



Pacific NorthWest Economic Region

2023 - 2024

PNWER Executive Committee*

Rick Glumac, MLA
British Columbia
President

Rep. Cindy Ryu
Washington
Vice President

Ken Francis, MLA
Saskatchewan
Vice President

Rep. DeLena Johnson
Alaska
Vice President

Hon. Sandy Silver
Yukon
Vice President

Hon. Caroline Wawzonek
Northwest Territories

Sen. Lew Frederick
Oregon

Garth Rowsell, MLA
Alberta

Sen. Mike Cuffe
Montana

Travis Keisig, MLA
Saskatchewan

David Bennett
FortisBC
Private Sector Co-Chair

Dan Kirschner
Northwest Gas Assoc.
Private Sector Co-Chair

Sen. Chuck Winder
Idaho
Imm. Past President

May 14, 2024

Honorable Governor Jay Inslee
Washington State Capitol
Olympia, WA

Honorable Governor Brad Little
Idaho State Capitol
Boise, ID

Honorable Governor Tina Kotek
Oregon State Capitol
Salem, OR

Honorable Governor Greg Gianforte
Montana State Capitol
Helena, MT

ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

RE: Threat of Invasive Quagga Mussels to the Columbia River Basin

On September 18, 2023, Idaho Governor Brad Little and the Idaho Department of Agriculture announced the presence of aquatic invasive Quagga mussels below Shoshone Falls during routine invasive species monitoring.¹² Following this notification, the State of Idaho began an eradication effort in a 16 -mile reach of the Snake River. Idaho officials will likely not know if the eradication was successful until 2024. The eradication effort in Idaho started at least three weeks after floating larvae were discovered in the Snake River, it is estimated the invasive mussels could have traveled 185 river miles to Oregon waters in a matter of hours and 375 river miles to Washington's waters within one week.

An established Quagga mussel population places our native salmon, steelhead, and resident fisheries on the brink of a potential disaster. The establishment of invasive mussels could have a disastrous economic and environmental impacts for the Columbia River Basin states. This invasive species has proven to pose a significant threat to both our environment and infrastructure, potentially leading to annual economic damages exceeding \$500 million in annual hydroelectric mitigation costs, not including mitigation impacts to drinking water, fish hatcheries and passage, agricultural irrigation systems, and other critical infrastructure. The heightened risk to the Columbia River Basin following the positive quagga mussel detection in the middle Snake River in Idaho demands continued, enhanced, and accelerated coordination and response across the region.

¹ <https://www.opb.org/article/2023/09/22/invasive-mussel-discovery-in-idaho-puts-pacific-northwest-on-alert/>

² <https://www.agproud.com/articles/58937-musseling-quaggas-out-of-the-snake-river>

We are requesting that State Governors proclaim a state of imminent threat and convene a regional executive task force that will determine regional needs and actions that will continue perimeter defense, facilitate increased watercraft inspection, increase monitoring water bodies, rapid response planning and establish plans for execution of containment strategies. Regional needs and actions will inform our response should larval veligers or adults be detected downstream from the treated site in Idaho or in Washington and Oregon's portion of the Snake or Columbia rivers.

Suggested initial needs and actions include:

1. Host a Regional Executive Level Tabletop Exercise and Multi-Agency Coordination Workshop, to prepare for detection of Quagga mussels downstream, ensuring a coordinated and effective response across Idaho, Washington, Oregon, and our regional partners to include all the governments.
2. Review, update, and reaffirm a regional executive level commitment to the *Columbia River Basin Interagency Invasive Species Response Plan: Dreissenid Species*.
3. Develop and execute memoranda of understanding with Washington, Oregon, Montana, Idaho, Canadian provinces (British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Alberta), and Tribal/First Nations (such as the Nez Perce, Umatilla, Yakima, Warm Springs) to expedite actions such as increased prevention, communications and public engagement, enhanced early detection monitoring, and rapid response preparedness.
4. Based on tabletop exercise and workshop outcomes, develop short-, near-, and long-term recommendations for necessary supplies and equipment for immediate response capabilities (including response permitting) and ongoing monitoring efforts and containment strategies.

The State of Washington Legislature added \$1.8 million state general fund appropriations and \$1.81 million in federal expenditure authority in this year's operating budget and the State of Idaho increased their funding to \$6.5 million to respond to the September 2023 detection in the Snake River and increase their prevention efforts to manage the imminent threat of mussels in the region.

We anticipate the need for enhanced and supplemental federal financial assistance from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to implement task force needs and actions. We call on Congress to increase the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Appropriation of the Water Resources Development Authorization (WRDA) for aquatic invasive species to its full authorized amount of \$130M for the USACE Aquatic Plant Control and Watercraft Inspect and Decontamination (APC-WID) Cost-Share Program. Additionally, we call on Congress to increase the WRDA authorization of funding to at least \$300M from \$130M, and facilitate USACE to provide regional (multi-state) services outside of the cost sharing agreement by waiving the 50% cost-share requirement for regional response actions.

The FY 2024 APC-WID appropriation was 50% of the past years. The program was originally established to protect the Columbia River Basin states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana from quagga and zebra mussels in 2014. Due to the program's success, the program is expanding to include the Upper Colorado and Upper Missouri Basin states in 2024. In the next two years the South Platte, Arkansas, and Russian River Basins, in addition to basins and watersheds that adjoin an international border between the United States and Canada (e.g., Great Lakes) will be added. The APC-WID program is a proven success, and the scope is growing accordingly. However, the funding must also increase to maintain the successful program while increasing in scope.

It is imperative that we take immediate action to increase prevention and readiness for a regional response strategy to prevent long-term catastrophic damage to our environment, economy, and cultural resources.

Sincerely,

Representative Mary Dye
Washington State Legislature, LD-9

Representative Britt Raybould
Washington State Legislature, LD-34

Senator Chuck Winder
Idaho State Legislature, LD-20

Senator Bob Hasegawa
Washington State Senate, LD-11

Representative Cindy Ryu
Washington State Legislature, LD-32

Senator Matt Boehnke
Washington State Senate, LD-8

Representative Stephanie Barnard
Washington State Legislature, LD-8

Representative Ken Helm
Oregon State Legislature, HD -27

Representative Pam Marsh
Oregon State Legislature, LD-20

Representative Emerson Levy
Oregon State Legislature, HD-53

Representative Charlie Conrad
Oregon State Legislature, HD-12

Representative Virgle Osborne
Oregon State Legislature, HD-2

Representative Tom Andersen
Oregon State Legislature, HD-19

Representative John Lively
Oregon State Legislature, HD-7

Representative Khanh Pham
Oregon State Legislature, HD-46

Representative Mark Owen
Oregon State Legislature, HD-41

Representative Mark Gamba
Oregon State Legislature, HD-60

Senator David Brock Snith
Oregon State Legislature, SD-1

Representative Christine Goodwin
Oregon State Legislature, HD-4

Senator Mike Cuffe
Montana State Legislature, SD-2

Senator Lisa Wellman
Washington State Senate, LD-41

Senator Wendy McKamey
Montana State Legislature, SD-12

Senator Ron Taylor
Idaho State Legislature, LD-26

Senator Van Burtenshaw
Idaho State Legislature, LD-35