
SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES AND WATER

Senator Josh Becker, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: AB 1894 **Hearing Date:** June 9, 2026
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Subject: Fish and wildlife: invasive mussels: imported water

SUMMARY

This bill would prevent a public agency from prohibiting imported water deliveries for groundwater replenishment due to invasive mussels unless there is substantial, documented evidence of a proven health and safety risk as a result of the invasive mussels.

BACKGROUND AND EXISTING LAW

Mussel mania.

Invasive mussel legislative history. Since 2007, California has been working to control and eradicate two species of invasive, freshwater mussels in state waters: quagga and zebra (dreissenid) mussels. In response to dreissenid mussel infestation, the Legislature has passed a series of bills that established the dreissenid mussels as restricted species and granted the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) with authorities to inspect, order treatment, and quarantine water vessels. As a restricted species, a person is prohibited from possessing, importing, shipping, transporting, or introducing the dreissenid mussels in any water within the state, unless authorized by CDFW through a restricted species permit.

Further, statute requires water managers to work with CDFW to develop measures to avoid infestation, as well as requires water managers to develop control plans to prevent the spread of the invasive mussels should the water system become infested with the mussels. The benefit of developing a control plan is that water managers enjoy liability protections from the unintentional transportation or introduction of dreissenid mussels to the water system once the control plan is approved by CDFW.

Several years later, the Legislature established the Quagga and Zebra Mussel Infestation Program. Under the program, an additional fee is charged to motorized boats in the state since motor boat recreation is thought to be the most likely cause of over-land aquatic invasive species spreading. Revenues from the fee are primarily used for grants distributed by the Division of Boating and Waterways (DBW), within the Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks). The next round of grants for the program are currently open, and DBW expects to distribute up to \$2 million dollars. The grants are available to entities that own or manage any aspect of water in a reservoir that is open for public recreation and is mussel-free. The funds must be used for prevention projects, such as planning, watercraft inspection stations and inspectors, launch monitors, watercraft decontamination units, educational signage, and outreach.

Until last year, statute and state programming was specific to quagga and zebra mussels. AB 149 (Committee on Budget, Chapter 106, Statutes of 2025) expanded the dreissenid mussel programs and authorities to include any invasive mussel, including the golden mussel.

Say hello to my little friend, the golden mussel. On October 17, 2024, Department of Water Resources (DWR) 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. 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. Environmental impacts of the golden mussel include loss of native and game fish through competition for food sources as well as a contribution to harmful algal blooms. It is estimated that a single mussel can filter up to a liter of water a day, which would remove critical nutrients and microbes that support ecosystem health. Recreation impacts of this mussel include waterbody closures, mandatory inspections, increased launch and/or entry fees, and reduced numbers of fish and shellfish for consumption. Economic impacts include costly repairs and maintenance (e.g., boats, water infrastructure, hydroelectric facilities), reduced water flow affecting food production, water delivery to homes, and flood control.

Don't move a mussel. 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 habitat for golden mussels.

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.

Invasive mussels control plan. Public and private agencies that operate a water supply system are required to cooperate with CDFW to implement measures to avoid infestation by invasive mussels and to control or eradicate any infestation that may occur in the system. If invasive mussels are detected, the operator of the water supply

system is required to prepare a plan, subject to CDFW approval, to control or eradicate invasive mussels in the system and eliminate or minimize any potential downstream transport of an invasive mussel. The plans are required to include methods for delineation of infestation; methods for control or eradication of adult mussels and decontamination of water containing larval mussels; a system monitoring program; and a requirement that the operator of the water supply system allows CDFW inspections as well as cooperates with CDFW to update or revise control or eradication measures in the plan to address scientific advancements.

One county's response. In 2025, the County of Los Angeles (County), fearing mussel infestation from imported water, prohibited water imports from infested waters. As a result, several agencies within the County have been unable to recharge groundwater with imported water from the State Water Project to replenish groundwater supplies. However, water agencies and communities throughout the county rely on a combination of imported and local water supplies, and some agencies, including Burbank Water and Power, are 100% reliant on imported water deliveries.

Los Angeles County Department of Public Works and Los Angeles County Flood Control District (LACFCD) own and operate spreading basins onto which the County spreads water, including stormwater. Imported water for groundwater replenishment is delivered through the flood control channels and diverted and spread at spreading grounds through agreements between water agencies and the County. At least two of the agreements between LACFCD and local agencies contain language granting LACFCD discretion to "allow, disallow, or restrict the spreading of imported water at the spreading grounds." The two agreements may be indicative of arrangements LACFCD has with other local agencies and also include the following provisions:

"[LACFCD] shall have full power and authority, at its sole and absolute discretion, to withdraw, modify, or revoke any permission granted in response to a written request when, in [LACFCD's] sole opinion, the spreading [...] cannot or should not be performed due to [LACFCD's] operational and/or maintenance concerns, problems, or difficulties."

"[LACFCD] reserves the right to prohibit or to terminate the spreading of imported water at any time, without prior notice, in connection with any emergency that may exist."

"[The entity conducting the spreading] shall be responsible for and shall fully compensate and reimburse [LACFCD] immediately upon request in connection with any damage to [LACFCD's] property or facilities caused directly or indirectly by the replenishment connection or any water flowing therefrom."

"[LACFCD] reserves the right to cease the spreading of supplemental water at any time [...] if, in the judgment of [LACFCD], such action shall be warranted by, and in connection with any emergency condition."

According to the author's office, the imported water deliveries of Burbank Water and Power were suspended on May 14, 2025, due to the presence of quagga mussels in the imported water system. Burbank Water and Power has an approved quagga control plan. The San Gabriel Valley agencies' imported water deliveries were suspended on September 24, 2025, due to County concerns about the infestation of Santa Fe Spreading Basins and San Gabriel Canyon Spreading Grounds with golden mussel.

These water agencies are in the process of finalizing their golden mussel control plans to submit to the CDFW.

Additionally, the San Gabriel Groundwater Basin went through a groundwater adjudication many decades ago and is governed by a court-mandated Physical Solution under the 1973 Main San Gabriel Judgment that expressly relies on the continued delivery of imported water to offset native overdraft and maintain basin sustainability. For the San Gabriel Groundwater Basin, imported water is not discretionary; it is a foundational element of the Physical Solution adopted by the Court to protect groundwater reliability, prevent further overdraft, and ensure long-term basin management.

According to the author, on March 24, 2026, the County claims to have “officially lifted its prohibition to allow for the gradual reintroduction of imported water to support groundwater recharge operations in the San Gabriel and San Fernando Valleys” with additional monitoring and interim safeguards. Sponsors of this measure indicate that while the moratorium has been lifted, no water deliveries have been approved. A pilot project for the Upper Canyon Spreading Basin in the San Gabriel Valley is pending control plan approval and water quality permits. For Burbank Water and Power, an invasive species control plan has been approved, but there is no set date for water deliveries to resume. There remains concern among water agencies regarding the timing of when spreading will be allowed, and work continues on Upper San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District’s control plan for deliveries to the greater San Gabriel Valley.

Existing law:

- 1) Until January 1, 2030, prohibits a person from possessing, importing, shipping, or transporting in the state, or placing, planting, or causing to be placed or planted in any water within the state, invasive mussels (Fish and Game Code (FGC) §2301(a)).
- 2) Requires a public or private agency that operates a water supply system to cooperate with CDFW to implement measures to avoid infestation by invasive mussels and to control or eradicate any infestation that may occur in a water supply system. Requires the operator of the water supply system, if invasive mussels are detected, and in cooperation with CDFW to prepare and implement a plan to control or eradicate invasive mussels within the system, and eliminate or minimize any potential downstream transport of an invasive mussel (FGC §2301(d)).
 - a) Requires all plans that do not specifically address invasive mussel species that are known to be present in bodies of water in the state as of January 1, 2026, to be updated or revised on or before September 30, 2027.
- 3) Requires any entity that discovers invasive mussels within the state to immediately report the discovery to CDFW (FGC §2301(e)).
- 4) Makes any person who violates the above provisions, violates any verbal or written order or regulation adopted pursuant to these provisions, or who resists, delays, obstructs, or interferes with the implementation of these provisions subject to an

administrative penalty (FGC §2301(f)).

- 5) Defines “invasive mussel” as any nonnative detrimental mussel species that is capable of spreading in freshwater and is listed in specific regulations adopted by the Fish and Game Commission (FGC §2303).

PROPOSED LAW

This bill would:

- 1) Prevent a public agency from prohibiting imported water deliveries for groundwater replenishment due to invasive mussels unless there is substantial, documented evidence of a proven health and safety risk as a result of the invasive mussels.
- 2) Define “imported water deliveries for groundwater replenishment” as deliveries of water imported from outside a region’s local watershed or natural boundary, primarily originating from the State Water Project, the Colorado River, or the Eastern Sierra, where the water is to be used for managed aquifer recharge, groundwater rejection, spreading, percolation, or other activities intended to replenish groundwater supplies.
- 3) Specify, for purposes of the bill, that water includes, but is not limited to, surface water conveyed by an aqueduct, canal, pipeline, or other conveyance.
- 4) Finds and declares that the bill addresses a matter of statewide concern and applies to all cities and counties, including charter cities and charter counties.

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT

According to the author, “[s]everal water agencies in Los Angeles County are being blocked from delivering imported water needed to replenish groundwater despite complying with state law and developing approved plans to address invasive mussels. These disruptions undermine the court-ordered management of the Main San Gabriel Groundwater Basin and threaten the primary drinking water source for more than 1.5 million residents, many in disadvantaged communities.

“AB 1894 ensures that critical water decisions affecting the entire state are made consistently at the state level and not through a patchwork of conflicting local rules. By aligning policy with science and existing law, this bill protects our water supply, supports emergency response needs, and upholds California’s commitment to the human right to water while prioritizing strategies to mitigate the threats of the invasive Golden Mussel.”

According to a coalition letter representing various water agencies, including the co-sponsors of the bill, AB 1894 would “establish clarification of the adherence of state law and regulatory guidelines when it comes to preventing, controlling, and eradicating of the newly immersed invasive golden mussel, along with other invasive species.” Additionally, “the interruption of the imported water delivers also threatens the 1973 Main San Gabriel Basin Groundwater Adjudication, which expressly relies on the continued delivery of imported water to offset overdraft and maintain sustainability.

Imported water deliveries are not discretionary for the Basin; it is a fundamental element of the groundwater adjudication's physical solution."

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION

According to the Valley Ag Water Coalition, writing in an opposed unless amended position, there are 4 main issues. First, "the bill usurps the authority of a groundwater recharge facility owner to protect its investment in design, permitting, and construction of the facility, and removes control of the facility from the owner by requiring it to accept the importation of water supplies from known infested bodies of water."

Second, the bill's "broad preemption of local authority could ultimately increase risks to water supply reliability by importing invasive mussels into an area that is not infested. ... AB 1894 would expose ... areas to infestation of golden mussels through the forced importation of State Water Project supplies from the north."

Third, "if invasive mussels are detected, the operator of the water supply system – not the entity importing the water – would be required to prepare and implement a plan to control or eradicate invasive mussels within the system AB 1894, in effect, shifts the burden from the entity creating the problem to the operator of the water supply system that [accepts the water]."

Finally, the coalition argues that "[golden mussels] are not directly known to pose a direct threat to human health, but they do create significant safety and infrastructure risks that can be indirectly affect public well-being. Therefore, the health and safety risk exception provided ... would be unlikely to ever apply."

COMMENTS

Recent author amendments. Recent author amendments limit the bill's application to imported water deliveries for groundwater replenishment *that are made in compliance with an approved invasive mussel control plan*. Specifically, unless there is a proven health and safety risk, a public agency would not be able to prohibit the importation of water for groundwater replenishment that is made in compliance with an CDFW-approved invasive mussel control plan.

Existing law requires all plans that do not specifically address all invasive mussel species known to be present in the state as of January 1, 2026 (which would include golden mussels) to be revised and updated by September 30, 2027. However, if this bill is enacted, it will take effect January 1, 2027, almost 9 months before the plans are required to be updated. It is unclear if all impacted water agencies would have an updated control plan submitted to CDFW by this time. Additionally, it is noted that, under existing law, CDFW is required to approve or provide comments to any revised plan within 180 days of the plan's submission. If an updated plan is not submitted to CDFW until September 30, 2027, and CDFW has an additional 180 days to respond to the plan, this would add to the potential gap between when the bill takes effect and when imported water deliveries in compliance with a control plan could take advantage of the bill's safeguard against local restriction. However, the gap may be appropriate to ensure adequate control plans are in place and being implemented given the serious consequences that would result from the infestation of invasive mussels.

But, what if? Despite adherence to a CDFW-approved invasive mussel control plan, it is still possible that invasive mussels can make their way to groundwater recharge facilities. Such instances are typically governed by the contractual agreement between the delivering and receiving entities. For example, in LAFCD's agreement, "[the entity conducting the spreading] shall be responsible for and shall fully compensate and reimburse [LACFCD] immediately upon request in connection with any damage to [LACFCD's] property or facilities caused directly or indirectly by the replenishment connection or any water flowing therefrom." Thus, if water imported from the SWP were to contain invasive mussels that damaged the facility, the San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District would be responsible for mitigating the situation.

It is unknown whether all water agencies and receiving agencies that would be impacted by this bill have similar provisions within their agreements.

Related legislation

AB 1772 (Papan), of the current legislative session, would authorize CDFW to decontaminate or order the decontamination of a conveyance found or reasonably believed to harbor aquatic invasive species after conducting a specified inspection. AB 1772 is pending referral in the Senate Rules Committee.

AB 2032 (Ransom), of the current legislative session, would require CDFW, the Department of Pesticide Regulation, the State Water Resources Control Board, and the Regional Water Quality Controls Boards to take various actions to quickly and effectively respond to invasive golden mussels. AB 2032 is pending referral in the Senate Rules Committee

AB 2787 (Committee on Water, Parks, and Wildlife), of the current legislative session, among other things, provides that a person who operates a Nevada-registered vessel on the waters of Lake Tahoe or Topaz Lake shall not be cited for operation of a vessel without a valid state-issued invasive mussel sticker, provided that Nevada has a program in effect for the management of aquatic invasive species. AB 2787 is pending in this Committee.

AB 149 (Committee on Budget, Chapter 106, Statutes of 2025), among other things, expanded statute and programs from "dreissenid mussels" to "invasive mussels," establishes a requirement for CDFW to review and approve updated invasive mussel control plans, and increased the invasive mussel fee.

AB 1150 (Committee on Water, Parks, and Wildlife, Chapter 831, Statutes of 2023), among other things, distinguished that the issuance and collection of the quagga and zebra mussel infestation and prevention fee from the biennial registration renewal.

AB 2443 (Williams, Chapter 485, Statutes of 2012), establishes the quagga and zebra mussel infestation prevention program, which required payment of the invasive mussel fee on vessels and permitted the use of the funds for, among other things, a grant program.

AB 1929 (Hall, Chapter 152, Statutes of 2010) determines that a water operator is indemnified from the penalty of possessing and transporting a restricted species, if the water operator is in compliance with an approved control plan.

AB 2065 (Hancock), Chapter 667, Statutes of 2008, requires reservoir managers to undertake certain measures to prevent invasive mussel infestation in reservoirs in which invasives mussels have not been detected.

AB 1683 (Wolk), Chapter 419, Statutes of 2007, prohibits a person to possess, import, ship, or transport in the state, or place, plant, or cause to be placed or planted in any water within the state, dreissenid mussels, unless authorized by CDFW. Additionally, authorizes the Director of CDFW, or the Director's designee, to conduct inspections of conveyances (e.g., vehicles and boats), order that the conveyance be drained, dried, or decontaminated, impound or quarantine conveyances, and conduct inspections of waters of the state and facilities that may contain invasive mussels. Further, requires water operators to implement measures to avoid dreissenid mussel infestation and develop a control plan upon infestation, among other things.

SUGGESTED AMENDMENTS: NONE**SUPPORT**

San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District (co-sponsor)
Upper San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District (co-sponsor)
Azusa Light and Water
California Municipal Utilities Association
San Gabriel Valley Economic Partnership
San Gabriel Valley Water Association
Three Valleys Municipal Water District

OPPOSITION

Valley Ag Water Association (unless amended)

-- END --