

Using muscle to prevent zebra mussels

James Cramer has been a summer resident of Glen Arbor his entire life. Every year, the 16-year-old seasonal resident takes advantage of the opportunity to spend three months along the shores of Glen Lake, living with his grandparents, Ed and Elaine Ricker. This summer, he's been active in keeping those shores pristine for future generations.

Cramer was hired by the Glen Lake Association as a boat checker at the lake's only public boat launch on Day Forest Rd. He and three other staffers work all day to prevent the spread of invasive species into the waters of Little and Big Glen Lake.

"My job is to stop incoming boats, find out where they were last and how long ago the boat was in the water. If it was within the last two weeks, I offer to powerwash the outside of the boat and trailer," Cramer said, "I also check live wells or other holding tanks to be sure there aren't any invasive species."

The program is voluntary, so boaters aren't required to participate, but that's not an issue for the visitors to the launch.

"I've had a couple people that were weary of the service, but once I explained our purpose, they were happy to participate," he said. "They don't want to spread the problem either."



Clockwise from left: Zebra mussels, the round goby and eurasian watermilfoil are just a few of the invasive plants and animals that can harm the balance of a lake.



The program was created several years ago by the Glen Lake Association as a response to the growing threat of invasive species. This proactive approach to protecting their watershed is just one part of the program the association has put together to inform property owners and visitors and prevent major damage to the health of Glen Lake.

Ed Ricker, a member of the association, explains the reason the association decided to take action: "We wanted to keep our two lakes free of zebra mussels, if at all possible. Zebra mussels eat plankton, destroying food for fish and creating clearer water. This plankton-free water allows sun to pen-

etrate the bottom, which increases the growth of weeds. This would dramatically change the lake's ecosystem."

To prevent such a problem, the association decided to fund the boat-washing program with association dues. Members also put together an information packet for people living in the Glen Lake watershed, as well as a manual for waterfront property owners to help them understand the responsibility that comes with owning water frontage.

The association also recently implemented a monitoring program for water quality and invasive species, which is supported by a strong volun-




Above, James Cramer serves as one of three boat-checkers during the summer at the public boat launch on Day Forest Rd. on Little Glen Lake. His goal is to stop the spread of zebra mussels and other invasives through a boat and trailer washing program.

teer effort from members of the association — something Ricker feels is his obligation.

"We live on one the world's most pristine lakes. It's our job to keep it that way."

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