

Western Invasive Mussel Response

Issue: Zebra and quagga mussels have now spread to western waters. Species findings have occurred in the States of California, Arizona, Nevada, Utah and Colorado. Although governments at all levels are responding to the invasion, a more coordinated, strategic effort is needed.

Context: While Eastern and Great Lakes states have been dealing with this challenging invasive species issue for the better part of twenty years, this is a new threat to western waters. Additionally, both mussel species are behaving differently than they have in the East causing them to spread faster than expected. On top of this, powerful western political leaders in Washington are asking what the Federal government is doing to address this threat.

Challenges:

- Large western public lands presence
- Control of western waters (western water rights?)
- Multiple, overlapping federal and state jurisdictions
- Different levels of knowledge regarding the complexity of the issue
- Scarce public funding
- Insufficient knowledge of control options and ecological behavior of the mussels in western waters

Scope: There are expectations for the federal government to work with the States and put forth a unified and coordinated response to this challenging economic, environmental and resource management issue. And while various governmental coordinating bodies exist to assume this role (ANS Task Force, National Invasive Species Council), real world, on-the-ground solutions are what is required to address the various incursions in the five states and to prevent the continued spread to other western waters.

Recommendations: To get beyond the standard and time-consuming response of developing a species specific control plan and to account for the variable learning curves of the different stakeholders, the FWS and NOAA (two co-chairs of the ANSTF), under the auspices of the ANS Task Force, are considering an Action Planning process that is delivered through a series of geo-specific workshops. This will allow the various Federal agencies to convene with the appropriate state agencies, pool resources and define a unified course of action, ultimately providing a vehicle for the Western stakeholders to respond to the western mussel invasion in a more coordinated, strategic fashion. This strawman is offered up for your consideration and is intended for you to make recommendations to the ANS Task Force about how best to proceed in moving forward with a unified response from the federal government.

Next Steps:

- Discuss issue with ANSTF and develop recommendations on how to proceed?
- Share recommendations with DOI Mussel group?
- Work with rest of DOI to prepare a unified response to Feinstein letter?
- Working with the ANSTF, NISC, the States, the Regional Panel, the 100th Meridian Initiative, the DOI mussel group and other stakeholders, start to develop the Western Mussel Action Plan