the lake is infested or not.

- Remove visible mud, plants, fish, or animals from your boat, trailer, or other equipment (anchor, centerboards, props, etc.) before leaving the water body. Note that the quagga mussels were found attached to aquatic plant stems!!
- Drain all water from live wells, bilges, motor, transom, and other containers before leaving the launch area.
- Wash your boat, trailer, and equipment thoroughly with hot tap water (140 degrees or higher) to remove plants and organisms that were not visible at the boat launch.
- Allow your boat to dry for a minimum of 5 days in a sunny location before transferring into a new body water.
- Do not release live bait or aquarium pets into any waters.
- Discard fish waste in the trash.

For more information on quagga mussels, and on clean boating to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species, [www.watershedcouncil.org/learn](http://www.watershedcouncil.org/learn).

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