

30 truckloads of zebra mussels removed from local waters



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Workers from the Vadnais Lake Area Water Management Organization and St. Paul Regional Water Services vacuum zebra mussels out of a channel between Pleasant Lake and Sucker Lake in Vadnais Heights.

BY SARA MARIE MOORE
VADNAIS HEIGHTS EDITOR

VADNAIS HEIGHTS — Approximately 275 cubic yards — or about 1,000 bathtubs — of nuisance zebra mussels were removed in a channel between Pleasant Lake and Sucker Lake earlier this month.

The mussels had built up so extensively in the channel close to Highway 96 and Rice Street in Vadnais-Sucker Lake Regional Park that they were causing a drainage issue.

It was important for the mussels to be removed, reported Nick Voss, education and outreach coordinator at the Vadnais Lake Area Water Management Organization (VLAWMO). In the area watershed, Sucker Lake is just north of Vadnais Lake, a water supply source for St. Paul. The organization assisted St. Paul Regional Water Services with the project.

A machine with a giant hose was used to vacuum the mussels out of the water. The pile collected over three days was 5 feet, 6 inches tall.

The mussels will be composted with food waste.

This is the second time the area has been cleared of mussels. It was last cleared in 2014; Voss said the two organizations plan to clear the area every two years. The project cost about \$23,000.

Zebra mussels, native to the Black Sea, were likely transferred to the Great Lakes by freighters in the '80s. They have spread across the area over time, said Jim Bode, production manager at St. Paul Regional Water Services. The mussels were first found in the northeast metro of the Twin Cities in 2006. With few natural predators, they have been competing with native animals and are a nuisance and hazard because they clog pipes, Bode reported.

The congregation of mussels near Sucker Lake by Highway 96 is due to mussel growth in pipes from Pleasant Lake in North Oaks, Bode added. Mussels build up in the channel area from further upstream when they are cleaned out of the pipes or travel downstream.

In the summer, St. Paul Regional

Water Services cleaned a screen at the outlet of Pleasant Lake every week. The screen is meant to keep fish in the lake. Screens and pipes are a popular place for mussels to congregate, Bode said.

He hasn't seen accumulation between Sucker Lake and Vadnais Lake, perhaps because Sucker Lake does not discharge the same way Pleasant Lake does.

But on the screen and in the pipeline from Vadnais Lake downstream to the water services plant, there is accumulation.

"They definitely grow on those pipes and we go in every winter and clean those out," he said. The screen at the outlet of Vadnais Lake gets cleaned every two weeks in the summer.

"We have had growth get so bad in pipeline screen chambers, the guys will have to flush open the screens and let the water kind of blow out the zebra mussels just to be able to get things functioning again," Bode noted.

There are no screens in the chan-

nel area where the mussels were cleaned out last month between Pleasant and Sucker lakes.

Screens don't necessarily keep zebra mussels at bay, due to the mussels' reproductive habits.

"I don't know of anything that can block them, because they spread on such microscopic spores," Voss said. The mussels reproduce by sending "veligers," free-living larvae, into the water, which plant themselves on surfaces and grow there.

These small larvae can travel downstream or be attached to a boat without being noticed, Voss said. This is the reason why boaters need to make sure their boats and recreation equipment are dry before traveling between lakes, he added. Fishing bait water should also not be transferred, Bode said.

Bode isn't sure how zebra mussels first got into Pleasant Lake, which has access only for residents and maintenance, and Sucker and Vadnais lakes, which don't have boat access.

"It may have been through multiple avenues," he said, although he doesn't think they came from the Mississippi River. Canoes, sailboats, fishing bait water or even commercial divers could have inadvertently brought them to the area.

The water quality of Vadnais Lake, and thus the water supply of the city of St. Paul, has not suffered from the mussels, Bode said.

"We are not really seeing any negatives except it is a lot of labor," he noted.

VLAWMO also plans to renovate the Highway 96 channel area in the spring for park visitors. The popular fishing area will be outfitted with native plants and new structures.

The area is used by school groups to study water insects and other animals.

"It is a great learning space," Voss said.

A video of the zebra mussel removal, titled "Zebra Mussel Removal" and posted by VLAWMO, can be found on YouTube. For more information on preventing zebra mussels from spreading, visit cleandraindry.org.

Sara Marie Moore can be reached at 651-407-1235 or vadnaisheightsnews@presspubs.com.



WHITE BEAR TOWNSHIP
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News & Views

A bi-weekly section where readers will be informed on subjects of seasonal interest, upcoming events and other timely topics.



TWO PARK BOARD MEMBERS WANTED – Are you interested in having a voice in guiding the development of Township parks, or planning Township Day, then we have an opportunity for you. The Park Board is seeking two applicants. The Board meets the third Thursday of each month at 6:30 p.m., at the Township Offices. Visit the Township's website or call the Township offices for an application.



VADNAIS LAKE AREA WATER MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION TECHNICAL COMMISSION REPRESENTATIVE WANTED – VLAWMO's mission is to protect and enhance the water resources within the watershed. Activities they work on include water quality monitoring, education and outreach projects, wetland protection, and water quality enhancement projects. The Technical Commissioners meet monthly on the second Friday of the month at 7:30 a.m. at VLAWMO's offices in Vadnais Heights City Hall, 600 County Road E. The Technical Commissioners approve a regular report for the Board of Directors, they serve as the Technical liaison to the Board, they approve monthly expenditures that fall within the accepted annual budget, and they also submit a recommended budget to the Board of Directors each spring.

WONDERING ABOUT ROAD CONDITIONS – Before you head out visit www.511.mn.org or call 511 to get the latest updated road conditions in Minnesota.



HOLIDAY HOME SAFETY TIPS:

- Merry & Bright – Carefully inspect holiday light strings each year & recycle any with frayed cords, cracked lamp holders or loose connections.
- Lights Out – Always turn off holiday lights when you leave the house unattended or when going to bed.
- Fresh is Best – Try to purchase a freshly cut tree, as they are more resistant to ignition. Keep your Christmas tree watered & away from open candles.
- Timing is Everything – Use an outdoor timer certified by CSA International to switch lights on & off. Lights should be turned on after 7 p.m. to avoid the electricity rush hour.
- One & Done – Never connect more than one extension cord together; instead use a single cord that is long enough to reach the outlet without stretching, but not so long that it can get easily tangled.
- The Great Outdoors – When hanging outdoor lights, keep electrical connections off the ground & away from metal rain gutters. Use insulated tape or plastic clips instead of metal nails or tacks to hold them in place.



SAVE OUR WATER

- Insulate water pipes in unheated areas with insulation tubes made of polyethylene or fiberglass.
- Drip your faucets – dripping faucets during sub zero temperatures can actually save you money on water by acting as inexpensive insurance. By keeping the water moving it greatly reduces the likelihood of freezing.
- Know where your property shut-off valve is. The faster you can turn off the water in the event of a catastrophic leak, the less goes to waste.

Visit www.whitebeartownship.org or call 651.747.2750
1281 Hammond Road, White Bear Township, Minnesota 55110



ANDREW 1918/SUBMITTED

Above, Zebra mussels compared to a quarter.



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At right, Thirty truckloads – 275 cubic yards – of mussels from a channel near Sucker Lake were piled 5 feet, 6 inches high. The mussels will be composted with food waste.