

Quagga mussels altering fish stocking in Nevada

By Jeff DeLong, Reno Gazette-Journal

Nevada wildlife officials have finalized plans to plant more than 1.2 million trout across Nevada over the next two years – a program profoundly challenged by an invasion of exotic mussels at Lake Mead.

Closure of the Nevada Department of Wildlife's Lake Mead fish hatchery, forced in 2007 due to the discovery of quagga mussels there, forced the department to ramp up production at its Mason Valley hatchery in Yerington as well as depend on another federal hatchery in Arizona.

With the Arizona deal set to expire, the department will cease stocking Lake Mead with trout beginning next fall, said Doug Nielsen, a Las Vegas-based spokesman for NDOW.

Quagga mussels, which now number in the trillions in Lake Mead, have become a "very significant factor" in fish-stocking operations as officials seek to halt spread of the invading mollusks to other water bodies, Nielsen said.

"That's the key factor in the whole thing. We have to be able to guarantee we're not moving mussels somewhere else," Nielsen said.

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