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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

INVASIVE NEW ZEALAND MUD SNAIL FOUND IN FOUR MILE CREEK IN GRAND TRAVERSE COUNTY

Traverse City, MI; July 20, 2023 – Invasive New Zealand mudsnails have been detected in the main branch of Four Mile Creek, a tributary to Mitchell Creek in Grand Traverse County. The invasive snails were discovered during The Watershed Center’s spring Adopt-A-Stream monitoring and were confirmed by Oakland University and Trout Unlimited in June.

“Our Adopt-A-Stream volunteers have been monitoring tributaries of Mitchell Creek for years but had not detected the New Zealand mudsnail at any of these sites until this June,” said Heather Smith, Grand Traverse **BAYKEEPER**® with The Watershed Center. “We are now working with state agencies and local organizations to provide educational information about the impact and spread of the mudsnails, including placing signage at major access points along Mitchell Creek and its tributaries.”

The New Zealand mudsnail, one of the most wide-spread aquatic invasive species in the world, invaded North America in 1987. The invasive mudsnail was first discovered in a Michigan inland waterway in the Pere Marquette River in 2015 and has since spread to six other river systems in the state – the Au Sable, Boardman, Upper Manistee, and Pine rivers and Shanty and Four Mile creeks.

The New Zealand mudsnail is considered invasive due to the environmental harm it can cause to river, stream, and lake ecosystems. The mudsnail competes with native macroinvertebrate populations for resources, potentially altering the composition and abundance of native macroinvertebrate communities and food sources. Additionally, because the shell of the mudsnail cannot be digested, they provide no nutrition for fishes that ingest them, which can lead to smaller fish sizes and poor fish health. New Zealand mudsnails can also alter nutrient cycling within aquatic systems.

The New Zealand mudsnail reproduces by cloning (a single snail can start an entire population) and have few natural predators so once introduced into a waterbody their populations can grow rapidly. Populations of over 100,000 mudsnails per square meter have been documented both around the world and in the United States.

The invasive mudsnail is easily spread by recreational activities such as boating and fishing. “Mudsnails are small (1/8-inch long) and inconspicuous and can therefore easily be transported on waders, nets, or boat hulls if not cleaned of mud or debris properly,” said Lucas Nathan with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Division. “Everyone visiting a river needs



to thoroughly clean their equipment after each use and before entering another waterbody to prevent introducing New Zealand mudsnails into new waters.”

To prevent the spread of New Zealand mudsnails and other invasive species, always Clean, Drain, and Dry all gear and equipment, taking extra precaution in areas known to have mudsnail infestations. The [New Zealand Mud Snail Collaborative](#) provides demonstrations of cleaning techniques, as well as more information about the invasive mudsnail.

State agencies, universities, and collaborative networks are conducting research aimed at better understanding the impacts of the New Zealand mudsnail in the Great Lakes region. Additionally, volunteers across Michigan, including those in The Watershed Center’s [Adopt-A-Stream](#) program, conduct regular monitoring of streams through the [Michigan Clean Water Corps](#) to determine stream health and keep an eye out for invasives.

Additional information on the invasive mudsnail, including how to identify and report a suspected discovery, can be found at michigan.gov/invasives and the [Midwest Invasive Species Information Network](#).

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About The Watershed Center Grand Traverse Bay

The Watershed Center is a non-profit organization that advocates for clean water in Grand Traverse Bay and acts to protect and preserve its watershed. The Watershed Center blends scientific and policy expertise with education, advocacy, collaboration, and solution-oriented actions to serve as a multi-faceted resource for the community. Learn more at gtbay.org.