



NWP NACIMIENTO WATER PROJECT
San Luis Obispo County Flood Control & Water Conservation District



DON'T MOVE A MUSSEL



Lakes Nacimiento and San Antonio face a serious threat – mussels. Here are basic guidelines on what's at risk, what's planned for 2010, and what you can do to keep area lakes mussel-free.

What's the Big Deal?

“Dreissenid mussels”, such as quagga and zebra mussels, are not native to the U.S.A. They first infected the Great Lakes in 1988, then in 2007 made their way across the continental divide into Lake Mead. In the past three years, quagga mussels have been found in reservoirs in Nevada, Arizona, and Southern California.

So far, more than 15 recreational waterways in California have been closed or restricted due to the threat of mussels.

Quagga and zebra mussels do damage on several fronts. First, they compete with native species for food; taking out the bottom link in the food chain. Next, they permanently alter water chemistry thereby impairing normal algae growth. Moreover, they reproduce at incredible rates (40,000 eggs/reproductive cycle; 1 million/spawning season).



Mussels start out life so small that you would need a microscope to see them. As they grow, they cluster and clog boat hulls, propellers, engines, cooling systems; can cover piers, pilings; clog water pipes and intakes; ultimately coat water's edge with sharp, smelly shells.

And they are robust. Mussels can live out of water for 3-5 days in hot, dry conditions; and up to 30+ days in humid conditions. This is why boaters are encouraged to follow the **CLEAN, DRAIN, DRY** approach to prevention.

What would happen if Lake Nacimiento or San Antonio got infected?

The lake ecosystem may never be the same. There is no known means of eradication. In other words, once mussels get a foothold, there is no known way to get them out of our lakes. The balance of fish and other species in the lake would be noticeably impacted. Clumps and clusters of mussels would develop and carcasses would accumulate on the shore.

We would have to declare ourselves an infected water body, a deterrent to boating and a negative impact on the local economy. Boats based on an infected lake would no longer be welcome on other lakes seeking to remain mussel-free.

How can we keep the lakes mussel-free?

Keeping infected boats out is the key; identifying infected boats is the challenge.

Like many lakes in the Western U.S.A., an inspection program is planned to keep high-risk vessels out. 2010 will be the first year of such a program for Lake Nacimiento. Our emphasis for the 2010 boating season is:



- Educate boaters, especially by promoting the CLEAN, DRAIN, DRY message
- Encourage every boater do a self-certification before launching
- Provide training for people interested in learning more
- Encourage your involvement

How are private launch ramps affected?

Lake Nacimiento is unique because of the 30+ ramps situated around the lake's rugged terrain. Private launch ramps such as Oak Shores, Heritage Ranch, Cal Shasta, Tri-Counties, Ranchos del Lago, Running Deer Ranch, South Shore Village, and others all enjoy a lake free of mussel infestation. Options to keep it that way range from inspecting boats as they approach the lakes along major roads and highways to monitoring boater traffic at each private ramp.

Inspection stations along approach roads offer efficiencies, but concerns about traffic management on holiday weekends and public costs to lease and equip such stations exist. For this initial year of mussel prevention efforts, the focus will be on a ramp-by-ramp basis.

Each private ramp will be asked to participate in the educational program such as sharing this document with your members, erecting signs, etc. You will also be asked to distribute self-check forms to all boaters and your guests, and ensure that boats meet the **CLEAN DRAIN DRY** standard.

What can I do?

Keep your boat **CLEAN, DRAIN, DRY** and off of infected lakes.

For more information, go to www.SLOCountyWater.org or call Carolyn Berg at (805) 781-5536 or Christine Halley at (661) 831-8782 x195 or Robin Dickerson at (661) 831 8782 x217.

