Zebra invasion

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has run rampant in the Great Lakes Region. "We were fortunate we had a filter, or it could have been a lot worse," said Fernando Fernandez, superintendent at Green Acres Country Club in Palatine, Ill.

Two years ago Green Acres had zebra two inches thick coating the sea wall around its irrigation pond. Fernandes said they all died within three or four weeks," he said.

Fernandez believes the water company injected chlorine or sodium hyper chloride into his water "because our turf got very yellowish and faded." Fortunately, Fernandez mixes the lake with rain and well water.

"I would have had some bad problems if I had used it straight," said Fernandez.

A marine biologist took samples and recommended that Fernandez lower the pond down to the mud in the winter, so the mussels wouldn't have anything to stick to. Basically, the exposed mussels would freeze to death.

Bill Aiston was not as fortunate as Fernandez. Superintendant at Lake Shore Country Club in Glencoe, Ill., Aiston buys balls, aerators, the filter screen, any sprinkler heads, so we spend a lot of money on golf courses." Aiston said.

But Aiston doesn't describe the ponds and let them sit for two weeks. "We'll have to do that every month. There is no chemical or electrical means to control them that is feasible for a golf course," he said.

By blowing out the irrigation system before winter, he will knock a lot of debris out, he said.

But Aiston doesn't describe the zebra as a big problem — yet. "Since our lakes are only 3 years old, we don't have any mature zebras in them," he said. "They grow to the size of 1-1/2 inches and get four or five deep."

National Biological Service (NBS) fishery biologist Amy Benson said water heated to 100 degrees also kills zebra mussels, which can withstand water temperatures in the 80s. Then again, a course's irrigation system would have to be shut off.

Even with these treatments, the zebra mussels return "if you don't take preventive measures," Clarke said.

To prevent an infestation of a irrigation system, "take precautions," advised Nancy Balcom, Extension educator with the Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program at the University of Connecticut.

"The prognosis is grim for all of the water bodies in the country who have first-hand experience in tracking, analyzing and fighting zebra mussels.

"We're uplinking in Gainesville and will go out to any Extension office across the Southeast," said Marion Clarke of the University of Florida campus here. Although anyone can tune in to the teleconference, it is being targeted to states from Texas to Florida, up the Atlantic Coast to New England and as far as Oklahoma, Arkansas and Tennessee.

For more information and download sites, people should contact Sea Grant Program offices: Texas (512-994-8426); Louisiana (504-388-6305); Mississippi (601-388-4710); Alabama (334-438-5690); Florida (904-392-1837); North Carolina (919-515-2544); Georgia (912-284-7288); and South Carolina (803-727-2075).

Meanwhile, the Florida Sea Grant Program is funding research into the most vulnerable environments in the state.

Ernie Estevez at Marineland will look at the environments where the zebra is flourishing in the Northern states and comparing those environments with Florida," Clarke said, adding that other states are undertaking similar studies.

Sources of zebra mussel information:

Marion Clarke, Sea Grant Extension Program, University of Florida at Gainesville: (904-392-1837).

Amy Benzon, fishery biologist, National Biological Service (904-784-8181): FAX 4906. The NBS has a zebra mussel database on the World wide web, address: WWW.NFSC.gov


Nancy Balcom, Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program, University of Connecticut (203-445-8664), which has produced the 10-minute video-tape. The Invasion of the Zebra Mussel: Just a Matter of Time.

GAINESVILLE, Fla. — A free satellite teleconference on the predicted zebra mussel invasion of the Southeast will be held from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sept. 27. One of the four case studies scheduled to be aired deals with impacts on golf courses.

Sponsored by Florida Sea Grant in cooperation with the Southeastern Sea Grant Programs, the conference will bring together experts from around the country who have first-hand experience in tracking, analyzing and fighting zebra mussels.

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