

Virginia to eradicate zebra mussels

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Virginia officials say they will attempt a first -- killing all zebra mussels from a large, open body of water.

A contractor hired by the state was to begin pumping chemicals into a Northern Virginia quarry Tuesday to kill the mussels.

The zebra mussel, a native of Eastern Europe, can clog industrial water-intake pipes, soil beaches and drive out native shellfish, the Richmond (Va.) Times-Dispatch reported.

The quarry covers 12 acres and its lake is 93 feet deep, the newspaper said, noting Virginia's first and only zebra-mussel invasion was discovered in the quarry in August 2002.

The contractor will be paid \$365,069 to pump nearly 300,000 pounds of potassium chloride into the lake. Officials said no one has ever eradicated the mussels from a large body of water.

Zebra mussels were discovered in the Great Lakes area in 1988, since spreading rapidly in that region and in the Mississippi River basin.

Scientists believe the mussels got into the Great Lakes from ballast water dumped by ships from Europe. It has not been determined how the mussels got into the Virginia quarry.

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