

# ANS Fact Sheet



## AQUATIC NUISANCE SPECIES (ANS) PROGRAM OVERVIEW

### Background

The Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) Act was signed into law in May 2008. The Act defines ANS as exotic or nonnative aquatic wildlife or any plant species that have been determined to pose a significant threat to the aquatic resources or water infrastructure of the state.

The Parks Board passed regulations required by the Act on February 20, 2009 and updated them since that time. The regulations require mandatory watercraft inspection, and if necessary, decontamination of all boats coming from out of state, leaving waters with known ANS and boats entering high-risk waters where inspections are required by the managing entity. The focus of the program is to prevent zebra and quagga mussels and other ANS from infesting Colorado's water resources and threatening our water storage and distribution systems for municipal, industrial and agricultural use. The Colorado ANS Program is highly effective and a model which other states across the nation are learning from.

### Program Goal and Successes

The goal of the program is to protect the state's natural resources, outdoor recreation and water supply infrastructure through the prevention of new introductions of costly invasive species, such as zebra or quagga mussels, in Colorado. Colorado has mostly prevented the introduction of these awful invasive species due to the diligent efforts of watercraft inspection and decontamination staff, as well as monitoring, education and enforcement actions.



In 2022, CPW's Aquatic Nuisance Species Sampling and Monitoring team detected a single adult zebra mussel at the west boat ramp at Highline Lake. This was the first time an adult mussel had ever been found in a Colorado water body. The following month, several more adult mussels were identified at the southeast corner of the dam, on the east boat ramp, and immediately below the reservoir.

Highline Lake is the only body of water where an adult zebra or quagga mussel has been found in Colorado and mitigation work began immediately following the discovery. Eight other reservoirs in Colorado have had mussel veliger (larvae) detections in the past but have since been delisted following multiple years of negative testing as per the regional standard. CPW's ANS Program has worked to stop the continued inoculation of our waters from invasive mussels being introduced by recreational watercraft.



### Sampling and Monitoring

Sampling and monitoring is a key component to the success of the ANS Program. CPW has sampled 584 "at-risk" waters since the program began and it was through this sampling program that invasive mussel larvae and adults were first detected in Colorado.

While CPW's ANS staff monitors the state's public waters for numerous invasive plant and animal species, the focus of sampling is on early detection of zebra and quagga mussels. There are three sampling protocols that target the three life cycles of mussels. CPW also documents native aquatic plants, mollusks and crayfish while performing monitoring activities for invasive species.





Service, Larimer County, various municipalities and private industry locations. Each year the state inspects approximately 500,000 boats and decontaminates more than 30,000 that are determined to present a high biological risk.

## Information and Outreach

CPW and its partner agencies have implemented a comprehensive, multi-faceted invasive species public education campaign. Accomplishments include distribution of tens of thousands of printed rack cards, brochures, handouts, DVDs and posted signage at offices, boat ramps and other public access points. Additionally, a media relations campaign has been launched using web, radio, print and television.

## Working Together: Watercraft Inspection and Decontamination (WID)

Watercraft inspection and decontamination is a requirement of the ANS Act and continues to be a key component in preventing the spread of ANS into and within Colorado. CPW coordinates a vast network of WID stations that are operated by CPW, the National Park

## Highline Lake

Adult zebra mussels were discovered at Highline Lake in September 2022. After careful consideration, CPW devised a two-pronged approach which included a significant drawdown of the reservoir in an effort to expose the majority of the mussels to freezing and drying conditions over the winter months. At the conclusion of the drawdown, EarthTec QZ, an EPA-registered molluscicide was applied to the remaining water. CPW started the drawdown process in November and molluscicide application began on March 1, 2023.

The ANS Program will continue to monitor the reservoir for any evidence of zebra mussels on a routine basis. Even if nothing is found, Highline Lake will be considered "Infested" for the next five years. During this time, staff at Highline Lake State Park will implement a containment watercraft inspection and decontamination program. This program will require all watercraft leaving the reservoir to be decontaminated to minimize the potential for this invasion to spread into additional waters.



## Mussel Boat Interceptions

Infested mussel boat interceptions have risen significantly since the program began. From 2009 to 2017 the state intercepted less than 20 mussel-fouled boats each year. This number has grown significantly with more than 100 mussel-fouled boats being intercepted each year from 2018 to present.

This exponential growth in infested boat interceptions is directly related to the growing threat invasive species pose to water infrastructure, natural resources and outdoor recreation. The majority of the intercepted vessels arrive from Lake Powell, the Lower Colorado River or the Great Lakes. All boats were decontaminated to ensure all mussels were dead, and no mussels were visibly attached.

## Financial Instability in 2017

The Supreme ruling in case 13SC996 significantly reduced the source fund for the ANS Program (Tier II Severance Tax) as appropriated in the ANS Act. A broad stakeholder effort was called upon to raise funds and determine long term solutions.

CPW redirected agency cash and a USFWS Motorboat Colorado Grant to pay for the 2017 boating season, along with over \$1M of partnership funds. Fortunately, the Colorado General Assembly provided funding to the ANS Program through SB17-259 and HB18-1338 to be leveraged with federal dollars and other sources to maintain the program over the 2018–2019 boating seasons.

## Mussel Free Colorado Act

In 2018, the Colorado General Assembly passed the Mussel Free Colorado Act (HB18-1008) to provide a new stable funding source through the creation of an ANS stamp for motorized boats and sailboats—\$25 for in-state residents and \$50 for out of state visitors. The bill also increases fines for violations and allows CPW to recoup costs for decontamination of quarantined and impounded vessels.

Similar to the 2017 joint resolution on ANS which passed the State Legislature unanimously, the Mussel Free Colorado Act continues to encourage federal governments, specifically the Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Forest Service and Army Corp of Engineers, to provide the other half of the needed funds for the ANS Program since many of the highest risk waters are federally owned or managed reservoirs.

## 2018 Water Resources Development Act

The 2018 Water Resources Development Act (S. 3021) was passed by the 115th Congress and signed into law in October 2018. Section 1170 includes a provision which directs the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to establish, operate, and maintain new or existing watercraft inspection stations to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species in the Columbia, Upper Missouri, Upper Colorado, South Platte and Arizona (should be Arkansas) River Basins. The provision also authorizes the Army Corps to assist states with monitoring and rapid response efforts in the case of an infestation of quagga or zebra mussels.

## The Stop the Spread of Invasive Mussels Act

Senator Bennet, along with Senator Daines and Senator Tester from Montana, introduced the Stop the Spread of Invasive Mussels Act in 2019. The bill would authorize the Secretary of Interior through the Commissioner of Reclamation to provide financial assistance to states or local governments for WID. The bill would add several federal agencies, such as the National Park Service, as a member of the ANS Task Force and provide authorization for all members of the ANS Task Force to conduct WID into and out of federal waters. The bill would require the ANS Task Force to report back on any regulatory changes necessary to implement WID prevention or containment. This bill has yet to be signed into law as of April, 2023. CPW urges you to support the passage of The Stop the Spread of Invasive Mussels Act.



## Pilot Roadside Watercraft Inspection and Decontamination Program

In 2021, Colorado Legislature passed House Bill 21-1226 which authorized Colorado Parks and Wildlife to implement a pilot roadside watercraft inspection and decontamination program. Year one of this pilot program was implemented in 2022 at the Loma Port of Entry. This effort was highly successful as 26 mussel fouled boats were intercepted over the course of three days. The pilot program was expanded in 2023.

## How You Can Help

Boaters are required to stop for an inspection when both entering, and exiting most bodies of water in Colorado. Stricter inspection requirements exist when taking a vessel from one body of water to another. To protect Colorado's waters and encourage a smooth inspection process, boaters are encouraged to:

- Make sure your vessel, compartments and equipment are 'clean, drained, and dry' before launching on Colorado's waters.
- Utilize the green seal and receipt process. Keep your green exit seal attached to your vessel and trailer and have your paper exit slip (blue or white) readily available.
- Support the passage of The Stop the Spread of Invasive Mussels Act of 2022 to help provide sustainable funding resources and broaden prevention partnerships.
- Inform municipal government, county commissioners, state legislators and federal congressional delegates of the potential economic and social impacts that could occur without ANS preventative measures.

