



# REGIONAL PARK AND OPEN SPACE DISTRICT Policy and Procedure Manual



Policy 8.5

Quagga Mussel Containment & Prevention

## I. POLICY

Quagga mussels are soft bodied animals that grow shells and live in freshwater such as lakes, rivers, streams and water conveyance channels and pipes. Adult quagga mussels are approximately 1” long and ½” wide. Quagga mussels feed by filtering microscopic plants and animals from the water. This filtering can negatively impact native plants and animals inhabiting the water body. Quagga mussels multiply rapidly, with females able to produce one million eggs per year. Young quagga mussels, or veliger’s, develop after fertilization, drifting in the water until finding a suitable place for attachment. Strong threads produced by the mussels attach the shell to most surfaces and often remain attached long after the mussel has died. Infestations of quagga mussels can cause disruption of water delivery, and significant damage to infrastructure resulting in significant financial impacts.

Early-detection monitoring for mussels will help contain and prevent the spread of these invasive species. Quagga mussels can be transported by boats, trailers and even unknowingly in bait buckets and bait previously used in infected waters, fishing reels, tackle, and hip waders or fishing floats that have not been cleaned and dried properly following use in infected waters.

## II. PURPOSE & BACKGROUND

Riverside County Regional Park and Open-Space District (District), as an operator/manager of Lake Skinner and Lake Cahuilla Parks is committed to helping contain and prevent the spread of Quagga mussels.

Lake Skinner Park allows fishing and boating; swimming and body contact with the water is not permitted. Lake Skinner has a confirmed population of Quagga mussels.

Lake Cahuilla Park allows fishing; body contact and boating is not permitted. Lake Cahuilla does not have a confirmed Quagga mussel population.

## III. PROCEDURE



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- A. Lake Skinner will adhere to Metropolitan Water District (MWD) and California Fish & Wildlife (F&W) guidelines and regulations.
- B. Lake Cahuilla will adhere to Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) and California Fish & Wildlife (F&W) guidelines and regulations.
- C. Lake Skinner - District staff performs Quagga inspections of all vessels and trailers before they enter the lake, and again upon exiting the park. The *Vessel Inspection Program (VIP)* includes:
  1. Vessel Survey Questionnaire – Questionnaire seeks data related to when vessel was used, what body of water along with determining if the operator is familiar with Quagga & Zebra Mussels. Vessel operators failing to comply with any aspect of the inspection process, including completing the Vessel Survey Questionnaire, will not be permitted to launch.
  2. Physical Inspection - all vessels and trailers are subject to physical inspection prior to being authorized to launch. Inspections are performed by trained staff or volunteers. Physical inspections include identification of standing water in live wells, bait wells, bilge areas, containers possessing live bait, or any other portions of the vessel; identification of mussels or other aquatic invasive species attached to some portion of the vessel. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife will be notified if Quagga or Zebra Mussels are suspected, and a *Suspect Invasive Species Sighting Report* is completed, and the vessel will not be permitted to launch.
  3. Consent Agreement Vessel Inspection Exit - all vessels and trailers exiting the water at Lake Skinner will be subject to physical inspection. Inspections are performed by trained staff or volunteers. Exit inspections include:



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- a. Identification of standing water in live wells, bait wells, bilge areas, containers possessing live bait, anchors/rope or any other portions of the vessel.
- b. Lowering the motor to allow all water to drain, remove all drain plugs.
- c. Check to see that inside and outside of the vessel and trailer are wiped dry.
- d. Vessel Survey Inspection Form is signed and dated after the exit inspection by vessel operator.

Failure to complete the exit inspection will automatically place the vessel on a mandatory 14-day quarantine list and will not be allowed to launch.

4. Quagga Information Database (QID) – All vessels entering Lake Skinner will have their hull identification data entered into QID; this is a live database that provides immediate notification of launch sites, vessels and all non-compliant issues.
  5. Survey and Inspection Exemption – once inspected, vessels that are stored at Lake Skinner and do not leave the property (such as the vessels that are provided by the on-site concessionaire) shall be exempt from the Vessel Survey Questionnaire and Physical Inspection Program. Any new vessels brought in by the Concessionaire, or vessels that leave the Lake Skinner property are subject to full inspection.
- D. Fishing at Lake Skinner and Lake Cahuilla – any fishing bait brought into the parks shall be in unopened and unused containers; all bait buckets shall be clean and dry; bait buckets shall be emptied in trash receptacles before leaving the park, and will not be left on the ground or dumped into the waterway; fishing gear (nets, tackle, reels, etc.) will be thoroughly rinsed after use and before leaving the park.



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- E. Vessel Operator Education Program
1. Lake Skinner - vessel operators are provided information about how to check and clean their boat to help prevent the spread of Quagga mussels. Boaters are asked to:
    - a. Inspect all exposed surfaces of the vehicle, trailer, anchor, dock lines, live wells, bilge, motor, hull, trailer axel and rollers.
    - b. Wash the hull of each watercraft thoroughly (steam clean with 140-degree or hotter water if possible).
    - c. Remove all debris, plant and animal material.
    - d. Drain all water and dry all areas.
    - e. Drain and dry the lower outboard unit.
    - f. Clean and dry all live-wells.
    - g. Empty and dry any buckets.
    - h. Dispose of bait in the trash.
  2. Lake Skinner & Lake Cahuilla – signs and posters are prominently displayed at the property; information is posted on the District website; and information is relayed to customers entering the park educating them on the District’s Quagga Mussel Containment and Prevention Program.
  3. Lake Cahuilla – events, such as triathlons, are granted special access and use of the lake. These events are subject to the District’s Special Event Policies and Procedures, which include paddle boat/buoy placement protocols and approvals and inspections by the Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD).

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