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PNWER Invasive Species Working Group Presents Defense Framework for Quagga and Zebra Mussels

(BIG SKY, MONTANA) – The Pacific NorthWest Economic Region's Invasive Species Working Group presented a Regional Framework for Perimeter Defense against Invasive zebra and quagga mussels July 13 at the PNWER Annual Summit at Big Sky Resort. The regional defense framework identifies ways states, provinces and federal border agents can help prevent the spread of mussels and estimates funding needs and possible sources to implement control measures.

The framework identifies key regulatory and policy goals to prevent the spread of invasive zebra and quagga mussels into the region's waterways:

- Support appropriation of \$20 million Water Resources Development Act funds to Columbia River Basin dreissenid prevention and monitoring activities.
- Support efforts for the mandatory decontamination of any watercraft/conveyance leaving a federally managed water body.
- Support adding quagga mussels as “injurious species” under the Lacey Act to make it illegal to transport dreissenids across state lines.
- Support and encourage states to develop legislation and funding mechanisms to advance individual state and provincial protections and create the capacity needed for regional entities to collaborate on regional defense and prevention.
- Support reauthorization of the National Invasive Species Act (1996) to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species and minimize the impacts of established invasive species.

The Pacific Northwest is the only region in the United States that does not have established populations of invasive quagga or zebra mussels, which multiply quickly and are easily transported across jurisdictions. These two invasive species pose serious threats to our fish, recreational, agricultural, and water resources in the entire PNWER region. An introduction to the region is estimated by the PNWER Working Group to cost \$500 million annually.

The framework was developed with input from invasive species leaders in Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington. These jurisdictions together spend approximately \$6.4 million annually on prevention of these mussels.

Despite coordinated efforts to address the introduction and spread of these mussels (dreissenids), gaps in federal law and processes hamper efforts. Addressing these regulatory and policy shortfalls will greatly enhance the ability of regional entities to protect the Northwest from an introduction.

"The economic threat posed by these mussels cannot be overstated. We value our waterways for clean hydropower, agricultural irrigation, recreation and as home to our important salmon resources. A small investment into preventative measures now will save the region hundreds of millions of dollars in the future. By working together as a region, we can make our conservation dollars go further," said state Sen. Arnie Roblan of Oregon, co-chair of the PNWER Invasive Species Working Group.

The framework is the result of a year-long coordination effort supported by the Washington State Legislature and the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife.

ABOUT THE PNWER SUMMIT

Held in alternating member jurisdictions each year, the annual PNWER summit draws hundreds of key business leaders, legislators and community leaders from PNWER's 10 states, provinces and territories in the Pacific Northwest. At the summit, participants meet in "working groups" to develop action items on policy issues in the following categories: agriculture, Arctic caucus, cross-border livestock health, border issues, disaster resilience, energy, environment, health care, innovation, invasive species, sustainable development, trade and economic development, transportation, tourism, water policy and workforce development. For more information on the summit, visit www.pnwer.org/2015Summit.

ABOUT PNWER

The Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER) is a public/private non-profit created by statute in 1991. Member jurisdictions include Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Montana and Washington, and the Canadian provinces and territories of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, the Northwest Territories and Yukon. PNWER's mission is to increase the economic well-being and quality of life for all citizens of the region; identify and promote "models of success;" and serve as a conduit to exchange information.

Learn more about zebra and quagga mussels and PNWER Invasive Species efforts:
www.pnwer.org/invasive-species.html

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