

## Brookes: Can dogs really sniff out quagga mussels?

Contributed by John Brookes  
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Last year an untrained junior Environmental Protection Agency political staffer got away with red-lining a report, originally drafted by scientists in his own agency and focused on development of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

The draft report looked at economic and environmental problems associated with well drilling, including pipeline and road construction, river diversions, deforestation, large scale infrastructure changes, interruption of historical wildlife migration patterns and other elements. It was comprehensive in nature and was well-based on the engineering, biology, and geology of the North Slope.

The subsequent red-lined report was the product of one individual, or maybe several in concert, certainly not acting alone but assuredly acting at the behest of those entrepreneurs from our economy whose interests lie in oil well drilling and the many ancillary side-lines this produces.

Taking this story to my point, the political arm of the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG), masquerading as scientists, have, entirely without scientific justification, put forth a whole "New Detection and Enforcement Arm," the "quagga-sniffing dogs."

In an effort to trigger a response from somebody (ANYBODY!) from the scientific community in Lake County, I have, as someone with a doctorate in aquatic biology, offered arguments against "quagga-sniffing" dogs, both through the mail, in person before the Board of Supervisors and face-to-face with citizens who I'd hoped would distinguish between the fallacy, "Gee, wouldn't it be neat if my dog (cross-trained in smelling bear-gall bladder and cadavers) could sniff out quagga mussels?"

Does that "cross-training" suggest the "real" reason that cops (DFG wardens, by the way, are cops, with guns on their hips, a badge on their chest and the rule of law as their umbrella) would also pretend quagga detection, and push this, in order to pull in that miscreant with one too many abalone? Do your cynical best and think about it.

Any of you good folks who'd wish to challenge me on the duplicity of the "quagga sniffers" (and sure, toss in the Willits training if you'd like, and the frozen mussels, and their "latent vapors," or any parts of this cockamamie fiction and I'll be pleased to respond.

In the same way the EPA subordinate caved in to his political superiors, a local DFG warden saw her future unfolding before her: "... The route to my guard dog [the real reason] is through quaggas, and nobody knows any better." This officer brags about California being "cutting edge" in the quagga detection dog industry. Does she, or do any of you, really believe that she was the first and only "investigator" to flash on any animal with a better sense of smell than, say, guinea pigs to toss into the lake or drop into the bait tank, and get the "Ah, ha, quaggas!" sign?

So politics being what it is, the DFG lieutenant warden got her silver bars a dog, and so much media bulk that unless there's just a huge up-cry from the media and the scientific community the lieutenant will just keep plugging onward and upward until she's a major.

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