



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Department Name: Community Services
Department No.: 057
For Agenda Of: April 15, 2014
Placement: Administrative
Estimated Tme: N/A
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from: N/A
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Department Herman D. Parker, Community Services Director (805) 568-2467
Director:
Contact Info: Paddy Langlands, Deputy Director of Parks (805) 568-2475
SUBJECT: Revisions to the Cachuma Lake Recreation Area Mandatory Vessel Inspection Program and Boat Launch Protocol; Third Supervisorial District.

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: N/A

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Approve revisions to the current Mandatory Vessel Inspection Program and Boat Launch Protocol to require a 30-day quarantine for all trailered vessels prior to entering the Cachuma Lake Recreation Area (Attachment 1);
- b) Authorize the Director of the Community Services Department to make minor revisions to the Mandatory Vessel Inspection Program and Boat Launch Protocol pursuant to Santa Barbara County Code section 26-87 in the interest of preventing the infestation of Quagga and Zebra Mussel and other aquatic invasive species at Cachuma Lake, expanding or reducing the hours of visual inspection, limiting the use of bait, and expanding the types of vessels that are subject to quarantine; and
- c) Determine that the approval of the revisions to the Mandatory Vessel Inspection Program and Boat Launch Protocol is for the protection of the environment and does not involve construction activities or relaxation of standards and is therefore exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15307 (Actions by Regulatory Agencies for the Protection of Natural Resources) and 15308 (Actions by Regulatory Agencies for the Protection of the Environment) and approve the filing of a Notice of Exemption on those bases (Attachment 2).

Summary Text:

The County of Santa Barbara Community Services Department Parks Division has been conducting Aquatic Invasive Species inspections on vessels being launched at Cachuma Lake since 2008. To date, staff has no indications that Cachuma Lake has been exposed to Quagga or Zebra Mussels, and early detection monitoring has detected no mussels. In December 2013, the operator at Lake Piru in Ventura County notified the State of California Department of Fish and Wildlife that Quagga Mussels appeared to be present in Lake Piru. Further testing and evaluation have proven that the mussels are present in Lake Piru. This is a significant finding because it is the first lake infected by the Quagga Mussel that is not fed by the Colorado River system. As a result, it is necessary for the County of Santa Barbara Parks Division to re-evaluate and strengthen the County of Santa Barbara's inspection and quarantine protocols. With approval of this item, the Parks Division will require 30 day quarantine on all trailered vessels entering Cachuma Lake, which is an extension of the current 14 day quarantine period.

Background:

Quagga and Zebra Mussels (Mussels) are non-native aquatic nuisance species originating in Eastern Europe freshwaters. They clog waterways, undermine healthy lake ecosystems, and create costly maintenance for water resource agencies. Mussels are believed to have been introduced into the Great Lakes region in 1988 through ballast water emptied from ships, and they spread throughout the Midwest and the eastern portion of the United States. Quagga Mussels were first discovered in the Colorado River system in January 2007 and have recently been found in 25 Southern California water bodies connected to the Colorado River via aqueducts and canals. Zebra Mussels were discovered in San Justo Reservoir in San Benito County in January 2008. Mussels spread primarily by two methods: (1) Adult mussels that have adhered to surfaces, such as a boat hull, and are introduced to a water body or system, or; (2) Microscopic larval forms, known as "veliger's", that live in the water column and could survive in water carried by recreational boats in bilges, live wells, and other areas where water could pool and remain, and are transported into a water body or system. The spread of the Quagga Mussel in California is becoming a significant concern due to the economic impacts associated with their introduction and proliferation. Quagga Mussels cause the greatest economic and ecosystem damage when they infest pipes, pumps, or other components of municipal and industrial water supply systems or power plant cooling systems.

On March 25, 2008, the Board approved the initial Quagga Mussel Inspection Program, and on February 10, 2009, further changes were approved.

In December 2013, the County was notified by the operator at Lake Piru (located 65 miles from Santa Barbara) that Quagga Mussels had been discovered there. It is believed that the most likely cause of the Quagga Mussel introduction into Lake Piru was via a vessel coming from an infected lake but the exact cause has not been determined. After confirmation that Lake Piru was infected, the County of Santa Barbara Parks Division reviewed existing protocols and after discussions with members of the Cachuma Operation and Maintenance Board (COMB) and the Santa Barbara County Water Agency, an immediate, temporary, more stringent protocol was put in place while the situation could be assessed. This change was to place all boats except those tagged with County of Santa Barbara tags in a 14 day quarantine period. Kayaks and canoes are still allowed immediately after passing a full inspection and power wash. Over the past several weeks, since December 2013, there has been a flurry of activity and revisions of protocols by lake operators at local lakes regarding Quagga inspections.

Since March 2008, the County Parks Division has had in place stringent protocols regarding inspections, testing and tagging of boats prior to the boat entering Cachuma Lake. The Department's procedures for inspecting and tagging boats will remain in place; however, the quarantine period is recommended to be extended from the current 14 days to the recommended 30 days, and will apply to all trailered vessels, local and non-local, that do not have the Santa Barbara County tag already in place.

The primary objective is to ensure that Cachuma Lake is kept free of Mussels and all other aquatic invasive species. With more stringent quarantine protocols the Lake can continue supporting boating recreation. The protocols are described in Attachment 1. The difference between the existing protocol and what is recommended is the existing 14 day quarantine on all trailered boats would be increased to 30 day quarantine. All other protocols remain the same. Vessels tagged with County of Santa Barbara tags will be allowed to return without enduring a quarantine period (unless the tag has been broken). A longer quarantine period will provide additional protections against the invasive species.

Staff has contacted neighboring agencies to gather information on quarantine protocols that they may have in place regarding the Mussels. Lake Casitas in the County of Ventura requires 35 day quarantine. Lake Lopez, which is located in San Luis Obispo County, requires 30 day quarantine for boats coming from infected lakes. Recent research (Choi, Gerstenberger, McMahon and Wong 2013) indicates that veliger's (larval stage of mollusks) can survive in 5-gallon water tanks for up to 27 days, depending on water temperature and on geographic location in the United States. This lends justification to quarantine of 30 days, and inspection failure of vessels with areas that cannot be inspected.

It is important to note that extending the quarantine period from 14 to 30 days may have a negative impact on park visitation and revenues. It also has the potential to have a negative impact on the annual Trout Derby, which is the major fundraising event for the non-profit Neal Taylor Nature Center located within the Cachuma Lake Recreation Area. Extending the quarantine period may result in boater and park visitors seeking other opportunities for boating. To mitigate this inconvenience, the Community Services Department Parks Division will be implementing inspection/tagging stations at the Waller Park and South County Operations offices on a monthly basis by appointment only. This will allow boaters to have their vessels inspected and tagged, starting the 30 day quarantine period without having to travel to the lake, potentially saving the boaters time and money. Inspections at the lake will still be done without appointment from 7.00am to 3.00pm.

There are a number of evolving issues being discussed and pursued relating to the Quagga and Zebra Mussel program in California. Some of these are the desire to have the State of California Department of Fish and Wildlife more involved in the use of AB-2443 Quagga fee disbursement funds and establishing a shared data base for registered boats showing which lakes have been visited.

CEQA:

The approval of revisions to the current Mandatory Vessel Inspection Program and Boat Launch Protocol is for the protection of the environment and does not involve construction activities or relaxation of standards and is therefore exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15307 (Actions by Regulatory Agencies for the Protection of Natural Resources and 15308 (Actions by Regulatory Agencies for the Protection of the Environment).

Risk:

Failure to implement the extended inspection program could result in the introduction of the Quagga or Zebra Mussel. In turn, this may result in increased maintenance costs for supplying water to the water districts dependent on the Lake, namely Goleta Water, Montecito Water, Carpinteria Water and Santa Barbara Water Districts. In addition, the Lake ecosystem would be negatively impacted.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

The annual number of boat launches per year is approximately 7,000, and based on record keeping of boats that are already tagged, it is anticipated that launches will decrease to 4,900 with the introduction of the revised inspection program. This will reduce revenue due to the loss of launch fees, park entrance fees and camping fees.

Special Instructions:

After Board action, please distribute as follows:

1. Minute Order - Paddy Langlands, Community Services Department

Attachments:

Attachment 1 - New 2014 Mandatory Vessel Inspection Program and Boat Launch Protocol

Attachment 2 - CEQA Notice of Exemption