



Scuba divers: reduce the risk of spreading zebra mussels

Best practices for scuba divers

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) – August 2016

Zebra mussels and scuba diving gear

Zebra mussels are an invasive species in Minnesota. As adults, the mussels range from 1/4 inch to 1-1/2 inches long and have D-shaped shells. Larval and juvenile zebra mussels are much smaller – sometimes invisible to the eye – and can be transported in water or in plants. Tiny zebra mussels may be able to move from lake to lake on plant fragments or in water trapped in scuba diving gear.

You can reduce the risk of spreading zebra mussels by following these recommendations:

Plan your visit and your gear

If you are planning to dive multiple sites, check the [DNR's infested waters list](#) or [contact the local invasive species specialist](#) to learn about zebra mussels in the area. Schedule dives on lakes and rivers where we haven't found zebra mussels before visiting water bodies that the DNR has [listed as infested](#) for zebra mussels.

Clean your gear

Inspect your scuba gear after each dive for anything that might carry zebra mussels. Remove all plant fragments, mud, and any other visible debris. Remove small plant pieces from buckles, webbing and other connectors.

Drain, rinse, and dry your gear

Drain water from all equipment. Remember to drain your buoyancy compensators and any boots on air tanks. Take a moment to check weight pockets or other pockets on your wet or dry suit. If you use lead-shot weights, allow the water to drain from them before reusing.

Rinse your gear with water. Check manufacturer's instructions for rinsing or draining equipment like buoyancy compensators.

Allow all equipment to dry completely after visiting known zebra-mussel infested waters.

Safety first

Always comply with manufacturer's instructions or other safety advice for your scuba diving gear.

Report zebra mussels

If you suspect you've found a zebra mussel, take a specimen to the nearest DNR office or [contact the local invasive species specialist](#). Note the location in the lake or river where you found the mussel.