

Hajik: Clearing up information on quagga, zebra mussels

Contributed by Steven Hajik
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In response to the recent article submitted by the Lake County Public Works Department concerning the quagga and zebra mussels, there were several inaccuracies and expectations that need to be addressed.

Although The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) assigned these quagga and zebra invasive mussels an "A" rating, however, it doesn't change the current roles of the CDFA and the Lake County Agricultural Commissioner (LCAC) concerning these pests. The rating simply recognizes that these two mussels are harmful invasive species. The rating is merely a policy statement; it carries no legal authority to take action. It signifies that an organism is of known economic importance that is not yet known to be established permanently in the state. Because neither species is a direct pest to agriculture, regulatory or other action does not fall under our jurisdictions.

Prohibition of the entry into the state of quagga and zebra mussels is authorized under the California Fish and Game Code and both species are named as prohibited species in its Fish and Game regulations. Accordingly, the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) Department has been, and continues to be, the lead enforcement agency concerning the quagga and zebra mussels.

The CDFA collaborates with the DFA by enforcing its regulations by inspecting incoming boats at its border protection stations and taking action if either mussel is found to be present still needs to be granted authority by Fish and Game to enforce any regulations beyond the current inspections they perform at the borders. The LCAC would do the same if either mussel was found during its regular inspection activities.

According to Fish and Game regulations, the CDFA will continue to inspect watercraft coming into California at the border stations to prevent infested watercraft from entering the state, and the LCAC will continue to assist Lake County Public Works in issuing boat stickers to resident and non-resident boat owners.

An "A" rating signifies an organism of known economic importance which requires serious enforcement action, but it requires no legal action by state and/or local government to establish a quarantine. Under California regulations, Lake County cannot establish a countywide quarantine regardless of the presence of an "A" rated organism.

Fish and Game DFG will continue to monitor the Quagga and zebra mussel situation's progress and will determine, if and when, it would be necessary for a state and/or local action is needed quarantine to be imposed.

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