

Date of Hearing: May 13, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 2032 (Ransom) – As Amended April 16, 2026

Policy Committee:	Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials	Vote:	7 - 0
	Water, Parks and Wildlife		13 - 0

Urgency: Yes State Mandated Local Program: No Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill requires various state agencies to take specified actions to more quickly and efficiently respond to invasive golden mussels.

Specifically, this bill, among other things:

- 1) Exempts any public or private agency that operates a water supply system and has submitted a control plan to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), prepared pursuant to existing law, from any permit requirement for golden mussels, as specified, for maintenance and operational activities to control the spread of golden mussels in the water supply system, including removing golden mussels from pipes, screens, filters, and other infrastructure in accordance with the submitted control plan and provides this exemption shall remain in effect until CDFW determines the agency's control plan does not meet the statutory requirements for control plans or approves the control plan.
- 2) Requires CDFW's Invasive Species Program to develop, by April 1, 2027, (a) guidance for public and private agencies that operate water supply systems to develop effective control plans, as specified and states that, other than the statutory requirements of a control plan contained in the guidance, compliance with this guidance is voluntary for a public or private agency, and (b) guidance for scientific research conducted by or for public and private agencies that operate water supply systems to control the spread of golden mussels, as specified.
- 3) Authorizes a public or private agency that operates a water supply system and does not have an approved control plan to submit to CDFW a streamlined project proposal for scientific research that investigates the biology, ecology, and feasibility of golden mussel prevention, mitigation, control, and eradication methods, as specified, and exempts this scientific research from CDFW's scientific collecting permits and restricted species permits for golden mussels, as specified, and terminates this exemption upon the agency's submission of a control plan.
- 4) Requires CDFW to update the spatial distribution maps of golden mussel-infested water bodies posted on its website no less than quarterly based on monitoring and reported detections, as specified.
- 5) Requires the Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR), the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board), and the Regional Water Quality Control Boards (Regional Water

Boards), in response to an invasive species threat, to (a) work with state and local agencies to quickly and efficiently respond to the threat, (b) identify any tools available to assist a state or local agency in rapidly responding to the invasive species threat, and (c) help identify any existing processes that allow for the rapid use of any tool that could be used to address the invasive species threat and enables a streamlined or faster administrative or procedural process.

- 6) Requires the State Water Board, if necessary, to help coordinate efforts between the Regional Water Boards in response to a threat of an invasive species.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) CDFW estimates ongoing annual General Fund costs of about \$224,000 for one new position to develop the required guidance and update its spatial distribution maps quarterly but notes this estimate is contingent on the passage of its budget change proposal, submitted as part of the Governor's fiscal year (FY) 2026-27 budget, requesting eight permanent positions to increase the department's capacity to prevent the spread of golden mussels from infested waters. The administration intends to fund these positions for three years from \$20 million appropriated to CDFW in the 2025 Budget Act.
- 2) DPR contends the specifics and scope of work required of the department under the bill is unclear; therefore, DPR estimates its ongoing annual General Fund costs may range from minor and absorbable to the low hundreds of thousands of dollars.
- 3) The State Water Board and Regional Water Boards anticipate minor and absorbable costs and note the boards are actively engaging on this issue via the draft "Statewide National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System General Permit for Discharges from Pest Control Applications to Waters of the United States," which provides regulatory coverage for the point source discharge of chemical and biological residual pesticides and other non-pesticidal products to waters of the United States from aquatic animal invasive species control applications.

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

COMMENTS:

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

Golden mussels are an invasive species that threaten California's waterways, ports, and agriculture...Current law requires a multitude of permits across state agencies, creating barriers for local water agencies to respond quickly and effectively. This ongoing crisis must be addressed with urgency. AB 2032 would expedite onerous and lengthy permitting processes across state agencies to ensure local water agencies can effectively respond to prevent, mitigate, control, and eradicate golden mussels from California's waterways.

- 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 Sacramento-San Joaquin 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 the Division of Boating and Waterways (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.

Writing in support, a coalition of organizations, including the California State Association of Counties, the California Municipal Utilities Association, the California Chamber of Commerce, and the California Farm Bureau, argue current regulatory pathways were not

designed for the speed required to respond to an invasive aquatic species spreading through aquatic water systems, and as a result, “agencies attempting to implement proven response measures face permitting delays that reduces the effectiveness of early intervention.” This bill, the coalition argues, helps streamline rapid response actions, allowing essential “maintenance and operational activities to proceed without unnecessary delay, directing consistent interim guidance through the state task force, improving statewide infestation mapping, and supporting pilot studies and scientific research.”

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