



GOLDEN MUSSELS AND WATERCRAFT INSPECTIONS

Boaters and recreationists can help combat the spread of a new invader in North America, the golden mussel. Despite its flashy name, the golden mussel poses a serious threat to California's water delivery systems, the environment, and recreational opportunities.

In October 2024, golden mussels were discovered in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and O'Neill Forebay, a State Water Project and federal Central Valley Project reservoir near Santa Nella, California. The golden mussel can tolerate brackish water and much lower calcium levels than quagga and zebra mussels. This means more waterbodies are vulnerable to infestation, including Lake Oroville, Thermalito Forebay and Afterbay, and other lakes in the Feather River Watershed.

Why are watercraft inspections important?

Adult mussels spawn multiple times each year and produce thousands of microscopic, free-floating offspring or planktonic larvae, known as veligers. Veligers are spread by water currents, but veligers can also be transported in the ballast tanks, bilges, livewells and cooling lines of watercraft. Adult mussels can also attach to boat hulls and motors. Both adult and veliger mussels can survive the overland trek on or inside a trailered vessel. By ensuring watercraft are clean, drained, and dry, boaters and recreationists can help combat the spread of the destructive golden mussel.



What threats are posed by invasive mussels?

When golden mussel populations are established, they are difficult to control, become very abundant and are easily spread to new waterbodies. These invasive mussels can:

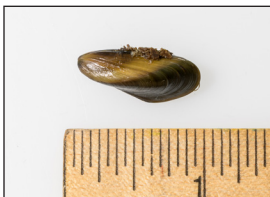
- Alter aquatic ecosystems by filter-feeding on planktonic algae and changing the habitat structure
- Impact water delivery systems by clogging small-diameter pipelines, screens, and filters
- Impact recreation by fouling watercraft and clogging intakes and cooling lines
- Shell shape: elongated triangle shape with rounded ends
- Distinguishing feature: firmly attaches to surfaces with brown hair-like fibers, called byssal threads.



Golden Mussel Sightings Map



How to Identify?



- **Size Range:** Adult golden mussels range in size from ½ an inch to 2 inches
- **Color:** Shell color is light to dark yellowish brown to brown color
- **Shell Shape:** Elongated triangle shape with rounded ends
- **Distinguishing Feature:** Firmly attaches to surfaces with brown hair-like fibers, called byssal threads

How to report sightings?

Contact the California Department of Fish and Wildlife at invasives@wildlife.ca.gov

For more information, visit

<https://water.ca.gov/mussels>

