



Municipal Information
Post Office Box 2570
Waco, Texas 76702-2570
254 / 750-5636
Fax: 254 / 750-5634
www.waco-texas.com

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Contact: Jonathan Echols
Public Relations Coordinator
Water Utilities
(254) 750-8416
e-mail: jonathane@ci.waco.tx.us

City Responds to Invasive Zebra Mussels Found in Lake Waco

The City of Waco is responding to the zebra mussel infestation of Lake Waco according to response plans it has had in place for the last few years.

The city has already identified several specific plans of action, depending on how widespread the population is within the lake.

“So far, around 30 zebra mussels have been found, all near a single boat ramp,” said Director of Water Utility Services, Joe Bernosky.

Zebra mussels have no impact on the quality of drinking water for City of Waco water customers, though in lakes previously infested, zebra mussels have caused issues by altering the aquatic life environment and clogging water intake pipes.

“The zebra mussels have reproduced at different rates and behave differently according to each body of water,” said Water Quality Manager, Tom Conry.

Conry said that although it could take up to a year before impacts are seen, the city is mainly concerned with keeping them away from the drinking water intake and out of the nearby dissolved air flotation treatment plant.

The city is coordinating response efforts with both Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) and the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).

The invasive mussels found their way into Lake Waco despite a multi-year effort aimed at prevention and public education by the City of Waco, TPWD and USACE.

Lake Waco is now the seventh lake in Texas to become infested by zebra mussels. The others are: Texoma, Ray Roberts, Bridgeport, Lavon, Lewisville and Belton.

Originally from the Caspian Sea in Asia, Zebra mussels were first discovered in North America in 1988, in Lake Michigan. The mussels are now found in 29 states.

The mussels have spread between water bodies by attaching themselves to watercraft, as well as in bait bucket and other fishing equipment.

Once fully established throughout a body of water, there is no known method for completely eradicating zebra mussels.

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