



# OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

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## **ATTORNEY GENERAL MASTO ANNOUNCES STAFF ATTENDS MEETING SEEKING LEGAL, REGULATORY ACCORD TO LIMIT SPREAD OF INVASIVE MUSSELS IN THE WEST**

*Quagga Mussels Can Impact Nevada's Ecology and Economy*

**Carson City, NV** – Nevada Attorney General Catherine Cortez Masto announced David Newton, Senior Deputy Attorney General, attended a meeting with legal and law enforcement officials and environmental scientists from the 15 Western states, in Phoenix from Aug. 22-23, to explore legal and regulatory ways of limiting an invasion of Quagga and Zebra mussels (non-native shellfish from Eurasia).

These mussels clog water system, impact the environment and can cost billions of dollars in damage and control wherever they spread. The meeting forged a uniform approach to education, inspection and regulations to encourage recreational boat inspections in the West to prevent the spread of invasive zebra or Quagga mussels.

Reports from U.S. Geological Survey state that in [January 2007](#), populations of Quagga mussels were discovered in Lake Mead and in [May 2011](#) evidence of Quagga mussels was found in Lahontan and Rye Patch reservoirs. According to the Tahoe Resource Conservation District there have been no Quagga mussels found in Lake Tahoe. However, they have stopped several boats with Quagga mussels prior to launching in 2012. These boats have been fully decontaminated prior to launching and pose very little threat to Lake Tahoe's waters.

The meeting, convened by Oregon Sea Grant, the National Sea Grant Law Center (both programs of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and hosted by the Arizona Dept. of Fish and Game, drew representatives from the attorneys general of all 15 Western states, along with state and federal fish and wildlife officials and biologists who specialize in marine invasive species.

The Quagga mussel, a prolific breeder whose filter-feeding habits has been shown to change entire ecosystems, invasive path began in Lake Erie in 1989, and is now found from the Great Lakes to the Northeast, including in Nevada Lakes.

Within the last few years, isolated infestations of both species, which can survive for days to weeks out of water – most likely transported on recreational boats and trailers – have begun to show up in Western recreational and irrigation waters in California and Arizona. Efforts to control the spread by educating boaters have met with mixed success, and state-by-state differences in legal and regulatory frameworks hinder the states' ability to require and conduct inspections.

The Phoenix meeting looked at the impacts of invasive mussels on local economies and infrastructure, the challenges to effective control, and a 100-plus-year-old federal law – the Lacey Act – which could give states a tool for approaching the problem.

Sessions included discussion of state authority to stop boats for inspection, quarantine and decontamination, what programs and laws have been successful in Western states, public attitudes about invasive species education and enforcement, and how cash-strapped states can fund such programs.

Click here for a current [Zebra and Quagga mussel map](#) (high resolution JPEG from U.S. Geological Survey)



Quagga mussels (*Dreissena bugensis*)

(Photo: [Western Regional Panel for the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force](#))



*Flip-flop covered with Quagga mussels at Lake Mead.*

(Photo: National Park Service)

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