

HUMBOLDT BAY MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT

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August 15, 2008

Humboldt County Board of Supervisors

825 5th Street, Room 111

Eureka, CA 95501

Trinity County Board of Supervisors

P.O. Box 1613

Weaverville, CA 96093

Re: Community Education and Prevention Efforts for Aquatic Invasive Species at Ruth Lake

Dear Supervisors:

The Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District (HBMWD) supplies drinking water to the majority of Humboldt County's population, and industrial water to the Evergreen Pulp Mill on the Samoa Peninsula. HBMWD's source of supply is Ruth Lake in southern Trinity County. As such, the District has a keen and vested interest in maintaining the quality and health of this water supply resource. Ruth Lake Community Services District (CSD) provides numerous recreational opportunities, as well as significant local economic benefit in and around Ruth Lake.

We realize there are many other important stakeholders who have an interest in Ruth Lake too – leaseholders and private property owners on or around the lake, boaters and anglers in our respective communities who use Ruth Lake, as well as downstream interests, including fisheries, in the Mad River.

Unfortunately, lakes and water supply reservoirs throughout the country have been, and continue to be, infested by several dangerous and damaging invasive species – most notably the Zebra and Quagga mussels, and the New Zealand Mudsnail. The purpose of this letter is to inform you of important work our agencies have initiated, and also to enlist your support in raising awareness of this emerging issue within our community, and in formulating strategies to help prevent introduction of these invasive species into Ruth Lake and other northern California reservoirs.

Background:

The introduction of the Quagga mussel to California just last year, and its fast and aggressive spread in southern California, is perhaps the most serious and urgent threat. The Quagga mussel spreads from one water body to another either from water releases from an infested reservoir, or by boats and trailers which have been in an infested reservoir. These mussels are very small and are prone to attach themselves to any hard surface on the boat, motor or trailer. Their larvae, unfortunately, are so small they cannot be seen. Once introduced into a lake or reservoir, they multiply very quickly – one mussel may release 40,000 eggs and up to 1,000,000 in a spawning season. Therefore, exponential growth of the mussel population may occur. When this happens, they adversely affect water

supplies (by clogging pipes and other infrastructure), coat piers or other marina infrastructure , and ruin boat motors. Additionally, they upset the biological food chain and ecological balance in the infested lake, thereby affecting fisheries.

Once introduced into a water body there is currently no known method to eradicate them. Therefore, the best strategies at this time to protect Ruth Lake are boater and community education, and prevention.

What We Are Doing About this Emerging Issue:

First of all, we have received several inquiries and have been apprised of numerous "rumors," that HBMWD is "closing the lake." That is not true, at least at this time.

What we are doing is taking this emerging issue *very* seriously. We are trying to strike a delicate balance while the science is evolving, and while the threat and risk assessments are advancing state-wide. We are considering and beginning to take prudent actions to prevent introduction of these harmful invasive species into Ruth Lake if they make their way out of southern California. If the invasive mussels infest Trinity, Lewiston or Shasta Lakes in Trinity and Shasta Counties, or if they infest Clear Lake in Lake County, we need appropriate measures *to have already been put in place* to ensure the chances of introduction into Ruth Lake are minimized or eliminated.

Yesterday, the HBMWD Board of Directors decided to institute a temporary boating restriction at Ruth Lake in an attempt to protect Humboldt County's water supply from these invasive species. Only boats registered in and originating from Humboldt and Trinity Counties will be allowed to launch at Ruth Lake. Boats registered locally, but recently immersed in infested waters in southern California or the Colorado river system, are also prohibited from entering Ruth Lake. This restriction is expected to be temporary and will end once boating registration and inspection programs – which are being developed jointly by HBMWD and the Ruth Lake CSD - have been put in place.

To address this emerging issue, HBMWD and the Ruth Lake CSD have created a Joint Agency Aquatic Invasive Species Committee. A copy of the Committee Charter is attached for your information. Please let us know if you or county staff would like to be involved with this committee, or otherwise kept apprised. Please note, we are meeting with each County's Fish and Game Advisory Commission and will keep them apprised of the Committee's work.

Activities that the committee has or will undertake are as follows:

- Evaluate strategies recommended by the California Department of Fish and Game to prevent the spread of these invasive species within the State
- Develop a "threat assessment" for Ruth Lake
- Develop a "Community Education Plan" aimed at educating and raising awareness within the local boating and angling community, and the community at-large. A number of activities have already been completed in this area, with more to follow.
- Support the California Department of Fish and Game with a monitoring program to assess whether the invasive species may be present in Ruth Lake
- Develop a "Prevention Plan" which will consider and identify actions aimed at preventing introduction of these harmful mussels.

We hope to enlist your support regarding the communication and prevention efforts. Our respective District interests, and our respective County interests, are mutually aligned on this emerging issue. Working together, we hope to prevent introduction of these aggressive and harmful species into Ruth Lake and other northern California reservoirs.

Sincerely,



J. Bruce Rupp
President
Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District



Lorin Fleming
President
Ruth Lake Community Services District

Cc: w/attachments

Loretta Nickolaus, Humboldt County CAO
Mark Lovelace, Humboldt County Supervisor-elect
Kirk Girard, Director Community Development, Humboldt County
Nancy Kaytis-Slocum, Humboldt County Fish and Game Advisory Commission
Dero Forslund, Trinity County CAO
Tom Stokely, Natural Resource Principal Planner, Trinity County
Pete Finnie, President, Trinity County Fish and Game Advisory Commission
Manager and Boards/Councils, HBMWD Wholesale Municipal Customers
Jim Lund, Senior Vice President and General Manager, Evergreen Pulp

Cc: w/out attachments

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