

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Matt Morrison, Executive Director, Pacific Northwest Economic Region

206-443-7723 / Cell: 206-399-4026; Matt.Morrison@pnwer.org

Megan Levy, Invasive Species program manager

503-730-0599; Megan.Levy@pnwer.org

Federal budget allocates \$4 million to Prevention of Invasive Mussels in Pacific Northwest

Efforts within the Pacific Northwest to defend against invasive quagga and zebra mussels were given a major boost recently as congress appropriated \$4 million within the federal omnibus budget for watercraft inspection stations in Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana. The federal funds, administered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, will require a one-to-one funding match with the states. On Jan. 19, delegates of the Pacific Northwest Economic Region (PNWER) asked Washington legislators to pass a joint resolution requesting continued funding in the federal 2017 budget. The federal funds will help expand state networks of watercraft inspection stations needed to stop mussels from entering the region on boat hulls and in vessel ballast tanks.

An invasion will rapidly foul and damage the operations of hydropower, irrigation, fish hatcheries, and municipal water facilities vital to our region's economy at a cost of \$500 million annually, according to an economic impact assessment for the region. 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 on boat hulls and in ballast tanks. Quagga and zebra mussels disrupt native fish habitats and destroy aquatic ecosystems in infested waterways.

PNWER has worked with state and federal legislators and officials as well as regional nonprofit associations to support and organize the region's defense against these mussels and find additional funding for inspection stations. A Regional Framework for Perimeter Defense against invasive zebra and quagga mussels was presented in July by [PNWER's Invasive Species Working Group](#). The framework identifies ways states, Canadian provinces and federal border agents can help prevent the spread of mussels and estimates funding needs and possible sources to implement control measures.

"These funds will double our efforts in growing the regional defense against these economically devastating invasive species," said Matt Morrison, executive director of PNWER. "Once they are here, they are here forever. We pay for them, forever. Our best bet is keeping them out."

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.