

County of Santa Clara

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County Executive Calls for Immediate Inspection of Boats Using Santa Clara County Reservoirs

Kutras Urges Inspections Instead of Ban on Boating

SAN JOSE, CA—Today, County Executive Pete Kutras called for immediate inspection of boats that use Santa Clara County reservoirs in light of the threat of possible damage from Quagga and Zebra mussels. This call follows several months of discussion between the County and the Santa Clara Valley Water District to identify the threat to Santa Clara County reservoirs and develop protocols for an inspection program. The County is prepared to implement the inspection program by May 23, 2008.

Quagga and Zebra mussels are known to be very invasive and destructive. U.S. Congressional researchers estimated that an infestation of the Zebra mussel in the Great Lakes area cost the power industry \$3.1 billion in the 1993 -1999 period, with an economic impact on industries, businesses, and communities of more than \$5 billion. The first population of Zebra mussels was found in California waters in January. In California, spread of the mussels threatens water delivery systems, hydroelectric facilities, agriculture, recreational boating and fishing, and the environment in general.

"We agree with the Santa Clara Valley Water District now that these mussels have been found in California," said County Executive Pete Kutras. "We need to take immediate steps to ensure that they do not reach our local reservoirs where they could do insurmountable damage."

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Quagga and Zebra 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.

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.

"The appropriate move to address the spread of Quagga and Zebra mussels is to immediately begin inspecting all boats launching in local reservoirs, and to continue permitting active recreation," said Kutras. "The water district has ample funds to pay for the cost of an inspection program that will not disrupt recreational boating for county residents, especially since we are proposing a small fee to help defray the cost. It is not necessary to ban recreational boating," he continued referring to one of the alternatives under consideration by the Santa Clara Valley Water District.

County Proposal

- 7 days a week vessel inspection program at power boating reservoirs - Anderson Lake, Calero Reservoir, Coyote Lake
- Non-power boating reservoirs will be closed with the exception of Stevens Creek Reservoir
- Program will run May - October 15, 8 a.m. to sunset
- Vessel inspections will be available at all power boating reservoirs - Anderson Lake, Calero Reservoir, Coyote Lake
- \$7 per vessel per inspection
- All vessels will go through an initial inspection. Once the 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 the water and an inspection fee will be collected
- Out of state boaters will be banned from Santa Clara County reservoirs
- Any boat registered in San Benito County and all counties south of the Tehachapi Mountains will be banned
- Any boat registered in Santa Clara County but has been in infected waters will be quarantined.

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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 for further information about boating reservations and more information on Quagga/Zebra mussels.

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