

Quagga mussel laced barges stopped before polluting other lakes

By Rocky Barker, Idaho Statesman

An armada of 41 flexible barges infested with quagga mussels during construction work in Lake Mead were stopped by Idaho's boat inspection program.

The barges were heading back to Seattle after work on the new Las Vegas water intake tunnel was completed in Lake Mead. Mead has been infested with the quagga mussels that were carried by boat from the Great Lakes.

The mussels reproduce quickly and clog canals, hydroelectric dams, and other structures in the state's lakes and streams and vast network of waterways. They also take over the ecosystems reducing the number of game fish. State officials predicted an infestation here could cost \$91 million.

A week ago one of the barges showed up at an Idaho inspection station at the port of entry on Interstate 84 south of Burley. Idaho Department of Agriculture inspectors stopped the barge and found mussels. They contacted Washington and Nevada officials when they learned that 41 similar barges were heading toward Seattle.

All of the states jumped into action to find, inspect and decontaminate the barges, said Amy Ferriter ISDA invasive species coordinator. Inspectors stopped two barges last Wednesday on Highway 93 north of Jackpot that had been reinspected and decontaminated by Nevada.

"Our inspectors said they were spotless," Ferriter said

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