

Media Advisory

**The Pacific Northwest Economic Region,
Northwest Power and Conservation Council, and
Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission
Present:**

***"Preventing an Invasion:
Building a Regional Defense against
Quagga and Zebra Mussels"***

**Wednesday, May 15, 2013, 8:00 am - 5:00 pm
Heathman Lodge | Vancouver, WA**



This Bureau of Reclamation photo shows a mussel-fouled water intake at Parker Dam, which impounds Lake Havasu on the border of California and Arizona.



Quagga mussels on the rudder of a vessel.



A mussel-fouled beach at El Dorado Reservoir in Kansas, northeast of Wichita.

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- Quagga and zebra mussels are the most economically damaging aquatic organisms to invade the United States.
- According to the [Quagga/Zebra Mussel Action Plan](#) (February 2010) prepared by a consortium of state and federal agencies in the West: *Without increased and immediate action, quagga and zebra mussels will cause irreparable ecological damage to western waters, and long-term costs will be in the billions.*
- The Vancouver conference (register [here](#)) will explore the far-ranging economic implications of quagga and zebra mussel infestations and develop an action plan for protecting Northwest waterways. Presentations will address vulnerability assessments for hydropower dams and municipal water systems, rapid-response planning, funding for regional prevention programs, and the devastating effects of invasive mussels on the Great Lakes.
- Mussel infestation is a significant concern for states and dam operators in the Northwest. The Independent Economic Advisory Board of the Northwest

Power and Conservation Council estimated in a [report](#) that the potential cost of controlling an infestation and cleaning hydropower and fish-passage facilities if the mussels take hold here would easily be in the tens of millions of dollars per year -- and hundreds of millions in total costs to fish and wildlife, habitat, irrigation facilities, water supply infrastructure, waterfront property, recreation facilities, hydropower dams and other places and structures that have contact with infested water.

- Portland State University graduate student Brian Adair, working with Dr. Mark Sytsma, studied the potential for a quagga mussel invasion in the Columbia River. Adair told the Power Council at a meeting in February: *We found that 68 percent of the mussels raised in untreated Columbia River water gained weight -- they grew. This does not bode well for the Columbia.*
- Quagga and zebra mussels were introduced to the United States in the Great Lakes in the late 1980s via ballast water discharges from ocean-going vessels. Since then, the mussels have spread throughout the central and Northeastern United States, and more recently to the Southwest, through a number of means, mainly as infested watercraft are moved among lakes and rivers.
- The dime-size mussels attach to boats and submerged structures, including dams and dock pilings, and form thick, hard mats of shells that can not only block water passage but also disrupt the environment by depleting nutrients for other species and ruining fish habitat. In the right conditions of water temperature and chemistry (in particular pH and calcium content), the mussels grow voraciously. They are transported from place to place primarily on infested watercraft.
- The 100th Meridian Initiative is working to halt the spread of aquatic nuisance species in the West, including zebra and quagga mussels, and has a website with more [background information](#).