



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Curecanti
National Recreation Area

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Monitoring Raises Question of Quagga Mussels in Blue Mesa Reservoir

New Boating Restrictions Due to “Suspect Conditions”

The Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) has declared Blue Mesa Reservoir a “suspect location” for infestation of invasive quagga mussels after reviewing the results of laboratory analyses received by the National Park Service from the Bureau of Reclamation and follow-up sample analyses from an independent laboratory. The “suspect” classification is based on variability in testing results that do not specifically meet the state’s criteria for declaring a water positive for mussels, but indicate that Blue Mesa Reservoir may be infested.

This type of classification is used in Utah where the procedure for waters that have non-definitive, but suspect results from plankton sample analyses is to put those reservoirs on a “suspect” watch list. Those waters are subsequently treated under the state containment protocol for watercraft inspection procedures which requires trailered watercraft exiting the water to be inspected, and increased sampling/monitoring for mussels is scheduled. Thus, until more information can be gained from future sampling and analysis efforts, Blue Mesa will be considered a suspect location for mussel presence and treated as a containment reservoir to ensure mussels are not being transported to uninfested waters, stated Elizabeth Brown, Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator with CDOW.

In response to these findings, new boating requirements for the reservoirs at Curecanti National Recreation Area will go into effect beginning May 8, 2009. All motorized vessels launching on Blue

Mesa, Morrow Point, and Crystal Reservoirs will be required to undergo a prelaunch inspection to ensure that they are not carrying invasive mussels. All motorized vessels will also be required to undergo an inspection when leaving the reservoirs to ensure that mussels will not be transported to other waters should the reservoirs be verified as contaminated. If needed, boat decontamination will be required prior to launching and/or prior to departing the reservoirs. The current self-certification program will expire May 7th. Hand-carried, non-motorized craft are considered very low risk for mussel transport and are not subject to inspection per state regulations.

Inspection and decontamination stations are located at Steven's Creek Campground, Elk Creek and Lake Fork and will operate daily between 5:30 am and 9 pm. These launch facilities will close overnight. All other launch facilities will be closed to launching of motorized vessels. Boats at slips or tied to shore may remain on the reservoir after 9pm, but must remain there overnight.

Curecanti National Recreation Area Superintendent Connie Rudd wants boaters to know that park staff will provide the most efficient service possible. "We recognize the inconvenience to boaters and understand the need for fast turnaround," she said. "Our staff will ensure that boats will go through the inspection process as efficiently as possible." Boaters can assist with the process by arriving at the reservoir with a clean, drained and dry vessel.

"The National Park Service and Colorado Division of Wildlife are committed to the protection of the significant fishery and recreational opportunities at Blue Mesa and ask for the public's support in preventing mussels from colonizing this and other lakes and reservoirs," Rudd said.

Blue Mesa Reservoir, located between Montrose and Gunnison, is Colorado's largest body of water. The reservoir is part of the Curecanti National Recreation Area, attracting approximately 1 million visitors annually.

For more information, visit CDOW website at <http://www/wildlife.state.co.us/>. For more information about mussel prevention operations at Curecanti, call Elk Creek Visitor Center at 970-641-2337 ext. 205 or visit <http://www.nps.gov/cure>.

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