

Enhanced Mussel Watch Phase 1: Eastern Great Lakes



Ed delivers a rock with zebra mussels to the boat crew, Oswego, NY.

Monday, September 21, 2009

-Kristina Lauenstein

After packaging and shipping three days worth of samples, we drive to Oswego where there are two sites, one an old mussel watch site the other an EPA AoC site being added this year. With the water likely to get rougher in the afternoon, we go out to the mussel watch site out in the lake. At 40 meters deep, the anchor isn't holding us in place and after two semi-successful grabs of sediment we can't seem to get any more. Going to shallower water, at only 30 meters deep, we still are unable to find sediment after several grabs. With past years of data at this site, and no hope of success collecting samples for chemistry, we regretfully head back to the harbor.

Years of experience gathering mussels have taught Ed and Gunnar where to look when establishing a new site. We dredge for zebra mussels along a breakwater and at 1.5 knots, Gunnar can feel the many "bites". After two tows we have a large enough sample.

The dredge came up free of sediment after both tows so we must move a short distance to find our benthos and chemistry samples. Mike points out a spot not far away along the breakwater that should not have been greatly affected by harbor dredging. The water is only a few meters deep and we work quickly. With our sediment samples on ice, we go back out onto the open water and stop near shore where Ed and Gunnar suit up to jump in the water. It is clear enough to see the bottom 4 meters down. Ed and Gunnar bring up large rocks, some as large as footballs, handing them off to Kristina and Mike who then pull off the mussels and throw the rocks back in on the other side of the boat. The work goes smoothly and before 5 p.m. we are back on land. It is only after concluding the day's work that we realize how exhausted we are.