

Dam Repairs, Mussels & Mud – April 9, 2023



During the time Lake Accotink dam is undergoing repairs, the water level has been lowered by 2 – 3 feet. The flashboards atop the spillway are being replaced and no water is currently passing over the spillway. Instead, water is flowing through the sluice gate at the base of the dam.



Accumulated organic debris is now above water in the marina



Mysterious structure emerges from the deep



Extensive new mudflats are now exposed.



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Previously filled channel is now dry.



Extensive new mudflats are now exposed.



After a couple weeks in the sun,
new life is emerging from the mud.

MUSSELS:

A brief exploration of the mudflats around the lake offered the unexpected surprise of about six dozen freshwater mussel shells. Some had clearly died in the draining event. Others may have died years before. While this is a very low population level, it is still more than the almost nonexistent numbers that had seemed to be present.

Is it a healthy population level? No.
Is the population viable? Maybe.
Much lower than numbers should be? Definitely.





All but two of the mussel shells found were of the species Paper pondshell (*Utterbakia imbecillis*), a Midwestern native introduced to our area. The mussel in the middle is a possible locally native Eastern Elliptio (*Eliptio complanata*). The mussel on the right is another local native, the Eastern floater (*Pyganodon cataracta*).



Paper pondshell mussels



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Paper pondshell mussels

Nearly all the shells were found along the north shore of the lake, for reasons that are not clear. We may speculate that the north side, being away from the main flow of Accotink Creek, offers greater protection from the surges of sediment known to bury mussels in the creek itself.



The low numbers of mussel shells were far outnumbered by shells of the invasive Asiatic clam (*corbicula fluminea*)



Shells of the invasive Chinese mystery snail (*Cipangopaludina chinensis*) seemed to be less common than was once the case.