



requirements for decontamination in (d) regardless of whether the department has adopted standards and procedures for decontamination pursuant to (c).

- 4) Requires that a conveyance, before launch into the waters of the state, be subject to decontamination if any of four specified conditions exist.
- 5) Provides that (a) if a person refuses to submit to decontamination of a conveyance or due to personal hardship is unable to immediately accompany the conveyance for decontamination, a law enforcement officer may detain or impound the conveyance until the decontamination is complete; (b) the owner of a conveyance that is decontaminated or detained due to failure to cooperate by the owner or person in possession of the conveyance is liable for all costs associated with the decontamination or impoundment, in accordance with applicable rules promulgated by CDFW; and (c) pursuant to existing law, CDFW and any other state agency exercising authority under specified sections of this bill are not liable to any person for any loss resulting from damage to conveyances as the result of inspection or decontamination, provided CDFW adhered to all rules promulgated by the department under this bill.
- 6) Allows CDFW to issue an inspection, decontamination, or quarantine certificate to the owner or person in possession of a conveyance that has been inspected pursuant to existing law, requires the certificate to reflect certain information, and specifies numerous requirements and authorities for CDFW related to inspection and decontamination certificates.
- 7) States the intent of the Legislature to subsequently amend this bill to identify and implement, to the extent feasible, alternative and equitable funding sources beyond fees imposed on the recreational boating community, such as assessments on commercial activities, including on international cargo shipping operations that may impact the introduction of aquatic invasive species to California waters.

#### **FISCAL EFFECT:**

- 1) CDFW will incur significant ongoing annual General Fund costs, possibly in the tens of millions of dollars, to decontaminate or order the decontamination of conveyances with invasive species, in accordance with requirements specified in the bill, and to establish standards and procedures for decontaminating conveyances and disposing of organisms and organic materials so that no viable invasive mussels remain on or in the conveyance before launch.

For its part, CDFW estimates General Fund costs of approximately \$68.5 million in fiscal year (FY) 2027-28 for 82 positions, vehicles, equipment, decontamination stations, and other one-time costs, followed by ongoing annual General Fund costs of about \$43 million for the 82 positions (one senior environmental scientist specialist, three environmental scientists, one analyst, one marketing specialist, two research scientists, 65 fish and wildlife technicians, and nine lieutenant specialists). CDFW contends these positions are needed to decontaminate every conveyance used in infested waterbodies and for related enforcement (particularly in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (Delta) and Southern California). CDFW notes it would need to lease, site, and install hot water dip tanks and high-pressure hot water decontamination stations at 65 sites around mussel-infested waters and maintain such equipment. Other tasks include conducting golden mussel research to inform management decisionmaking, enforcing invasive species regulations, supporting local agency prevention programs, deploying K9 scent teams for conveyance inspections, conducting outreach,

developing messaging and material tailored to niche user groups educating them on preventing the spread of mussels, providing local invasive mussel expertise to water managers and the public, providing technical assistance and training to water managers implementing watercraft inspection programs and encouraging their participation in the reciprocal program, implementing early detection monitoring for invasive mussels, quarantining conveyances, and other related tasks.

As part of the Governor's proposed FY 2026-27 budget, CDFW is requesting eight permanent positions to add invasive mussel containment capacity primarily to Central and Northern California to ensure conveyances leaving the Delta do not move golden mussels to un-infested waters statewide through complementary actions implemented by the department, the public, and federal, state, and local agencies. The administration intends to fund these positions for three years from \$20 million appropriated to CDFW in the 2025 Budget Act. It is not clear to the committee if any of these resources, if approved by the Legislature this year, may be used to implement some of the requirements of this bill.

- 2) The Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks), which oversees the Division of Boating and Waterways (DBW), estimates ongoing annual General Fund costs of \$30 million to support inspection and decontamination stations, associated staff, equipment, and materials for reservoirs operated or managed by State Parks. The department notes its estimate may evolve and is contingent on program standards and procedures to be determined by CDFW, as required by the bill.

While this bill puts CDFW in the lead, State Parks notes that as the operator or manager of 10 lakes and reservoirs, State Parks is responsible for invasive mussel inspection and prevention efforts, pursuant to the Fish and Game Code, which requires owners and managers of reservoirs to assess the vulnerability of the reservoir for the introduction of invasive mussel species and develop and implement a program (including public education, monitoring, and management of permitted recreational, boating, or fishing activities) designed to prevent the introduction of invasive mussel species. For this reason, State Parks expects to incur significant costs to implement the control measures outlined in the bill and to expand State Parks' current inspection and prevention efforts to additional lakes and reservoirs.

As discussed in the background, DBW administers an invasive mussel prevention grant program, which is currently being revised through emergency regulations to include golden mussel prevention; however, given the magnitude of the golden mussel infestation challenge and the associated costs, the invasive mussel fee is not a reliable funding source for agencies' workload and implementation costs.

The author may wish to more clearly define and delineate the roles and responsibilities of different state agencies, particularly CDFW and State Parks, to reduce costs and avoid duplication of efforts.

- 3) The State Water Resources Control Board and Department of Justice anticipate any costs to be minor and absorbable.

The Legislative Analyst's Office recently warned of General Fund structural deficits of around \$35 billion per year in the 2027-28 FY and ongoing.

**COMMENTS:**1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

[This bill] will use a long-term, stakeholder-driven framework to address both the rapid spread of invasive golden mussels and future aquatic invasive species, protecting California's environment, water infrastructure, recreation, and economy...While recent legislation has taken important first steps, California still lacks a coordinated, forward-looking strategy to manage this growing threat.

2) **Background.** According to CDFW, golden mussels are an invasive bivalve. Adult mussels form byssal threads that enable them to attach to surfaces and spawn multiple times each year, producing thousands of offspring. In October 2024, golden mussels were discovered in the Delta – the first known occurrence in North America. Since then, golden mussels have been detected throughout the Delta and the State Water Project (SWP).

Golden mussels have been linked to a loss of native and game fish, because they compete for the same food sources, and contribute to harmful fish-killing algal blooms. Recreational impacts include waterbody closures, mandatory inspections, increased boat launch or entry fees, and reduced numbers of fish and shellfish for consumption. Economic impacts include costly repairs and maintenance (boats, water infrastructure, hydroelectric facilities) and reduced water flow affecting food production, water delivery to homes, and flood control.

The most common way invasive mussels move between waterbodies is by hitchhiking on watercraft and equipment. According to CDFW, there are no socially and environmentally benign methods currently available to eliminate invasive mussels once they are present. Therefore, containing mussels within infested areas is the only means to minimize additional new, widespread impacts. While the spread of invasive mussels in interconnected waters cannot be prevented without restricting navigation, their overland spread, attached to and within watercraft and equipment, may be prevented.

Since the discovery of golden mussels in the state, CDFW has been coordinating with other agencies to survey the extent of infestation in the Delta, sample for golden mussels in waters statewide, and update existing outreach and educational material to include golden mussels. CDFW also formed an interagency Golden Mussel Task Force that developed a statewide Golden Mussel Response Framework in April 2025. This proposal to respond to golden mussels builds on the department's existing capacity within the Invasive Species Program's Quagga and Zebra Mussel Project, which works to contain and limit the spread of these invasive species in the state.

Under this project, motorized boats pay an infestation prevention fee (via a sticker issued by the Department of Motor Vehicles), and revenues from the fee are primarily used for grants distributed by DBW. The current sticker is collected every two years, and as of January 2026, the fee for the sticker is \$16 and expires at the same time as the vessel registration renewal sticker. To date, in FY 2025-26, CDFW has collected approximately \$2.5 million in fees, and DBW expects to award up to \$2 million in grants to eligible applicants in 2026.

Budget trailer language in 2025, among other things, extended the state's quagga and zebra mussel protections to golden mussels, expanded the current mussel sticker fee to include

golden mussels, and allowed the fee to increase from up to \$30 to up to \$42. To date, sticker fees have not been used for golden mussels; however, DBW is promulgating emergency regulations to comply with last year's budget trailer language – specifically to change the name of the current grant program to add golden mussels and to establish a technical advisory group to increase the sticker fee to enable a more robust response to the invasion of golden mussels. Currently, affected water agencies are required to submit golden mussel control plans to CDFW; agencies are in the process of completing these plans.

The author contends this bill creates a “platform for broad stakeholder engagement to develop durable, widely supported strategies to combat golden mussels and future aquatic invasive species.” The author notes the bill accomplishes this objective by establishing a statewide decontamination standard for waterborne vessels, developing a system of reciprocity that recognizes and honors certifications of decontamination for vessels and equipment moving between non-infested waterbodies, and identifying alternative funding sources beyond the recreational boating community.

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