

# Attack of the zebra mussels

Officials look for public's help in stopping destructive species in Cherokee Lake

By **JEFF BOBO**  
NET News Service

MORRISTOWN — State officials are asking area boaters to help stop the spread of a destructive mussel species that was discovered in Cherokee Lake for the first time last month.

Zebra mussels have made their way into Cherokee Lake, threatening to disrupt the lake's ecosystem and clog the lake with harmful and unsightly mussel colonies.

In November, an angler fishing near the TWRA boat ramp at Olen Marshall Bridge in Bean Station discovered what he believed to be zebra mussels.

He contacted the TWRA office, and biologists were able to positively identify them and verify that there were more in the lake.

Originally brought to North America in international shipping ballast water from Eurasia, zebra mussels were discovered in the Great Lakes in 1988 and have spread rapidly throughout the connected waterways, eventually



Contributed

## Zebra mussels clog the housing of a propeller.

making their way to Northeast Tennessee.

The rapidly reproducing mussels can have serious environmental, economic and recreational impacts on Tennessee's reservoirs.

Zebra mussels consume considerable amounts of beneficial microscopic organisms, resulting in less food for larval and juve-

nile fishes that support native fisheries and native freshwater mussels.

The fast multiplying zebra mussels attach and colonize on hard surfaces such as docks, break walls, boat hulls, engine out-drives, water intake structures used for power and municipal water treatment plants and even native freshwater mussels.

They also make swimming and other water recreation hazardous because of their sharp edges.

Zebra mussels have also been discovered in nearby Norris Lake, prompting TWRA to encourage TVA to keep the lake level as low as possible to hopefully dry many of them out.

TWRA is also in the process of posting signs at Norris and Cherokee to notify boaters of how to slow the spread of zebra mussels by reminding them to "Clean, Drain and Dry" their vessels before traveling from one lake to another.

"The TWRA can only do so much to stop the spread of zebra mussels," said TWRA Region IV Fisheries Coordinator Bart Carter. "The majority of the responsibility lies with the angling and boating public to be diligent in taking steps to control their spread."

The TWRA recommends several steps to curb the spread of zebra mussels, including:

- Inspect the boat, trailer and all equipment and remove any visible vegetation or organisms.

- Pull boat plugs and drain live wells prior to leaving the water body.

- Flush engine with fresh, clean water.

- Dry boat and equipment for 5 days before launching into another water body.