

## **North Platte River Wyoming Fly Casters Memorial Public Access Area, including Jessica's Pond Closure**

Effective immediately until further notice, the North Platte River Wyoming Fly Casters Memorial Public Access Area, including Jessica's Pond, will be closed for construction. This Public Access Area is located just outside of Casper along the North Platte River at the Dan Speas Fish Hatchery. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department is protecting the Dan Speas Fish Hatchery from possible contamination from an aquatic invasive species, New Zealand Mudsnails, currently found in the North Platte River.

### **Why are we closing the Public Access Area, including Jessica's Pond?**

- New Zealand Mudsnails (NZMS) have been found in the North Platte River near Jessica's Pond outlet. NZMS are *not* zebra or quagga mussels that have been recently identified in marimo moss balls sold in some pet stores across the state.
- The Wyoming Game and Fish Department will conduct construction to protect the Dan Speas Fish Hatchery from potential exposure to this invasive species.

### **What are New Zealand Mudsnails?**

- NZMS are an invasive aquatic snail designated as an invasive species in Wyoming and throughout the United States. Originally from New Zealand, they were accidentally introduced to the United States in 1987 and have since spread to most western states.
- NZMS compete with native invertebrates for food and habitat and can negatively impact fish populations, vegetation, and other native biota.
- They reproduce asexually, so a single NZMS can result in a colony of 40 million snails in just one year!
- These tiny water snails are about the size of a grain of rice and can live out of water for days.
- Currently, populations in Wyoming occur in Yellowstone National Park (Madison, Firehole, Gibbon, Gardner rivers, Nez Perce Creek), Grand Teton National Park (Polecat Creek and the Snake River), Lake Cameahwait (Bass Lake) and in the Bighorn, North Platte, Salt, Shoshone, and Snake rivers.
- You can find more information on NZMS [here](#).

### **What is the problem?**

- NZMS can easily be transported by anglers and other recreationists from the infested area of the North Platte River into Jessica's Pond by attaching to equipment like waders, boot soles, nets, floatable devices, and even between the pads of a dog's foot.
- Currently, water leaving the Dan Speas Fish Hatchery flows into Jessica's Pond, which places the facility at a high risk of infection. Construction will quickly address this threat to protect the hatchery from potential exposure to this invasive species.
- The Dan Speas Fish Hatchery is the largest producer of trout for stocking in Wyoming. If NZMS make their way into the hatchery, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department

would have to undergo a very complicated and expensive eradication process to rid the facility of the snails. The ability to stock trout throughout the state would be drastically reduced until eradication was complete.

### **What is the solution?**

- The Wyoming Game and Fish Department will *temporarily* close the North Platte River Wyoming Fly Casters Memorial Public Access Area, including Jessica's Pond and parking.
- Construction will increase the height/distance of the existing hatchery effluent structure and lower the water level of Jessica's Pond channel, creating a freefall drop between the two, which would prevent NZMS from moving upstream. The engineering design for this project has just begun, and construction is expected to start later in 2021.
- The Wyoming Game and Fish Department wants to remind all water users to Clean, Drain, and Dry all equipment while recreating in Wyoming's waters. More information about aquatic invasive species can be found online.

### **How long will these areas be closed?**

- The total closure will be in effect until construction is completed in the spring of 2022.

For more information contact the Dan Speas Fish Hatchery at 307-473-8890.