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Sea Grant
Florida

Zebra Mussel Alert

The zebra mussel is an introduced freshwater barnacle-like bi-valve that poses a multi-million dollar threat to all boaters, anglers, commercial fishermen, industrial water users and drinking water supplies. They attach themselves to hard surfaces and can plug-up small to large pipes. The cost of dealing with zebra mussels where they are already established is millions of dollars each year.

Your help is needed and essential!

- What's it look like?**
- Zebra mussels look like a small clam, with a yellowish and/or brownish shell, usually with alternating dark and light bands of color.
 - They are small, 1" to 2", and usually grow in clusters in shallow water, 6' to 30' deep.
 - Zebra mussels are the ONLY freshwater mollusk that attaches itself to solid objects, including boat hulls, inside water cooling systems, and rocks.
- What to do?**
- Note the date and location where shells were found. Put 3-4 shells in rubbing alcohol. Don't throw any back into the water; a female can produce hundreds of thousands of eggs.
- Who to contact?**
- Immediately contact your nearest Florida Sea Grant extension agent, or phone (352) 392-1837.

Is prevention possible?

Yes. The most likely way zebra mussels can be introduced into Florida is by transport in the larval stage (known as veligers). It is too small to be seen with the naked eye. It survives well in bait buckets, live wells, bilges, inside water cooling systems of boats, and in most any other wet circumstance.

What you can do.

Dry out containers and bilges. Flush cooling systems. Don't move water from one freshwater source to another. Report any sightings of adults.

University of Florida Sea Grant Extension Program
For further information: (352) 392-1837