



State of California – Natural Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
South Coast Region
3883 Ruffin Road
San Diego, CA 92123
(858) 467-4201
www.wildlife.ca.gov

EDMUND G. BROWN JR., Governor
CHARLTON H. BONHAM, Director



December 29, 2014

Mr. E. Michael Solomon, General Manager
United Water Conservation District
106 N 8th Street
Santa Paula, California 93060

Subject: Request for Dreissenid Mussel Containment and Santa Clara River Protection from Dreissenid Mussels

Dear Mr. Solomon:

California faces unprecedented challenges resulting from the introduction and establishment of quagga mussels, *Dreissena rostriformis bugensis*, and zebra mussels, *Dreissena polymorpha* (mussels). As you know, left unchecked, these mussels pose a significant threat to the infrastructure and environment of the state.

Quagga mussels were discovered in Lake Mead in January 2007 and subsequently downstream in the Colorado River system and the Colorado River Aqueduct. Quagga mussels currently occur in more than two dozen reservoirs in Southern California. Once established, these mussels can impede water distribution systems, impact recreational opportunities, and threaten native species throughout the state.

In order to protect California's water supply and wildlife resources, the Legislature enacted Fish and Game Code Section 2301 (FGC §2301) in an effort to halt the spread of mussels. This law requires public or private agencies that operate a water-supply system infested with mussels to prepare and implement a response plan that specifies how the mussels will be controlled or eradicated within the infested waterbody.

An infestation of adult quagga mussels was confirmed in the Lake Piru Recreation Area in December 2013, and then subsequently confirmed in Lower Piru Creek, which is a tributary to the Santa Clara River in Ventura County. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) understands that water releases into Lower Piru Creek occur year round for steelhead restoration purposes, and are required per the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) hydropower license. While we understand the need for these releases, we feel that the threat posed by Quagga mussels is far more serious, and their spread into the Santa Clara River would have far greater impacts on the State's wildlife resources.

In order to meet the requirements of Fish and Game Code section 2301, the Department requests that United Water Conservation District investigate the option of temporarily curtailing the release of water from Lake Piru into Lower Piru Creek while evaluating options to control and contain or even eradicate mussels from Lake Piru in order to prevent the spread of quagga mussels into the Santa Clara River and the habitat it provides for endangered and sensitive species.

To date, operators of mussel-infested waterbodies have taken measures to ensure they contain mussels and not cause infestations downstream of their water system. We encourage you to work cooperatively with other agencies and the Department to ensure containment within Lake Piru.

Eloise Tavares is the Department's Regional Quagga/Zebra Mussel Scientist in your area and is available to provide guidance and information as you explore options.

We are aware of the initial steps United Water Conservation District has taken to investigate control options and want to take this opportunity to thank you and your District for your progress. Additionally, the Department has received the draft Quagga Mussel Monitoring and Control Plan dated October 2014 and it is currently under review.

For questions regarding this letter please contact John O'Brien, supervisor for the Region's Inland Fisheries Program at (562)342-7152 or by email at john.obrien@wildlife.ca.gov, and for questions regarding our review process for your draft plan, please contact Eloise at (562) 342-7155 or by email at Eloise.Tavares@wildlife.ca.gov.

Sincerely,



Edmund Pert
Regional Manager
South Coast Region

ec: California Department of Fish & Wildlife
Martha Volkoff, Habitat Conservation Planning Branch
Jennifer LaBay, Habitat Conservation Planning Branch
Terri Stewart, South Coast Region
John O'Brien, South Coast Region
Mary Larson, South Coast Region
Eloise Tavares, South Coast Region