

WDFW NEWS RELEASE

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Arrest warrant issued in zebra mussel case

OLYMPIA - An arrest warrant has been issued for a commercial trucker from Michigan charged with transporting invasive zebra mussels into Washington state aboard a 50-foot cabin cruiser.

David Derderian, 44, of Fraser, Michigan, was charged in Kittitas County Lower District Court last November with unlawful transportation of a deleterious exotic species and making false statements to law enforcement officers.

The court issued a warrant for Derderian's arrest when he failed to appear for his arraignment Jan. 13, said Michael Boska, deputy prosecutor for Kittitas County.

"We appreciate the court's help on this case," said Bruce Bjork, chief of enforcement for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), which sought the initial charges against Derderian. "We need to do everything we can to keep zebra mussels and other invasive species out of this state."

Zebra mussels are small, freshwater mollusks that can quickly infest lakes and rivers, threatening native fish species and public water systems, Bjork said. Since the 1980s, when zebra mussels entered the Great Lakes in ships' ballast water, they have spread to more than 20 states, including Michigan.

The invasive mussels often spread by attaching themselves to boats and trailers. Washington state law prohibits the transportation of aquatic invasive species on boats or trailers and allows state authorities to stop them for inspection.

The charges against Derderian stem from the delivery of a Sea Ray cabin cruiser from Lake Michigan to Washington. Derderian was hauling the boat when he was stopped Nov. 14 by the Washington State Patrol at the Cle Elum truck scale on Interstate 90.

State Patrol commercial vehicle officers found zebra mussels on the boat and alerted WDFW, which has special equipment to decontaminate boats carrying zebra mussels. But Derderian left with the boat and continued to Blaine before the WDFW officers could arrive at the scene, according to the department's report.

Bjork said WDFW officers later intercepted Derderian in Blaine and stopped him from launching the boat. Based on Derderian's statements and actions, they then asked the Kittitas County Prosecutor's Office to press charges.

WDFW has also referred the case to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service for consideration of federal charges for interstate transport of the invasive mussels, which would be a violation of the Lacey Act.

"We are pressing for federal charges in this case," Bjork said. "It's essential that we have people's cooperation in our efforts to keep zebra mussels and other invasive species out of Washington. Besides the risks to fish and shellfish, these invaders have already cost industry, government and private citizens billions of dollars in damage to water and hydropower facilities in this country."

For information on zebra mussels, see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/enforcement/> on WDFW's website. To report zebra mussel sightings, call 1(877) WDFW-AIS.