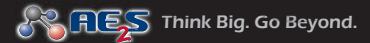


The Update

August 2009



Invasive Species: Zebra Mussels

Four more lakes in Minnesota have been recently infested with Zebra Mussels, bringing the total to 10 in the state. The barnacle-like zebra mussel poses a multibillion-dollar threat to North America's industrial, agricultural, and municipal water supplies, and it could become a costly nuisance for freshwater shipping, boating, fishing, and clamming as well.

Zebra mussels are known for inhabiting intakes and pipes of public water supply facilities, hydroelectric and nuclear power plants, and industrial facilities. They take over pipes and constrict flow, thereby reducing the intake capacity. Zebra mussel densities were as high as 700,000 per square meter at one power plant in Michigan, and the diameters of pipes have been reduced by two-thirds at water treatment facilities. Although there is little information on zebra mussels affecting irrigation, farms, and golf courses, they could be likely candidates for infestations, especially if they have intakes near or on infested waters.

There are a number of methods currently being researched to help control the growth of zebra mussels including UV Light, acoustical vibration, and different coatings for large vessels. State agencies are stepping up educational and enforcement efforts to slow the progression of the invasive species. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Invasive Species Program, established in 1991, strives to prevent and curb the spread of invasive species within the state, and reduce the impacts caused by invasive species to Minnesota's

(continued on back)

On July 14th a bill was introduced in the House of Representatives to create a federal water trust fund that is intended to provide an estimated \$10 billion annually to water and wastewater infrastructure funding. The fund would be supported by new taxes, including:

- A four cent per-container fee on water-based beverages — includes anything that is more than 50 percent water, such as soda, but not juice or milk;
- A three percent fee on items disposed of in wastewater, such as toothpaste, shampoo, cosmetics, toilet paper, and cooking oil;
- A one-half of one percent excise fee on pharmaceutical products, which would support remediation research and programs to prevent drugs from entering water systems;
- A one-fifteenth of one percent fee on corporate profits over \$4 million — similar to the tax that funded the Superfund program until the tax expired in 1995.

Introduction of Federal Water Trust Fund

The United States Government Accountability Office (USGAO) determined a number of issues to be considered in designing and establishing the water trust fund. The stakeholders involved determined three main issues they feel need to be addressed: 1) how the trust fund should be administered and used; 2) what type of financial assistance should be provided; and 3) what activities should be eligible to receive funding from the trust fund. The majority of the stakeholders agreed that the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) should administer the funds; however, their views differed as to how the funds should be used. Some believe the funds should be added to the existing State Revolving Funds (SRF's), while others think the funds should be administered through a separate new fund. Others did not support the establishment of a trust fund at all. The majority of the stakeholders feel the financial assistance should be distributed using a combination of loans and grants to address the needs of different localities. Finally, most stakeholders identified capital projects as the primary activity that should receive funding from a water trust fund.

Supporters believe this bill would prevent individuals from having to bear the burden of paying for the neglected infrastructure with a tremendous increase in water rates. Supporters include the American Society of Civil Engineers, the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA), and the Associated General Contractors of America (AGC).

Kristine L. Young, representing AGC, testified that, "Many communities do not currently have the financial resources to make the investments that are direly needed and necessary to meet federal water quality standards and face significant practical and political challenges enacting rate structures that would raise adequate

(continued on back)

(Zebra Mussels continued)

ecology, society, and economy. Boaters and others who use the water can contribute to such efforts by taking steps to prevent the transportation of aquatic invasive species from one lake or river to another. Transporting prohibited species is illegal in Minnesota, with violators facing fines up to \$500. ■



Zebra Mussels Clogging a Pipe
Photo Courtesy of Michigan Sea Grant
(www.miseagrant.umich.edu)

(Introduction of Federal Water Trust Fund from first page)

capital to make the improvements that are needed.” She noted the declining appropriations that SRF programs suffered until recently and said “AGC supports creation of a long-term, sustainable, off-budget source of funding for water infrastructure.”

The American Water Works Association (AWWA) has a number of reservations regarding the bill. AWWA has indicated that trust funds must be renewed annually, and if more funds are collected than are allowed to be spent through the appropriations process, those funds can be, and often times are, spent elsewhere. AWWA does not support a water tax because it would siphon away local funds and would result in communities with adequate rates subsidizing those that do not.

The National Association of Water Companies stated, “The trust fund mechanism created by this bill would serve to further mask the value of water through taxes on unrelated activities and discourage responsible water use and conservation through heavy, broad utility subsidizations.”

AWWA does support the fact that the bill would channel funds through existing SRF loan programs and also urged passage of S1005, a bill that reauthorizes the SRF program and gives greater weight to loan applicants who “can demonstrate that they are implementing asset management plans and responsible financial planning.”

For more information on this topic please visit www.awwa.org or contact AE2S. ■

TEMP--RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

First Class
U.S. Postage
PAID
Grafton, ND
Permit No. 13

Offices in:
Grand Forks, ND
Bismarck, ND
Williston, ND
Fargo, ND
Moorhead, MN
Minneapolis, MN
Great Falls, MT
Kalspell, MT
www.ae2s.com

Advanced Engineering and
Environmental Services, Inc. (AE2S)
2016 Washington Street South
Grand Forks, ND 58201