

PARCS UPDATE #50

APRIL, 2015



PLANS TO FIGHT INVASIVE MUSSELS

1. HOW DID THESE INVASIVE MUSSELS BECOME A THREAT TO OUR LAKES?

In our last Update #49 we told you about how these non native mussels came to North America from the Baltic areas, were transported on boats up the eastern seaboard of the US, and ultimately became established in Ontario, in the northeastern states and, in 2013, in Lake Winnipeg, Manitoba.

2. WHICH ARE THE MOST VULNERABLE SASKATCHEWAN LAKES?

The highest risk lakes are those along the eastern and southern borders of the province and those that host a lot of visiting boats (such as during fish derbies). Examples include Lake Diefenbaker, the Qu'Appelle Lakes, and Tobin Lake.

3. WHAT HAPPENS IF THESE MUSSELS ENTER OUR LAKES?

These Zebra and Quagga mussels have *no natural predators*. Nor have any effective treatments been found. They attach themselves to intake structures causing millions of dollars of damage to water intake, power generation facilities and lakefront property. They attach themselves to most hard surfaces. These mussels also cause *a significant decrease in the number of fish that feed on deep-water zooplankton organisms, like trout or walleye.*



4. WHEN DO THESE MUSSELS SPAWN AND SPREAD?

They spawn in the spring in water temperatures of 10 to 15 degrees Celsius. The spread from lake to lake most often is caused by their attaching themselves to boats.

5. WHAT HAS SASK ENVIRONMENT DONE TO DATE TO COMBAT THIS THREAT?

Sask Environment has:

1. Produced a supply of posters for boat launches that advertise the Key Message: **Clean, Drain, Dry your boat to prevent the spread of these mussels** – the mussels will die after being completely dried out for a period of time.
2. Set up the TIPS line for alerts about suspected spotting of these mussels.
3. Trained Conservation Officers in watercraft inspection.
4. Purchased of a high-pressure decontamination washer.

Sask Environment emphasizes, however, that the best strategy is **prevention through public awareness**. Sask Environment's main emphasis has been on developing a plan to train an army of volunteers for early detection of these mussels

6. HOW IS THE PLAN BEING DEVELOPED FOR PROTECTING OUR LAKES?

On **January 22nd** PARCS was invited to a planning session that was hosted by the Ministry of Environment and included representatives from the ten organized Saskatchewan Watersheds Associations.

In **February** our PARCS UPDATE #49 introduced you to Saskatchewan Watersheds and provided contact information for both cottage communities and their watersheds. (PARCS Coordinator, Lynne Saas subsequently attended the Annual General Meeting for the South Sask River Watershed Stewards - the watershed for her lake - and learned much about how the Stewardship group is funded, how it operates and how it is in a position to coordinate lake-based initiatives.)¹

Since the February Update #49 we have received some corrections to that contact information. We are attaching the **updated Watershed Contact Information Document**.

On **February 28th** PARCS learned that the position occupied by Collin McGuire at Sask Environment (to develop the monitoring program for invasive species and to educate the Saskatchewan partners) would *end on March 31st*! PARCS subsequently sent a letter to the Premier and to the Minister of Environment asking that a trained staff person be retained, dedicated to assuming a leadership role on this issue. The last page of this newsletter is a copy of that letter. *To date, we have had no reply.*

On **March 18th** PARCS received the manual for the Adult Invasive Mussel Monitoring Program (AIMM) from Colling McGuire at Sask Environment. It outlines a partnership program with non-government organizations², for *early detection of adult invasive mussels* in our province. It tells how volunteers can do *shoreline substrate sampling*, when to monitor and how to submit data to the Sask Conservation Data Center.

On **March 23rd** PARCS learned Collin McGuire's position would indeed end March 31st.

On **March 25th** PARCS wrote to the Sask Association of Watersheds (SAW) (with cc's to the Premier and the Minister of Environment) asking whether they would:

- 1) Assume the leadership role needed to co-ordinate a lake-based volunteer effort in implementing the AIMM protocols, and
- 2) Join PARCS in urging the province to provide a trained staff person to assist with the training needs of the volunteers, at least for the implementation period. The SAW Board of Directors considered our letter at their March 26th meeting.

On **March 31st** PARCS received a phone call from the coordinator of the Sask Association of Watersheds saying that SAW had agreed to the PARCS requests. Coordinator Bridget Andrews pointed out that monitoring for aquatic invasive species is part of the 25-year plan of the Saskatchewan Water Security Agency³.

¹ I would urge every cottage community to attend these meetings of their own watershed stewards group.

² Such as cottage communities and the Saskatchewan Watershed Stewards.

³ The main funding agency for the Saskatchewan Watershed Stewards.

It is SAW's intention to convene a meeting of the coordinators of all ten Watershed Associations as part of their 2015 SAW Convention to be held April 13 to 15 in Melfort⁴ for the purpose of planning how they can coordinate the AIMM program in their areas. She also stated that the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation has volunteered to help, including the construction of the substrate samplers to be used by the volunteers.

7. SO WHAT CAN OUR COTTAGE COMMUNITIES BE DOING IN THE MEANTIME?

First, we suggest that your Resort Village Council or your RM Council or your Organized Hamlet Board:

- 1) **NOW** - Add your voice to the voice of PARCS and SAW. Write to the Premier and the Ministry of Environment stating that you support the need for additional training provided at the community and lake levels for committees that are prepared to take part in the AIMM Program. (Note the letter on the last page)
- 2) **NOW** – Educate your cottage owners through email or regular newsletters. Pass along information from this Update. Emphasize the importance of vigilance for snowbirds returning with boats and during fishing derbies.
- 3) **SOON** – Set up an environmental committee of volunteers to:
 - Do substrate sampling.
 - Place education posters at boat launches.
 - Report suspected spotting of these aquatic invasive species to our current TIP line.
- 4) **AFTER APRIL 20TH** - (After the Watershed Convention) Contact the coordinator of your Watershed (see the accompanying Watershed Document) to:
 - Introduce your community to your Watershed Co-ordinator to:
 - Request copies of the posters for your boat launch(es)
 - Request that the Watershed Co-ordinator call and host a meeting with representatives from all of the cottage communities along your lake – for the purpose of training volunteers to do the monitoring and reporting for the AIMM Program.



⁴ For conference agenda, go to www.saskwatersheds.ca.

PROVINCIAL ASSOCIATION of RESORT COMMUNITIES of SASKATCHEWAN



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March 9, 2015

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Honourable Scott Moe
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Dear Premier Brad Wall and Environment Minister Scott Moe,

As you are no doubt aware, Zebra and Quagga mussels were introduced into the eastern USA from the Baltic and Black Sea. They have spread into Canada's eastern waterways and, in 2013, infected Lake Winnipeg. There are no natural predators or effective treatments for these mussels. By attaching themselves to intake structures, they affect power generation and water treatment systems. Ontario estimates that the added cost to power generation and water treatment has been \$264 million over the past 16 years since these mussels were introduced into that province. These mussels also cause significant impacts on the lake ecology, tourism and recreational benefits.

As the ice recedes from our lakes and boats re-enter our province towed by returning snowbirds, Saskatchewan is the most vulnerable province to invasion by these species. The **attached PARCS newsletter** tells how PARCS, as contact for the cottage owners along our lakes, stands ready to assist in mobilizing a cadre of volunteers to assist with a program of education and testing of our lake waters. We salute the Saskatchewan Watershed Coordinators who will assist with coordinating the efforts at each of our lakes. We especially applaud the coordination role played to date by the staff from the Fisheries Branch of the Ministry of Environment.

We know that the province of Alberta has invested millions into prevention programs, working through the Alberta Lake Management Association. Alberta is looking to commitment from the province of Saskatchewan in preventing the introduction of these invasive species into the western provinces.

At the February 28, 2015, regular meeting of the Board of Directors of PARCS (The Provincial Association of Resort Communities of Saskatchewan), our directors were bewildered to learn that there has been no plan, after March 31st, to allocate special staffing resources to saving our Saskatchewan lakes from this threat. The Directors passed the following motion:

"That the Premier of the province and the Minister of Environment be urged to allocate a trained staff person dedicated to assuming a leadership role in working with the Saskatchewan Watershed Associations and the Provincial Association of Resort Communities in Saskatchewan in preventing the contamination of our lakes by invasive aquatic species."

We await your early response to our motion. We believe that time is of the essence in enacting a plan to prevent a catastrophe to our Saskatchewan lakes

Yours truly
Sherry Jimmy
President, PARCS