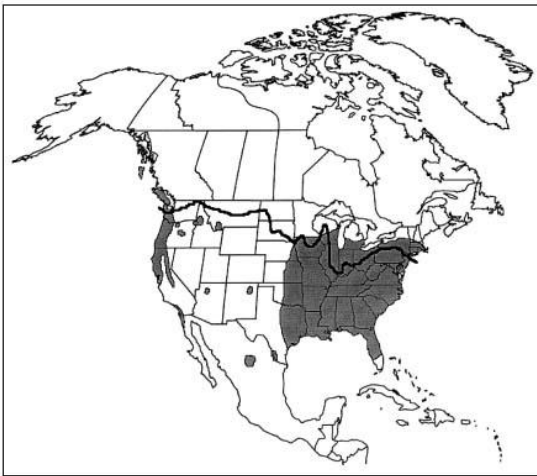


## Human Impacts on the Spread of Earthworms

On their own, earthworms can move at a rate of only about 17 meters per year. At this rate it would be impossible for earthworms to have spread into the areas of Alberta where they are now found. This suggests that something else must be helping them spread throughout the province faster.

Erin Cameron and Erin Bayne's research has shown that earthworms are more likely to be found near roads than in forest interiors. Earthworms are also more commonly found near boat launches when on the opposite side of the lake they aren't found at all. This evidence leads researchers to believe that humans are likely responsible for the earthworm invasion in the northern boreal forest.



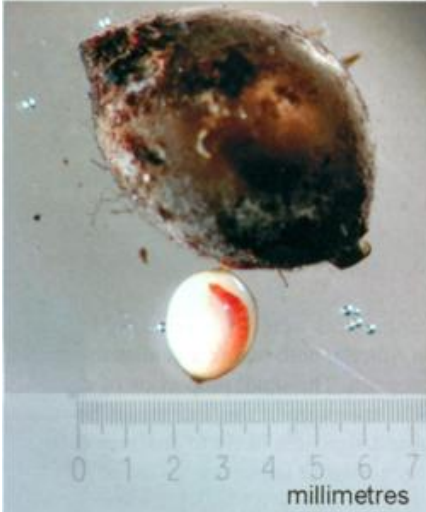
This map shows the native range of earthworms in North America.

Image from:  
<http://maerzlab.uga.edu/research/non-native-species-invasions.html>

This belief is further supported by the fact that earthworms are not normally present at roads shortly after their construction but they become more common as roads are used. This suggests that earthworms are being brought into the northern Alberta forests by vehicles rather than by construction.

Adapted From: Cameron, E. , Boyce, M. (2013) Don't dump your worms! Earthworms are trashing our forests. *Alberta Outdoorsmen*, Volume 15 (2), 16-18.

Last Updated: Nov 13, 2013



An example of an earthworm cocoon. These cocoons are small, can easily get stuck into the mud on vehicles, and can be carried great distances by cars.

Image from: Cameron, E. , Boyce, M. (2013) Don't dump your worms! Earthworms are trashing our forests. *Alberta Outdoorsmen*, Volume 15 (2), 16-18.

### Reflections

1. If earthworms can only move very slowly, how are they moving quickly into remote forests in Alberta?

2. In what ways can we reduce or eliminate the transport of earthworms into northern Alberta?

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