

Boat with quagga mussels stopped near Tahoe

By Lake Tahoe News

Quagga mussels were found on a boat wanting to launch at Lake Tahoe this month.

The boat was being inspected at the Alpine Meadows station May 14. California Department of Fish and Wildlife quarantined the boat for several days, and Tahoe Resource Conservation District staff performed multiple decontaminations to ensure all invasive species were removed before the boat was released to the owner.



Quagga mussels like these on a boat prop leaving Lake Mead are what scares water managers elsewhere.

Photo/TRPA

This is not the first time quagga mussels have been found at a Lake Tahoe area inspection station. In 2011 a boat with 37 mussels were discovered at the Spooner Summit station.

In 2016, there were 7,689 boat inspections, 2,689

decontaminations, with 39 boats intercepted. The last figure means a boat that had an aquatic invasive species. Eight of the 39 were mussel species.

A study done in 2015 by UNR and Desert Research Institute scientists proved that quagga mussels could survive and thrive in Lake Tahoe. To date, none has been found in Lake Tahoe or Fallen Leaf Lake.

Quagga mussels have caused billions of dollars in negative economic impact to waterways nationwide, including areas in Southern California and Lake Mead.

Once they enter a water body there is no way of eliminating the invasive species. They glom onto water in-take pipes, leave craggily shells behind and disrupt the ecosystem.

As part of increased prevention methods approved by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board this week, motorists towing boats in the Lake Tahoe Basin will be required to remove drain plugs from their watercraft after leaving the water. This is to help prevent the spread of existing aquatic invasive species within the lake.

Removal of drain plugs while traveling will assist boaters in arriving at boat inspection stations across the West clean, drained, and dry—an effective way to prevent the spread of invasive species.