

# State departments merged on July 1

On July 1, the Division of Travel and Tourism will officially transfer from the Department of Commerce to the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. The merger changes the agency's name to the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism and the name of the division to the Division of Tourism. The merger also:

- Establishes the new position of Assistant Secretary for Parks and Tourism; Linda Craghead was appointed to that new position.
- Abolishes the position of Assistant Secretary for Operations, held by Keith Sexson.
- Creates the position of Assistant Secretary for Wildlife, Fisheries and Boating; Keith Sexson was appointed to the new position.

All Division of Travel and Tourism employees will transfer to Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism along with the division's funding. In early July, eight employees will move their offices to Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism's Office of the Secretary at 1020 S Kansas. Six other employees work in the Goodland Tourist Information Center, located on eastbound I-70 west of Goodland.

The phone number for the Division of Tourism will remain the same, 785-296-2009.

The Kansas Agritourism program, managed by Becki Rhoades, will also officially transfer to the agency on July 1. Rhoades moved to the Office of the Secretary on Friday, June 24. Her phone number is also unchanged, 785-296-1847.

Robin Jennison, Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism Secretary, is looking forward to the agency's added responsibilities. "This is a great opportunity for us to help make Kansas a real showpiece in the Midwest. I firmly believe the state has an enormous variety of opportunities for tourists and outdoor enthusiasts, alike. This merger just makes sense," he said.

Becky Blake, Director of the Division of Tourism, added, "Kansas has a wealth of unique and authentic experiences to share with the rest of the world. This merger will enhance our ability to develop and promote all of the state's tourism opportunities and expand the economic impact of this important segment of the state's economy."

For information about traveling in Kansas, visit the Division of Tourism website at [travelks.com](http://travelks.com) and for more information about Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism, visit the agency website at [www.kdwp.state.ks.us](http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us).

# Zebra mussels found in the Osage County lakes

On Wednesday, June 29, officials with the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced that zebra mussels have been found in Council Grove Reservoir in Morris County and Melvern Reservoir in Osage County.

Adding the 12th and 13th Kansas reservoirs to the infested list disappoints Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism aquatic nuisance species biologist Jason Goeckler because he knows the spread can be prevented.

"We expected Council Grove Reservoir because zebra mussels naturally move downstream, and they were found in Council Grove City Lake last July," Goeckler explained. "The Melvern infestation is a different story because it could have been prevented. I still think we can prevent further spread of aquatic nuisance species if lake users will follow a few basic precautions."

All un-infested Kansas waters are under continual zebra mussel surveillance by Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism staff. A day after biologists found zebra mussel larvae, called veligers, while sampling Council Grove Reservoir, a lake user found a rock with a single adult zebra mussel attached.

Within days, both veligers and adult mussels were found at Melvern Reservoir. Veligers are too small to see with the naked eye and suspend for several weeks in the water before sinking to the bottom and attaching to a hard surface.

While they are suspended in the

larval stage, zebra mussels can be easily transported in flowing water or water in boats, bait buckets and through other recreational activities.

Zebra mussels are native to the Black and Caspian seas in Europe. They are believed to have been transported to the Great Lakes in the ballasts of transoceanic ships. Since first being discovered in 1988, zebra mussels have spread quickly to other waters in the Midwest. Control is expensive and there is no way to eradicate them once they become established.

While an adult zebra mussel is only about the size of a dime, the species poses a threat to our native fish and aquatic animals.

One adult female can produce up to 1 million eggs per year, and zebra mussel colonies quickly become quite dense, attaching to any hard surface, including native mussels, crayfish, turtles, boats, docks, as well as water intake structures. They even attach to other zebra mussels, creating layered colonies up to 6 inches thick.

Densities of more than 1 million zebra mussels per square meter have been documented in Lake Erie. In addition to the threat they pose to our environment, native species and water recreation, zebra mussels will cost water suppliers, power plants and other water-related businesses \$1 billion each year -- costs we all help pay.

Adult zebra mussels are filter feeders, and an infestation can dramatically disrupt a lake's food chain by removing plankton native fish rely on. Kansas Department of

Wildlife, Parks and Tourism biologists have documented decreases in body condition and abundance in several game fish species after zebra mussel infestations. Zebra mussel feeding habits may also increase the potential for blue-green algae blooms, which can be toxic to humans and animals.

Dense colonies of zebra mussels make wading and swimming along shorelines dangerous because of their sharp shells. When zebra mussels die, the odor and shell fragments that wash up make any shoreline activities unpleasant.

With these latest discoveries, Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism will increase local outreach efforts through signage and information materials in an attempt to educate lake users about the dangers of spreading zebra mussels. All lake users are asked to help stop the spread of zebra mussels to another water body.

All anglers and boaters must remember three simple rules: CLEAN, DRAIN, and DRY. Inspect your vessel for zebra mussels before you leave the boat ramp area. (Zebra mussels are on the prohibited species list, which means they can't be possessed alive.)

Having a live zebra mussel attached to your boat is a violation. Drain all water from the boat's livewell, baitwell and sump area (Drain any bait buckets, as well -- never pour live bait into the lake, dispose of it on land.) Dry the boat and trailer for at least five days before putting them in another lake, or wash the boat and trailer with 140-degree water.



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