ASSEMBLY THIRD READING
AB 1772 (Papan)
As Amended April 27, 2026
Majority vote

SUMMARY

Authorizes the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to decontaminate or order the decontamination of a conveyance found or reasonably believed to harbor aquatic invasive species and specifies other actions to help combat the spread of invasive golden mussels in the state.

Major Provisions

1) Extends the authority of the director of CDFW to require a conveyance be dried for not more than 30 days, before launching into waters of the state and allows the owner to retain possession of the conveyance during the drying period, subject to any requirements established by CDFW.

2) Authorizes CDFW to decontaminate or order the decontamination of a conveyance found or reasonably believed to harbor aquatic invasive species after an inspection conducted pursuant to existing law. Further, requires CDFW to establish standards and procedures for decontaminating conveyances and disposing of organisms and organic materials and requires specific outcomes of those standards and procedures.

3) Prohibits a conveyance from being launched into the waters of the state under specified conditions.

4) Permits a law enforcement officer to detain or impound the conveyance until the decontamination is complete and determines that the owner of a conveyance is liable for all costs associated with the decontamination or impoundment if the owner fails to cooperate.

5) Allows CDFW to issue an inspection, decontamination, or quarantine certificate to the owner or possessor of a conveyance that has been inspected and requires the certificate to reflect certain information and specifies numerous requirements and authorities for CDFW related to inspection and decontamination certificates.

COMMENTS

On October 17, 2024, Department of Water Resources staff discovered golden mussels in the Port of Stockton. Soon after the initial discovery, the golden mussel was quickly found at additional sites within the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (Delta). The golden mussel is a freshwater bivalve native to the rivers and creeks of China and Southeast Asia, but it has established itself outside of its native range in several countries. The discovery in Stockton was the first detection of the species in the United States. The Fish and Game Commission quickly took emergency action to add "*Limnoperna fortunei* (golden mussel)" to the list of restricted species (species that cannot be imported, transported, or possessed within the state, except by a restricted species permit). Since then, the golden mussel has been detected throughout the Delta and the State Water Project. The presence of the species poses a significant and immediate threat to the ecological health of the Delta and all waters of the state, water conveyance systems, infrastructure, and water quality.

Golden mussels have proven to be much more difficult for the state and water managers to control. Golden mussels have high reproductive rates and form dense colonies. This mass colonization of surfaces (termed "biofouling") blocks, impairs, and, in many cases, inhibits the functionality of manmade surfaces including underwater intakes, structures, and mechanisms. Biofouling also coats the hulls and external components of watercraft and recreational facilities, and natural objects such as rocks, fallen trees, even other sedentary bivalves. In addition, mass colonies of golden mussels alter ecological processes of the natural environment resulting in detrimental impacts to native and game species and water quality. Nearly every fresh and brackish waterbody in California is suitable for golden mussels. Indeed, the Water, Parks, and Wildlife Committee has heard of countless examples of the issues golden mussel infestation has been causing for water infrastructure and the recreational boating industry. Even the fear of infestation has resulted in water operators heavily restricting, or even prohibiting, water access for public recreation.

There are no socially and environmentally benign methods currently available to eliminate invasive mussels once they are present. Adult mussels can survive days, even weeks, when removed from water. Larval mussels can survive a week or longer in small volumes of water. Eradication from large, interconnected bodies of water is likely impossible. 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 (vessels), can be prevented. If a vessel carrying live invasive mussels is launched into an un-infested waterbody, it can result in a new mussel infestation. The risk that any given vessel poses for spreading invasive mussels is dependent on the type of conveyance, and the behavior of the boater. Depending on the type of watercraft and when it will be next launched, preventing the overland spread of mussels can be as simple as boaters draining water upon exit from a waterbody and allowing their watercraft to dry prior to their next launch, or a rigorous professional cleaning, which requires labor- and time-intensive hot-water, high-pressure washing, or weeks out of water, depending on the season, waiting for entrapped mussels to die.

When golden mussels were first discovered in the Delta, some water managers stood up inspection programs that imposed a variety of requirements before an individual could launch a vessel, including a minimum dry period of 30 days prior to launch. Watercraft that did not pass their inspection were turned away. Water managers that already had watercraft inspection programs in place continued to conduct inspections as they always had, while some increased the requirements for watercraft to launch (including mandatory decontamination if the prior launch was at that same waterbody). Access to reservoirs throughout the state is controlled by water managers, and the management of that access varies considerably across different waterbodies. As a result, public boating access has been significantly disrupted since October 2024, affecting recreational boaters and anglers, tourism, and local economies. To date, CDFW is aware of four watercraft intercepted by these programs with adult golden mussel attached.

The Western Regional Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species and partners have produced two primary guidance documents for managing vessel inspection and decontamination processes and standards. These are the Uniform Minimum Protocols and Standards for Inspection and Decontamination Programs for Dreissenid Mussels in the Western United States (UMPS) and Watercraft Inspection and Decontamination (WID) Manual. WID outlines science-based

prevention and containment protocols and procedures to reduce the risk of invasive mussels and other aquatic invasive species being introduced or spread in a system. WID is informed by UMPS, which uses best available science to establish a consistent, quality standard that the Western U.S. may adopt to reduce invasive species spread. For example, UMPS elucidates specifications for the most effective mussel decontamination from vessels, including the temperatures, duration, volume, and force of water necessary to decontaminate a vessel and trailer.

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. First detected in California in 2024, golden mussels are more adaptable than previous invasive mussels, enabling rapid spread and devastating impacts: clogging water systems, increasing infrastructure costs, disrupting recreation, and harming native ecosystems.

Arguments in Support
Several entities write in support of this bill. The National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) writes that "The discovery of golden mussel in California's Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta was a turning point for our state's water resources, natural ecosystems, and recreational boating communities. This destructive species can rapidly outcompete native mussels, clog water infrastructure, impair water quality, and ultimately lead to public agencies closing water access to boaters and non-motorized paddle craft. These closures have immediate consequences for local economies, outdoor recreation, and the hundreds of thousands of Californians whose livelihood relies on boating and fishing." Further NMMA writes in support of the stakeholder process the author is employing to "build the best framework to address this growing threat."

The California Tahoe Alliance (Alliance) supports the intent of this bill and notes that the introduction of invasive mussels, such as the golden mussel, could have devastating consequences on Lake Tahoe's famed clarity, delicate ecosystem, and $5 billion annual recreation and tourism-based economy. They share that a 2009 estimate by the Army Corps of Engineers indicated that invasive mussels could lead to annual losses of $22 million ($33 million in 2025 dollars) in the Lake Tahoe Region, impacting tourism, property values, and maintenance costs. The Alliance also indicates that the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency has implemented boat inspection procedures that prevented 72 boats with aquatic invasive species (including one boat with golden mussels) from entering Lake Tahoe in 2025 alone.

Several water agencies also write in support. Upper San Gabriel Municipal Water District summarizes their positions with "This commonsense legislation addresses the challenges facing recreational boating and water management communities in the prevention and decontamination of invasive mussels, while also identifying and implementing alternative and equitable funding sources."

Arguments in Opposition
None on file.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee, this bill has the following fiscal impact:

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 this 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 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 decision-making, 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 CDFW, 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 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. State Parks 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 ten 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.

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.

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.

VOTES

ASM WATER, PARKS, AND WILDLIFE: 12-0-1
YES: Papan, Jeff Gonzalez, Alanis, Alvarez, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bennett, Boerner, Caloza, Gallagher, Hart, Rogers
ABS, ABST OR NV: Celeste Rodriguez

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 15-0-0
YES: Wicks, Hoover, Aguiar-Curry, Calderon, Caloza, Dixon, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

UPDATED

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