
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 2032 (Ransom) - Fish and wildlife: golden mussels

Version: June 11, 2026

Urgency: Yes

Hearing Date: August 3, 2026

Policy Vote: N.R. & W. 7 - 0, E.Q. 7 - 0

Mandate: No

Consultant: Ashley Ames

Bill Summary: This bill would exempt a public or private agency that operates a water supply system from certain California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) permitting requirements until an invasive mussel control plan is submitted, approved, or denied, as applicable; require at least quarterly updating of an online map of golden mussel observations by CDFW; and require the California Department of Food and Agriculture and the State Water Resources Control Board to quickly and efficiently respond to the threat of golden mussels, among other provisions, as provided.

Fiscal Impact:

- CDFW estimates ongoing costs of \$234,000 in the first year and \$215,000 annually thereafter (General Fund) to develop all identified best management practices and provide research guidance, among other things.
- The California Department of Pesticide Regulation (CDPR) reports its fiscal estimate is unknown and could range from minor to the low hundreds of thousands of dollars. CDPR states that it is unable to determine an exact cost estimate at this time as it's unclear the range of work CDPR would be tasked with on invasive species/golden mussels as a result of this bill.
- 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 nonpesticidal products to waters of the United States from aquatic animal invasive species control applications.

Background: On October 17, 2024, DWR staff discovered golden mussels in the Port of Stockton — the first detection of the species anywhere in the United States. A freshwater bivalve native to rivers and creeks of China and Southeast Asia that has established itself well outside that range in several countries, the golden mussel was soon found at additional sites in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. The Fish and Game Commission took emergency action to add the species to the restricted species list, and detections have since spread throughout the Delta and the State Water Project. CDFW maintains an online map of confirmed observations.

The species poses an immediate threat to the ecological health of the Delta and all waters of the state, to water conveyance systems and infrastructure, and to water quality. Ecologically, golden mussels displace native and game fish by competing for food and contribute to harmful algal blooms; a single mussel can filter up to a liter of

water per day, stripping nutrients and microbes that sustain the ecosystem. Recreational effects include waterbody closures, mandatory inspections, higher launch and entry fees, and fewer fish and shellfish available for consumption. Economic effects include costly repairs and maintenance to boats, water infrastructure, and hydroelectric facilities, along with reduced flows affecting food production, residential water delivery, and flood control.

The species has proven far harder to control than the state and water managers anticipated. High reproductive rates and dense colonies produce biofouling that blocks, impairs, and often disables underwater intakes, structures, and mechanisms, while coating watercraft hulls, recreational facilities, and natural surfaces including rocks, fallen trees, and other sedentary bivalves. Those colonies also alter ecological processes in ways that harm native and game species and degrade water quality. Nearly every fresh and brackish waterbody in California is suitable habitat.

No socially and environmentally benign method currently exists to eliminate invasive mussels once established, though work is underway to evaluate elimination methods for water supply systems. Adult mussels survive days to weeks out of water and larvae survive a week or longer in small volumes, which makes eradication from large, interconnected waterbodies likely impossible. Containment within infested areas is therefore the only available means of limiting further widespread impacts.

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. Tens of millions of dollars are being spent to stop the mussels.

Proposed Law: This bill would:

1. State legislative intent to align permitting processes to better support the necessary rapid response to prevent serious impacts of golden mussels on water infrastructure, water supply systems and waterbodies and to support public and private agencies that operate those systems, as provided.
2. Exempt a public or private agency that operates a water supply system and has submitted an invasive mussel control plan to CDFW from any permit requirement for golden mussels for maintenance and operational activities in the water supply system, as provided. Sunset this exemption when CDFW either approves or denies a submitted invasive mussel control plan.
3. Require CDFW's Invasive Species Program to develop by April 1, 2027, guidance for public and private agencies that operate water supply systems to

develop effective invasive mussel control plans. Require the guidance to include relevant protocols, example standards, and statutory requirements. Provide that compliance with the guidance is voluntary except as specified.

4. Require CDFW's Invasive Species Program to develop and publish on CDFW's internet website by April 1, 2027, 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 provided. Require the guidance to include mussel handling standards to minimize any potential negative impacts, as specified.
5. Authorize a public or private agency that operates a water supply system and does not have an approved invasive mussel control plan to submit a streamlined project proposal for scientific research to CDFW, as provided. Require the project proposal to comply with the guidance in 4). Compliance with the guidance in 4) is voluntary for those not submitting a project proposal.
 - a. Exempt the proposed scientific research from the need to obtain scientific collecting permits or restricted species permits, as provided. Sunset the permit exemption upon the agency's submission of an invasive species control plan to CDFW.
6. Require CDFW to update the golden mussel spatial distribution maps of infested water bodies posted on its internet website no less than quarterly based on monitoring and reported detections. Require the maps to distinguish between reported and confirmed detection of golden mussels and include the date of the most recent map update, as provided.
7. Require the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to work with state and local agencies in order to quickly and efficiently respond to the threat of golden mussels. Require CDFA to identify any tools available to assist a state or local agency response including an integrated pest management strategy or registered pesticide, as provided. Require CDFA to help identify any existing processes that allow for the rapid use of any tool to address the invasive species threat, as provided.
8. Require the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) and the regional water quality control boards to work with state and local agencies to quickly and efficiently respond to the threat of golden mussels. Require the SWRCB to identify any tools available to assist in rapidly responding to the invasive species threat, as provided. Require the SWRCB to 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 process, as provided. Require the SWRCB to help coordinate efforts between the regional water quality control boards in response to the threat of an invasive species.
9. Make this act an urgency statute and justify the urgency due to the serious threat golden mussels pose to water infrastructure, water systems, water bodies and ecosystem health, as provided. Make numerous relevant legislative findings and declarations.

Related Legislation:

AB 2787 (Assembly Water, Parks, and Wildlife Committee, 2026) among other things, would provide 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 1894 (B. Rubio, 2026) 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.

AB 1772 (Papan, 2026) 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, among other provisions.

AB 149 (Assembly Budget Committee, 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 (Assembly Water, Parks, and Wildlife Committee, 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.

Staff Comments: CDFW has longstanding budget concerns which have persisted despite repeated efforts over multiple decades to address them. When the state has

significant fiscal concerns – as it does now – ensuring consistent and sustained funding for the department is particularly challenging. Recently, at legislative direction, CDFW undertook a "service-based" budgeting effort to identify the personnel needed to perform the services required by its mandates. CDFW's services were separated into eight general programs for analysis. In 2021, the initial results of this effort were released that revealed that CDFW's funding was inadequate to meet its "mission" service level. Generally only about 1/3 of the necessary resources were available. The Newsom Administration proposed, and the Legislature approved, significant one-time General Fund moneys to support the department's activities in the near-term. Some progress in addressing the gaps in service were subsequently made, although this was offset, at least in part, by new duties.

A recent update (for fiscal year 2024/2025) shows that overall CDFW receives about 38% of the resources needed to meet its mission. The Budget Act of 2026 does not narrow that gap. Its principal action for CDFW was defensive: the Legislature rejected the Governor's proposed vacancy eliminations, preserving 60.1 positions at the department, including game warden positions. The augmentations CDFW did receive are largely program-specific or consist of position authority funded from existing sources, such as 22 positions for cannabis-impacted lands drawn from the continuous appropriation from the Cannabis Tax Fund and 21.5 positions replacing temporary positions historically funded through reimbursement agreements.

For golden mussels specifically, the budget provides \$6 million General Fund for Delta-based decontamination control sites to prevent the spread of the species. That is a discrete appropriation for containment infrastructure rather than sustained program capacity, and it stands in contrast to the Nutria Eradication Program, which receives \$8.2 million General Fund in 2026-27 and \$8 million ongoing along with permanent position authority. Proposition 4 has allocated \$20 million to CDFW, but the budget removed Control Section 15.02 and deferred the 2026-27 Proposition 4 expenditure plan to August budget legislation, so how much of that money becomes available in the budget year remains unresolved. It is unclear how the resource challenges at CDFW impact their ability to respond to golden mussels and what the source of ongoing sustainable funding for golden mussel response will come from.

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