

# Invasive aquatics not a priority with EDC supervisors

By Kathryn Reed

A crash course in invasive species was given to El Dorado County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday during their once a year meeting in South Lake Tahoe.

A number of non-native aquatic organisms already call Lake Tahoe home. Although this is not a good, what could be worse is if quagga or zebra mussels enter the water.



Quagga mussel

Last week a federal task force adopted a plan to deal with the invasives. Lake Tahoe is one of four entities in the country with an interstate plan to stop the mussels from migrating. This allows the area to receive federal money to help with inspection costs.

It would cost the Lake Tahoe Basin millions of dollars a year if these mussels ever reached the lake. This would be in lost property, damage to water treatment plants, and tourists not coming.

The California Department of Fish & Game's website says, "U.S. Congressional researchers estimated that an infestation of the Zebra mussel in the Great Lakes area cost the power industry \$3.1 billion in the 1993-1999 period, with

an economic impact to industries, businesses and communities of more than \$5 billion. California could spend hundreds of millions of dollars protecting the state's water system from a Quagga/Zebra infestation.

Eradication isn't possible " at least with today's science and technology.

Ted Thayer, wildlife program manager with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, explained what his agency has been doing to prevent the mussels from entering Lake Tahoe.

Board of Supervisors Chairman Ron Briggs sounded like he knew nothing of the mandatory inspection program that was in place for the entire 2009 boating season.

Supervisor Jim Sweeney got hung up on thinking the mussels had something to do with lake clarity.

Supervisors barely discussed an ordinance from Lake County that encompasses Clear Lake and if they would want to adopt something similar. There was talk by some supervisors that they have little interest in paying for prevention and enforcement.

"I'm not going to take a deputy off the street to fight mussels," Briggs said.

This was after Thayer explained some of the consequences that could occur if the mussels enter Lake Tahoe as well as what has happened to the Great Lakes and Lake Mead.

"You can't walk with your toes in the sand on the beach with razor sharp shells. The shells gum up engines of boats," Thayer told the five elected officials who were meeting at Lake Tahoe Airport.

Perhaps instead of having the Tahoe supervisor sit on the TRPA Governing Board, one of the other four should so more supervisors have a better understanding of what is going on at

the lake with aquatic species and other important subjects.

The TRPA website and DFG website have detailed information about the mussels.