

# County of Santa Clara

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Boat Inspections to Begin at Four Santa Clara County Reservoirs Starting May 23** *County Seeks 50/50 Cost Sharing with Santa Clara Valley Water District*

SAN JOSE, CA—Today, the County of Santa Clara Board of Supervisors approved a vessel inspection program to re-open four reservoirs to recreational boating on May 23. The Board approved the program on the basis of sharing the \$560,000 program costs equally with the Santa Clara Valley Water District. The County will use Parks Department funds to cover program costs through July 27, 2008. The Water District's willingness to share in program costs will make the decision if inspections, and recreational boating, continue after July 27, 2008.

Boating at all 10 county reservoirs was suspended by the Santa Clara Valley Water District on May 13 in response to the emerging threat of infestation from Quagga and Zebra mussels. While mussels have not been sighted in Santa Clara County, the vessel inspection program will address introduction of mussel infestation by boating in reservoirs. Mussel infestation in reservoirs can occur through multiple avenues including boating and water importation.

"This is a delicate balancing act between protecting our water system and ensuring recreational boating activities continue on our waterways," said Supervisor Don Gage, Chair of the Board's Housing Land Use, Environment and Transportation Committee. "Inspections for Quagga/Zebra mussels may be a long term reality for county reservoirs and the Water District should share the cost."

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Santa Clara County Parks provides recreational services at the reservoirs under a lease from the Water District and will implement the inspection program seven days a week, from 8 a.m. to a ½ hour before sunset, at three power boating reservoirs including Anderson, Calero and Coyote and one non-power boating reservoir at Stevens Creek. All other reservoirs will remain closed under the District's moratorium.

The inspection program calls for all vessels to undergo inspection prior to launching. Boats connected to trailers will have the option to be banded. The tamper-resistant band goes between the boat and the trailer. If the band is intact when the vessel returns to a Santa Clara County reservoir it will be allowed to launch without an additional inspection. If the band has been broken or tampered with the vessel will be required to undergo another inspection prior to launching and pay an additional inspection fee. Once a vessel has left the water for that day a band will be attached to the vessel between the winch hook of the trailer and the eyebolt of the bow of the boat. If this band is broken upon reentry into the reservoir, that vessel will have to be re-inspected before entering county reservoirs and an inspection fee will be collected.

Out of state boaters as well as any boat registered in San Benito County and all counties south of the Tehachapi Mountains will be banned from Santa Clara County reservoirs. Any boat registered in Santa Clara County that has been recently launched in infected waters will be quarantined and re-inspected.

"The Board's decisive action to implement the inspection program for Memorial Day weekend clearly shows they understand and support the importance of recreational boating in our community," said Jim O'Connor, Deputy Director of the Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Department.

The program is expected to cost approximately \$560,000 for the period from May 23, 2008 to December 31, 2008. The County continues to seek costs for this program from the Santa Clara Valley Water District. The Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Department will implement a \$7 fee per inspection with the option to purchase a \$35 annual inspection pass to help offset the cost of the program.

Quagga and Zebra mussels are known to be very invasive and destructive. The mussels attach themselves to boats and can spread from one body of water to another. They can clog water pipes, boat piers, and ruin boat motors. Typically they are the same size as a fingernail, and can grow up to about two inches long. Quagga mussels inhabit fresh water at depths from 4 to 180 feet (most commonly 6-12 feet) and prefer hard surfaces.

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Quagga/Zebra mussels can colonize on hulls, engines and steering components of boats, other recreational equipment, and if left unchecked, can damage boat motors and restrict cooling. They also attach to aquatic plants, and submerged sediment and surfaces such as piers, pilings, water intakes, and fish screens. In doing so, they can clog water intake structures hampering the flow of water.

### What Residents and Visitors Can Do

County residents and visitors can do their part to prevent the spread of Quagga and Zebra mussels by inspecting their water vessels, including powerboats, kayaks, canoes and jet skis. When leaving water:

- Inspect all exposed surfaces - small mussels feel like sandpaper to the touch
- Wash the hull of each watercraft thoroughly
- Remove all plants and animal material
- Drain all water and dry all areas
- Drain and dry the lower outboard unit
- Clean and dry all live-wells
- Empty and dry any buckets
- Dispose of all bait in the trash
- Wait five days and keep watercraft dry between launches into different fresh waters.

Please visit [www.parkhere.org](http://www.parkhere.org) for further information about boating reservations and more information on Quagga/Zebra mussels.

For information on the boat inspection program contact the Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Department. Water quality questions should be directed to the Santa Clara Valley Water District at 408-265-2607 ext. 2237

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