



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Joseph G. Pantalion, P.E., Director ^{JGP}
Watershed Protection Department

DATE: July 17, 2017

SUBJECT: Zebra Mussels Documented in Lake Travis

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) announced on June 27, 2017, that an established, reproducing population of zebra mussels has been confirmed in Lake Travis. Zebra mussels (*Dreissena polymorpha*) are native to Eastern Europe and were first discovered in the Great Lakes in 1988. They have rapidly spread across the United States and were discovered in Texas in 2009. Zebra mussels can produce millions of offspring each year and the known eradication methods typically are not fiscally, physically, or environmentally feasible.

Potential negative impacts to the ecology, infrastructure, and recreational aspects of lakes and rivers based on experiences elsewhere in the U.S. may include:

- Clogging water intakes by forming thick colonies;
- Reducing recreational enjoyment of beaches and shorelines because of piles of very sharp shells;
- Attaching to boats, docks, dams, buoys, and other structures found within the waterways;
- Disrupting all levels of the aquatic ecosystem, potentially resulting in the destruction of native mussel communities, changes in the diversity of fish, and declines in certain bird populations;
- Increased algae blooms that can foul shorelines and create other nuisance conditions.

While the spread of zebra mussels into Lake Travis is unfortunate, it was not unexpected. It is likely zebra mussels will be found before long in Lake Austin, Lady Bird Lake, the Colorado River downstream of Longhorn Dam, and Lake Walter E. Long. The impacts to infrastructure and environmental resources such as water treatment intakes, power plant cooling intakes, drainage tunnels and pipes, and Barton Springs should be expected.

Watershed Protection Department staff will continue to coordinate with TPWD, the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA), and other City of Austin departments, including Austin Water, to monitor our waterways downstream of the Mansfield Dam for the spread of these mussels. We are also working together to provide outreach and education to increase public awareness since the best way to prevent the spread of this invasive species is by cleaning, draining, and drying boats, trailers, fishing gear, skis, paddle boards and generally anything that has been in the water. For more information about zebra mussels and how to slow the spread, visit www.texasinvasives.org.

cc: Elaine Hart, Interim City Manager
Bert Lumberras, Assistant City Manager
Robert Goode, Assistant City Manager
Sara Hensley, Interim Assistant City Manager
Greg Meszaros, Director, Austin Water