

CACHUMA OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE BOARD

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January 23, 2008

Mr. Salud Carbajal, Chair
Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Re: Cachuma Reservoir – Quagga Mussel Danger

Dear Mr. Carbajal:

As I am sure you have been informed, the quagga mussel was discovered in Lake Mead on January 6, 2007, and has spread rapidly to the four western states. It has been found in more than a dozen locations in the state including the Colorado River Aqueduct, Lake Havasu, Lake Mojave, Lake Powell, Lake Matthews near Riverside, and has now moved into five reservoirs in San Diego County as well. In addition, the zebra mussel, a close relative of the quagga mussel, has just been discovered in a Hollister-area reservoir in San Benito County. Lake Wolford and Lake Cuyamaca have imposed a private boat ban until high-powered, heated sprayers can be installed. At Lake Poway, officials have banned float tubes, private motors, anchors and live-bait containers. The rate of reproduction and growth of the quagga mussels is the most experts have ever seen, due to warmer temperatures, abundant food supply, and calcium available in these waters. This has resulted in a speed of growth so great that they are now a direct threat to Santa Barbara County. Therefore, a rapid, emergency response plan must be developed and put in place utilizing all available preventative measures before infestation occurs at Lake Cachuma.

Quagga mussels and their free-floating larvae spread to waters from fishing boats, motors, hull surfaces, bait tanks, and boat trailers. They “hitch hike,” on boats that have been in infested water bodies, and then enter a new water body when the boat is launched. The mussel’s ability to rapidly colonize on soft and hard surfaces clogs water intake and outlet structures, hampering the flow of water. The wet surfaces of all objects, such as pipes, valves, pumps, sensors, and other hydraulic devices can become completely incrustated with the mussels. And it is virtually impossible to eradicate them once they are established. If they do enter the Lake, they will severely impact all of the Cachuma Project physical facilities, including the Bradbury Dam radial gates, intake and outlet structures to the mainstem Santa Ynez River and Hilton Creek, Tecolote Tunnel, valving and piping at the north and south portals, the South Coast Conduit all the way to the Corona del Mar and Cater Water

*Carpinteria Valley Water District
City of Santa Barbara
Goleta Water District
Montecito Water District*

*Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District, Improvement District #1
General Manager/Secretary of the Board, Kathleen A. Rees*

Treatment Plants, and the water treatment plants themselves. In addition, once in the Lake, quagga mussels could enter the State Water Pipeline through the Bradbury Dam outlet works, which in turn could impact each State Water turnout on the Santa Ynez River.

The quagga and zebra mussels have caused an estimated \$100 million a year in damages in the eastern United States and Canada. The Metropolitan Water District has already spent nearly \$10 million over 18 months on mussel control measures. If Lake Cachuma becomes infested, it will cost hundreds of thousands of dollars annually to remove the mussels and maintain the water delivery system that provides this vital resource to some 300,000 residents on the South Coast and in the Santa Ynez Valley, as well as thousands of visitors to Santa Barbara County.

They disrupt the natural food chain because as filter feeders, they remove food and nutrients from the water column, effectively depleting the food supply for other aquatic species, including endangered steelhead and bass. They eat so much phytoplankton that the water turns clear allowing sunlight to increase algal growth, which can cause taste and odor problems in drinking water supplies.

Therefore, prevention is critical. This threat is from the recreational use of boats on Lake Cachuma. The County of Santa Barbara, as the operator of the recreational facility, is responsible for ensuring that Lake Cachuma is managed for its primary purpose - to provide a safe and adequate water supply to the customers of the Cachuma Project Member Units. Recreational activities, such as fishing, are secondary benefits. We, therefore, request that the County take all available steps to protect this valuable resource.

COMB's General Manager, Kate Rees, and General Counsel, Bill Hair, met with County Park staff and Reclamation staff on January 11, 2008 to discuss this issue, and it was a very useful and informative meeting. However, neither the Parks Director nor anyone from the Chief Executive Office, although invited, attended the meeting. Ms Rees indicated that she understood that County Park personnel have been carrying out regular inspections of the Lake, and have not yet discovered the presence of quagga mussels. However, once they are discovered, it will be too late. The Parks Department has been pro-active in initiating several important preventative measures, such as boater education handouts and signage at the main gate, mandatory inspections of all private boats as they enter the Park, and having boat owners sign affidavits regarding where their boats have been. However, it is our belief that inspections, no matter how thorough, are not sufficient to prevent an infestation, as the mussel can be imported in the larval stage which cannot be detected by a visual inspection.

Additional measures are apparently being considered by the County but are not yet in place. Until those measures are implemented, COMB requests that Lake Cachuma be temporarily closed to all boats that are not a part of the current rental fleet, and prevent any other object that might contain mussels or their larvae from entering the Lake. This is not an action that can be "phased in," but must be done immediately. This is a serious and critical emergency, and needs to be recognized as such.

We realize that banning private boats will impact revenues for the Park and will be a hardship for the fishing and boating public who use Lake Cachuma. However, it will cost the County far more to perpetually maintain Cachuma Project facilities if the Lake becomes infected. Therefore, we strongly urge you to issue a restriction on private boating *for a minimum of six months*, but ultimately as long as it takes, to get all available protective measures in place, including, at minimum, the following:

1. Carry out thorough and adequate inspections of all boats entering the County Park.
2. Obtain signed affidavits from boat owners as they enter the Park that their boat is clean and dry, and that it has not been in infected waters.
3. Establish a decontamination protocol that boat owners must follow for boats and other recreational equipment.
4. Purchase and install high-powered, heated, sprayers and decontamination stations, and require that all boats with ANY potential for harboring quagga mussels or vellegers be decontaminated prior to entering the Lake.
5. Continue regular inspections of the Lake, boating facilities, and Cachuma Project facilities and equipment. Expand the current inspections of the Lake to include diving inspections and plankton tows.
6. Make operational the boat registration tracking system being developed by the Department of Fish and Game for all boats. Turn away all boats that have been in infected waters unless owner can demonstrate the boat has been in dry dock for a minimum of 10 days.
7. Develop an exit inspection program
8. Revise public information handouts to inform the public that all of these measures will be strictly enforced.

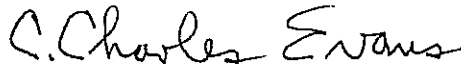
In addition, we believe the County should consider providing dry-dock storage space within the Park for local boat owners, and also additional private boat dock space that could be rented by interested boat owners.

Please be advised that COMB and its Member Units (City of Santa Barbara; Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District, Improvement District No. 1; and the Goleta,

Montecito, and Carpinteria Valley Water Districts) will hold the County of Santa Barbara responsible for removal of any quagga mussel infestation, all resulting damages to Cachuma Project facilities, Cater Treatment Plant, Corona del Mar Treatment Plant, or State Water conveyance facilities, and all ensuing maintenance to those facilities that might result if the quagga mussel infests Lake Cachuma.

We will gladly work with Reclamation and the County Parks Department to develop viable emergency measures. The financial burden for implementation of these measures rests with the County of Santa Barbara.

Sincerely,



C. Charles Evans
President of the Board

cc: Michael Jackson, South Central California Area Manager, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
Daniel Hernandez, Santa Barbara County Parks Director
William Brennan, Central Coast Water Authority
Cachuma Project Member Units

kr.comb/quagga/County ltr_012208