



League to Save Lake Tahoe | City of South Lake Tahoe | Placer County | El Dorado County | North Tahoe Public Utility District | South Tahoe Public Utility District | Tahoe City Public Utility District | Tahoe Resource Conservation District | Tahoe Fund | Tahoe Regional Planning Agency | Lake Tahoe Community College | Tahoe Transportation District | Washoe Tribe of California and Nevada

April 16, 2026

Chair Papan and Vice Chair Gonzalez,

On behalf of the California Tahoe Alliance (CTA), thank you for holding a hearing on AB 1772 and for your committee's focus on protecting California's lakes, rivers, and water systems from the threat of golden mussels.

The CTA is a coalition of 14 public and private organizations in the Lake Tahoe Basin. We advocate for the preservation and protection of Lake Tahoe through leveraging California's commitment to and share of funding to address the most pressing policy and resource challenges facing the region, like golden mussels.

Since 2008, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA), along with the Tahoe Resource Conservation District, has led the Lake Tahoe Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) program, a nationally recognized watercraft inspection program, to prevent AIS introduction into Lake Tahoe and control the existing invasive species in the lake (Eurasian watermilfoil, curlyleaf pondweed, invasive clams, and New Zealand mudsnails). Keep Tahoe Blue, a local environmental non-profit organization, has complemented these agency programs with volunteer trainings, arming 951 volunteers with the tools to identify aquatic invasive species through an Eyes on the Lake training since 2013.

We appreciate your staff for proactively engaging with the Tahoe Region on this important topic. Our comment letter adds additional details to topics already discussed with your staff.

- (1) Address and prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species, including, but not limited to, the golden mussel, which currently represents an urgent and significant threat to the state's water resources, in California's waterbodies and water infrastructure systems.**

A new introduction of invasive mussels, such as the golden mussel, could have devastating consequences on Lake Tahoe's famed clarity, delicate ecosystem, and \$5 billion annual recreation and tourism-based economy. A 2009 estimate by the Army Corps of Engineers indicated that invasive mussels could lead to annual losses of \$22 million (\$33 million in 2025 dollars) in the Lake Tahoe Region, impacting tourism, property values, and maintenance costs.

In response to the discovery of golden mussels in California, TRPA implemented new boat inspection procedures immediately after the discovery to ensure Tahoe remains free of any new aquatic invasive species by requiring mandatory decontamination of all boats entering Lake Tahoe. Previously, all boats required inspection, and only boats entering Tahoe from high-risk bodies of water or boats that did not arrive clean, drained, and dry required decontamination. In 2025, Tahoe's boat inspectors prevented 72 boats with AIS from entering Lake Tahoe, including one boat with attached golden mussels.

A statewide inspection and decontamination program that focuses on major waterbodies would help combat the threat of golden mussel and other AIS in California. Intermediate steps could move the state in that direction could include:

- Expand and fund statewide monitoring to better identify and track which lakes have been infected by invasive species. This information is needed to monitor, track, and address the spread of golden mussels across the state.
- Construct and operate decontamination stations across the region as hubs to decontaminate boats from multiple lakes in one location. This would provide a service for the entire state and ensure that lakes without funding or the capacity to inspect or decontaminate boats are protected from AIS.
- Require decontamination for boats leaving infested bodies of water. This is a strategy employed at Lake Mead and Lake Powell to contain the infestation of invasive quagga mussels.

(2) Establish a statewide standard for the decontamination of all waterborne vessels and equipment, including motorized vessels, paddlecraft, and other potential vectors capable of transmitting aquatic invasive species, including the golden mussel.

The Western Regional Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species was formed in 1997 to help limit the introduction, spread and impacts of aquatic nuisance species into the western region of North America. This panel of public and private entities was formed by a provision in the National Invasive Species Act of 1996 (P.L. 101-636). The Western Regional Plan has developed decontamination protocols and standards that are shared across the nation (Uniform Minimum Protocols and Standards - https://westernregionalpanel.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/UMPSIV_Report2021_Final.pdf).

California should consider formal adoption of regional and national standards whenever possible to ensure consistency with other state's decontamination programs. The Tahoe Region currently follows these same standards. TRPA staff would also like to note that California DWR complete tests that verify Tahoe's AIS protocols are sufficient for golden mussels, and a formal report is currently pending.

(3) Create a statewide database to voluntarily track the movement of vessels, equipment, and other vectors among California waterbodies, providing waterbody managers with accurate information on the prior contamination status of these vessels.

A statewide database to document prevention efforts, i.e. inspections and decontaminations conducted on watercraft at various waterbodies, in the state is essential to prevent the introduction of AIS. Among Western States, there is already a tracking database for AIS and boat inspections. This database, called the *Watercraft Inspection and Decontamination Application*, is managed by the Colorado Department of Wildlife. The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency has also promoted its use to in State programs; to date 23 California programs already utilize this app.

We encourage California formally adopt this database. Additional resources such as funding or staffing capacity to augment Colorado's management of the system would be helpful.

In addition to statewide tracking of vessels detailed above, more robust statewide monitoring of AIS infestations in lakes and other waterbodies in the state is critical. Knowing where golden mussels, and other AIS, already exist is critical to controlling and preventing their spread. This information is also critical to supporting a system of reciprocity (item 4).

(4) Develop a system of reciprocity that recognizes and honors certifications of decontamination for vessels and equipment moving between noninfested waterbodies, thereby facilitating safe recreational access.

The Tahoe Region has concerns about broad reciprocity for boat inspections and decontaminations. Specific concerns around reciprocity include:

- Native species concerns, for example a species native in Folsom Lake may be invasive to Lake Tahoe if introduced.
- Waterbodies will likely have different existing AIS other than invasive mussels that a potential reciprocal waterbody does not want.
- Extensive monitoring for existing AIS is critical and takes considerable data over a period of time to have confidence in what may or may not be present in a particular waterbody.

We would like to continue discussions on this topic to identify ways to streamline boater access to California's waters while ensuring Tahoe's robust program can remain in place. For example, the State could;

- Construct and operate decontamination stations across the region as hubs to decontaminate boats from multiple lakes in one location. This would provide a service for the entire state and ensure that lakes without funding or the capacity to inspect or decontaminate boats are protected from AIS.
- Require decontamination for boats leaving infested bodies of water. This is a strategy employed at Lake Mead and Lake Powell to contain the infestation of invasive quagga mussels.

(5) Identify and implement, to the extent feasible, alternative and equitable funding sources beyond fees imposed on the recreational boating community, such as assessments on commercial activities, including on international cargo shipping operations that may impact the introduction of aquatic invasive species to California waters.

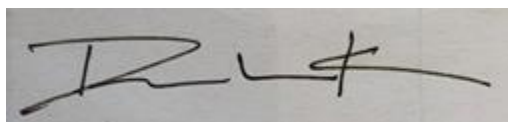
Even with the decontamination requirement for all motorized boats in Lake Tahoe, golden mussels can be spread by construction equipment and nonmotorized watercraft like kayaks, canoes, and paddleboards, none of which the State of California requires any AIS inspection or decontamination.

The TRPA Code of Ordinances provides protections from any non-motorized waterborne conveyance potential harboring any AIS by making them subject to inspection and decontamination if deemed necessary by TRPA or its designee. Since 2014, Tahoe partners have proactively engaged the nonmotorized users through the Tahoe Keepers program. This education program is aimed at training users to self-inspect and clean their nonmotorized watercraft. In 2025, a total of 819 people completed the Tahoe Keepers training. Additionally, staff at popular Tahoe beaches interacted with more than 17,000 members of the public to educate them about AIS and prevent the spread to Tahoe. Keep Tahoe Blue volunteers educated an additional 900 beachgoers.

A mandatory, state-wide, nonmotorized AIS sticker could help fund AIS programs and serve as an additional public education tool. This program could include a required educational component, similar to the [educational video and quiz in the Tahoe Keepers program](#). Like the motorized sticker program, it should also ensure recognition of Tahoe and Topaz as interstate waters in the legislation since Nevada currently has a required nonmotorized sticker program.

Thank you for your work to protect Lake Tahoe and the state of California from golden mussels, and for your consideration of our requests herein this letter.

Sincerely,



Devin Middlebrook
Chair, California Tahoe Alliance