

Aquatic invaders a threat to Oregon's waterways

It may be difficult to believe that a mussel the size of a nickel, or a crab no larger than the palm of your hand could devastate entire bodies of water or obliterate native Oregon species, but they can – and they are.

In Oregon, New Zealand mud snails and aquatic weeds such as Eurasian milfoil are some of the primary culprits. These destructive invaders are turning up in lakes, rivers and bays and wreaking havoc on the state's treasured waters. In nearby states such as California, Nevada and Arizona quagga and zebra mussels are already squeezing out native plant and aquatic life and costing millions of dollars in maintenance and restoration efforts. These non-native invaders clog water intake pipes, pumps and underwater screens at water treatment plants; build up on and damage docks, buoys and beaches; destroy boat engines; and harm wildlife by degrading native ecosystems and eating their food.

One of the most serious threats not yet known to occur in Oregon is an aggressive aquatic plant called hydrilla. This destructive invader can completely clog waterbodies, create poor habitat for fish, smother wildlife and alter water quality by raising pH, decreasing oxygen and increasing temperature – and it's already living in neighboring states including California, Idaho and Washington.

Whether plant or aquatic animal, these invasive species have common characteristics: they were transported into the region via cargo vessel, recreational boat or by other human activity, and have the ability to devastate our water bodies, degrade water quality and destroy fish and plant life.

The Oregon State Marine Board advocates that boaters must play a critical role in halting the spread of aquatic invaders. Boats provide the perfect ride for aquatic hitchhikers, and just one boat launched into a lake or river with an invasive aquatic species aboard could infest an entire water body. Boaters can protect our treas-

ured waterways simply by cleaning and decontaminating their watercraft after use in any water body.

"An informed public and an active effort to prevent new introductions of invasive species is extremely important," said Glenn Dolphin, Clean Marina Coordinator of the Oregon State Marine Board. "Infestations will not only hurt our native wildlife but will also compromise the usability of water bodies and take millions of dollars to combat."

The quagga mussel, for example, was brought to the Great Lakes from the Caspian Sea during the 1980s in the ballast water of a cargo ship. It has since multiplied out of control in East Coast states, and recently hitched a ride on an unwashed boat to Lake Mead in Nevada. As a result of this 2,000-mile journey to Lake Mead, the mussel is harming local fish hatcheries, causing damage to boat engines and threatening the operation of the Hoover Dam by clogging water intakes and turbines.

"Oregon has many precious natural resources, its water bodies being among the most utilized and treasured in the state," said Glenn Dolphin. "The plants and animals of Oregon's waters have evolved over time into a complex but delicate relationship with each other and their environment. Introducing harmful non-native species into Oregon waters can upset the balance of the ecosystem, hurting the environment and jeopardizing all of the things that make our waterways special."

The Oregon State Marine Board is urging boaters, fishermen and other recreation enthusiasts to take precautions

Power of the People

By W. Marc Farmer, General Manager, West Oregon Electric Cooperative



WOEC Annual Meeting Set

The date, place and time have been set for the 65th Annual Meeting for West Oregon Electric Cooperative. Registration will begin at 10:00 a.m. with the business meeting starting at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, August 22nd. The business meeting, followed by the BBQ luncheon at noon will once again be held at the Scout Cabin in Hawkins Park. There will be door prizes and free goodies and you must be present to win. For those planning on attending, you will need to RSVP when you receive your annual meeting packets in the mail. Included in the packet is information regarding the meeting, RSVP information for the luncheon so we can prepare enough food for all attending, and your official mail-in ballot to vote for the Board of Directors positions open for election this year.

Speaking of Board of Director elections, this year there are three Board positions that will be determined by a vote of the membership. District #1 will have incumbent Director Bernard Bird running along with Brian Baker, District #4 has Joe Riley running unopposed, and District #6 has incumbent Director Dixie London being opposed by Jonelle Stroup. Board members are voted on by all of the membership, not just by District, so it is very important for all to take the

time to cast their vote for those Board candidates they wish to represent them for the next three years. Please take the time to fill out the ballot and mail it back or drop it by the office. If you are planning to attend, please call the office at 503-429-3021 or email sarahr@westoregon.org to RSVP the number of people attending so that we can make adequate preparations for food.

As a member-owned electric utility, this is your chance to be an active part of the Co-op through your vote for representation on the Board of Directors and by attending the meeting to hear reports on the financial status, operations, and management of your cooperative. This is your chance to ask questions and participate. We welcome the opportunity to interact with our members and make sure your questions and input are heard and we've responded.

At this year's meeting, Board President Robert VanNatta will give an update on the Oregon State Legislative Session and the Federal Legislation so far and how they are or will impact West Oregon. I will be presenting an update on the results of the last FEMA event this winter from the snow storms, current events, and the rate increase in our wholesale power rate from Bonneville Power Administration and its impact on our rates here at WOEC. Darlene McLeod, Manager of Administration & Finance, will provide a financial report for 2008 and bring you current on our financials so far in 2009. Steve Scott, Engineering/Operations Manager will update us on WOEC projects. It will be an informative meeting with a delicious lunch and great door prizes. We'd love to see you there for our 65th Annual Meeting.

and help prevent the proliferation of these species. Thoroughly cleaning boats, trailers and equipment after being in any water body is extremely important. Boaters are also urged to immediately report suspected infestations at 1-866-IN-VADER.

"Boaters may think this is a small problem, but it's far from it," said Glenn Dolphin. "We need boaters to take this issue seriously and help combat what has the potential to become a dire situation for native wildlife, as well as for all of the people

who enjoy Oregon's scenic water bodies."

For more information about the Oregon State Marine Board's clean boating program

and the nuisance species affecting Oregon, visit www.boatoregon.com/OSMB/clean/ANS.shtml

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