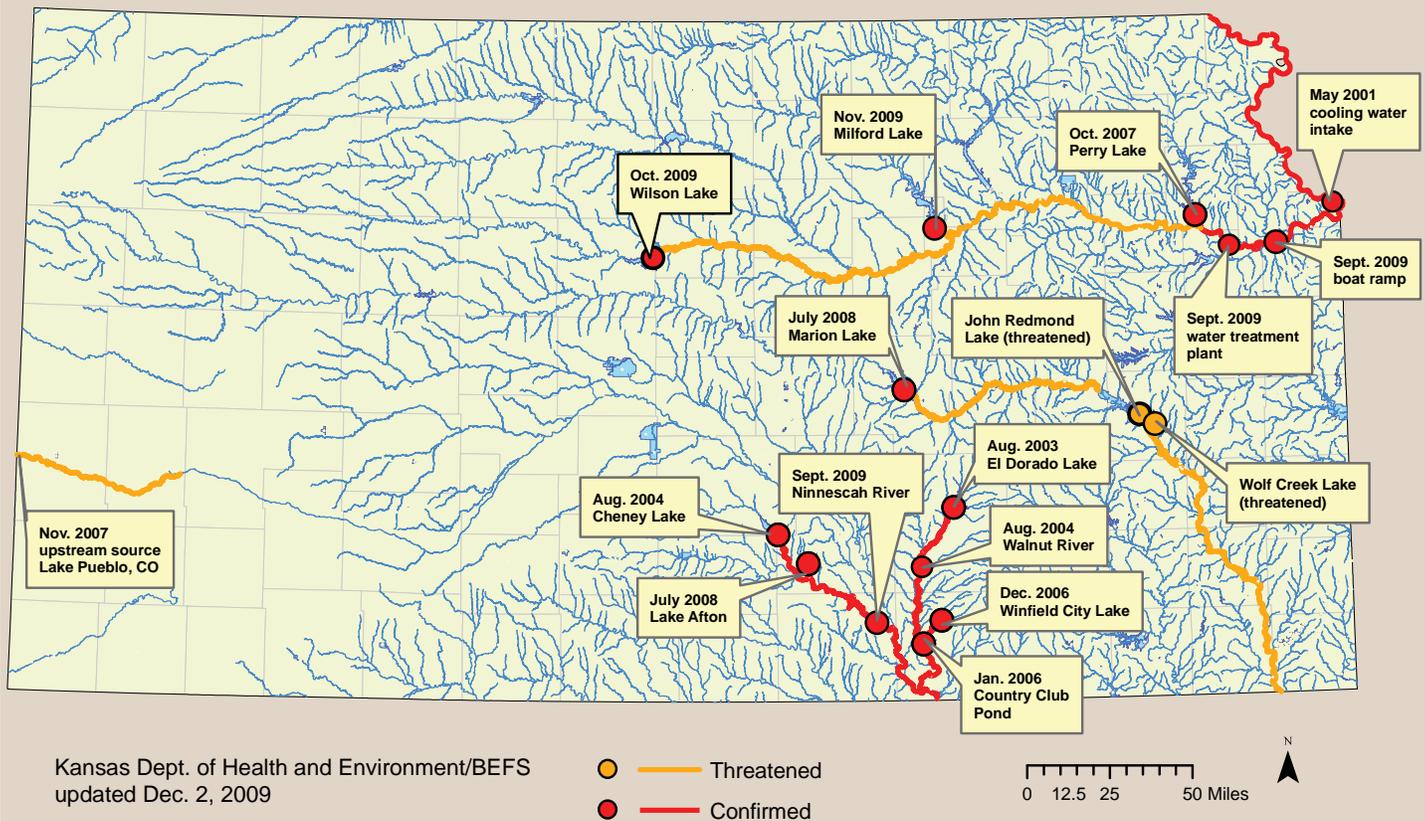


Zebra Mussel: The Unrelenting Spread in Kansas

The zebra mussel, *Dreissena polymorpha* (Pallas, 1771), a small bivalve mollusk native to eastern Europe and Western Asia, was introduced accidentally to North America between 1985 and 1986 in the ballast water of commercial ships arriving from Europe. Within a quarter of a century, zebra mussels have infested all Great Lakes and numerous water bodies in over half of the lower 48 states. Biologists believe this highly invasive exotic species has spread from the Great Lakes into our major river systems primarily through inadvertent transport by commercial barge and recreational vessels. In Kansas, the unrelenting spread has been just as impressive, starting with several dead zebra mussel specimens recovered from the cooling water intake of a power plant located along the Missouri River near Kansas City in May 2001, followed just two years later with live specimens discovered in El Dorado Lake in south-central Kansas in August 2003. Cheney Lake followed suit in 2004, and at least one new water body has been added to the list each year since 2006. As zebra mussels spread, so does the financial burden on Kansans, through higher local taxes and water user fees levied to address the added expense in dealing with these invaders. Deemed a non-indigenous aquatic nuisance, the zebra mussel has the potential to cost North American water users billions of dollars in monitoring and eradication efforts.

Zebra Mussel Distribution in Kansas



Large colonies can contain millions of individuals and interfere with the operations of water intake facilities, irrigation systems and recreational boat motors. These infestations also often have negative ecological impacts, including the disruption of normal aquatic food webs and the elimination of native mussel communities.

Ongoing cooperative monitoring efforts by state agencies and industrial and public utilities continue to track the spread of zebra mussels. Public awareness concerning this phenomenon is critical for preparing for and mitigating the potential economic and ecological impacts of these organisms. Recent studies suggest that individual citizens may be able to help slow the spread of zebra mussels.

If a boat or personal watercraft (PWC) is or may be contaminated with zebra mussels, perform the following inspection and cleaning procedures before entering any water body:

- Inspect the hull, trailer, and live well (must be dry) and remove any visible zebra mussels or aquatic plants. If zebra mussels are discovered, collect and place in rubbing alcohol and contact the appropriate state agencies (see below). Under no circumstances should the organism be returned to the water.
- Before leaving the premises of any visited water body, drain any water from the engine cooling system (PWC blow out), live well, bilge and bait buckets.
- Dispose of all leftover bait on land in appropriate receptacles. Do not re-use live bait if exposed to infested waters.
- At a minimum, rinse hull, trailer, motor and infested equipment with high-pressure chlorinated tap water, using hot water (140 degrees F) if possible, flushing engine cooling system, live well and bilge before transporting your vessel from infested waters to uninfested waters.
- Dry everything in an area protected from rain for FIVE DAYS before entering uninfested waters.

Public adherence to recommended control practices and reporting zebra mussel sightings will help prevent the further spread of these animals to our lakes and rivers. For more information, or to report a zebra mussel sighting, please contact the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, Research and Survey Office at (620) 342-0658 or the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Bureau of Environmental Field Services at (785) 296-6603. To obtain additional information on zebra mussels or other aquatic nuisance species affecting Kansas, please visit the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks website

www.kdwp.state.ks.us/news/Fishing/Aquatic-Nuisance-Species.html

