

SNAKE RIVER UPDATE

The Idaho State Department of Agriculture will begin implementing a copper-based treatment to eradicate quagga mussels in the Mid-Snake River area. Active treatment will occur from downriver of Hansen Bridge to Centennial Park from October 8 – 18.

//// WHY IS TREATMENT NEEDED?

ISDA confirmed Tuesday September 24, 2024, a small number of quagga mussels in multiple samples in the Twin Falls area of the Snake River.

Quagga mussels were first identified in the Snake River near Twin Falls in September of 2023. ISDA implemented a rapid treatment with a chelated copper product that significantly reduced the quagga mussel population in the affected stretch of river. It was the first treatment of this type and scale ever attempted in North America.

- Quagga mussels spread rapidly and clog pipes that deliver water for drinking, energy, agriculture, recreation, and a variety of other uses.
- Established quagga mussel infestations have major impacts on fish populations and wildlife habitat. Quagga mussels remove essential nutrients from freshwater ecosystems, leading to a devastating decline in native species, felt for generations.
- If left untreated, they damage and hinder infrastructure so severely it would cost Idaho hundreds of millions of dollars in actual and indirect costs. This would affect every irrigator, power user, and recreator in Idaho.

//// WHAT IS THIS TREATMENT?

As a part of the rapid response to the detection of quagga mussels in the Snake River, ISDA will be implementing a multi-faceted treatment plan. The first treatment will utilize the chelated copper product, Natrix, and is set to begin October 8 and last 10 days.

- Natrix, was used in the Snake River quagga mussel treatment in 2023 which significantly reduced the quagga mussel population.
- Natrix is labeled and approved by EPA for this type of aquatic applications. The product has been used in other states for mussel, fish, algae, and plant control.
- The treatment is being applied at a rate that will eradicate mussels but is below the drinking water standard for humans.
- The application area is from just downriver of Hansen Bridge to Centennial Waterfront Park.
- Treatment will dissipate immediately outside of the application area. Based off last years' treatment, ISDA expects standard river copper levels 18-miles down river (Kanaka Rapid). Within this 18-mile dissipation area, product will be present in the water for approximately three days after the final treatment application. The treatment is expected to finish October 18.
- ISDA and the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality will routinely monitor the river from downriver of Hansen Bridge (Sage View) to Kanaka Rapid to evaluate treatment effectiveness and copper dissipation.

The upcoming treatment is the first of the multi-faceted treatment plan. ISDA is planning a second treatment in November to target quagga mussels in still water and deep pool sections of the river.

//// WHAT IS THE ANTICIPATED IMPACT?

The treatment application will occur across an 8.5-mile section – less than one percent – of the Snake River and is intended to eradicate quagga mussels at all life stages.

The treatment will not have an impact on any drinking sources. The application rate of Natrix at the immediate application site is lower than the drinking water standard. There are no public drinking water intakes near this treatment area of the Snake River.

Last year's treatment resulted in large numbers of fish mortalities in the treated stretch of the river. This treatment will likely again cause mortality in fish, aquatic plants and algae from Sage View Bridge downstream to Kanaka Rapid. Fish mortality is expected to decline rapidly as the treatment dissipates. For more information on fish mortality, contact Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

//// WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

Stay off the water – While the response and treatment are implemented, access to the Mid-Snake River from Hansen Bridge to Yingst Grade (Broken Bridge) is CLOSED. To minimize any exposure to the treatment and to prevent the movement of mussels, any persons, watercraft, pets, decoys, and fishing tackle are temporarily prohibited from accessing the water.

To minimize any exposure to the treatment, ISDA advises to stay out of the dissipation area from downriver of Hansen Bridge to Kanaka Rapid from October 8th to 21st.

The copper-based treatment application rate is lower than the drinking water standard. It is not required by the product label, but out of an abundance of caution, ISDA recommends keeping all livestock and pets out of the dissipation area from downriver of Hansen Bridge to Kanaka Rapid.

For more treatment and current closure information, visit idaho.gov/quagga.

//// MORE INFORMATION

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