

KEEP ZEBRA MUSSELS OFF YOUR WATERCRAFT

Zebra mussels can cause significant problems for watercraft owners who leave their watercraft in infested water for long periods of time. As free-floating, juvenile zebra mussels develop and grow larger, they settle out and attach to hard surfaces. Any part of the boat that sits in infested water for multiple days is a potential landing spot for zebra mussels, including watercraft hulls and motors.

DECREASE COLONIZATION

There are two common methods watercraft owners have used to prevent zebra mussels from colonizing on their watercraft's hull:

1. Boat lifts can be used to keep the watercraft completely out of the water, when not in use.
 - » Utilizing a watercraft lift is the most effective way to prevent zebra mussel colonization because the watercraft is no longer exposed to the juvenile zebra mussels as they settle.
2. If your watercraft is not stored on a lift, anti-fouling products that effectively repel zebra mussels and prevent adults from attaching to a watercraft's hull can be applied.
 - » These can be copper based or more natural, environmentally friendly forms, like capsaicin (one of the chemicals that makes chili peppers hot). Many of these anti-fouling products last the full boating season, while others may need to be applied multiple times during the summer. Your local marine dealer may be able to provide some guidance on these products.

MINIMIZE DAMAGE

Juvenile zebra mussels can be sucked up into boat motors or internal compartments with lake or river water. Routine practices to minimize damage to vital internal components of watercraft include:

- » Pumping out as much water as possible from ballast tanks after each use.
- » Lowering outboard motors or lower units to allow them to completely drain before tilting them back up for transport or to keep them out of the water when on boat lifts.
- » Allow boat motors to reach normal operating temperatures during each trip.

Taking these precautions can help protect your watercraft from the damage of zebra mussel colonization and reduce the complexity of watercraft decontaminations. Also, taking steps to prevent zebra mussel colonization can help prevent the spread of this harmful invasive species to other waters.

