

March 12, 2025
In re: HB2981

Dear Chair Lively,

My name is Robyn Draheim and I am the coordinator of the Oregon Invasive Species Council. The role of the Council is to act as a catalyst on invasive species issues, providing leadership and facilitating collaborative efforts across our wide network of members.

The State of Oregon is facing an unprecedented threat from invasive mussels. Recognizing that their agencies cannot successfully address invasive mussels alone, the Oregon and Washington Departments of Fish and Wildlife convened the Oregon and Washington Invasive Mussel Near-Term Action Working Group. Participants included entities that would be significantly impacted by invasive mussels (including Tribal Nations and water users) along with critical partners with management responsibilities, scientific expertise, legal authority, etc.

Working together, the group identified the highest priority actions and needs in order to increase both prevention and preparedness for invasive mussels. These are intended to function as a road map representing both a shared vision and an action plan for our two jurisdictions, and you'll see that many of their recommendations are reflected in HB2981.

While this working group was focused on shared waters, given the threat posed by any mussel infestation in the PNW, these recommendations are applicable to management priorities across our state, not just within our portion of the Columbia River Basin.

The recommendations from the working group include both near-term and long-term actions. While some can be implemented with improved coordination and with existing capacity, the working group recognizes that many are dependent upon additional funding as well as new resources, partners, tools and technologies. Overall, the recommendations focus on three areas of invasive species management: prevention, early detection, and preparedness.

Prevention is the best approach to managing invasive species, requiring the least funding, and thwarting long-term economic and environmental impacts. The working group recommends that current prevention efforts be increased, and that new and strategic preventative measures be taken to address the imminent threat of invasive mussels. Preventing new introductions means addressing the ways mussels are transported into the state: overland on trailered watercraft and other conveyances, and through untreated or un-exchanged ballast water from infested ports. This

would require creating additional mandatory check stations at strategic locations, expanding coverage at existing stations, creating new partnerships for inspections, increased outreach about the risks of invasive mussels, etc.

Early detection of invasive mussels is also crucial because it allows for rapid response and potentially eradication. Identifying new invasions early gives managers a chance to intervene before these populations become established. The working group recommends expanding early detection monitoring efforts along with updated and expanded waterbody risk assessments to focus monitoring efforts in the most at-risk locations. They also recommend states develop new partnerships with Tribes and raw water users to assist with early detection.

Last is rapid response preparedness. If prevention fails, it is vital to initiate rapid response to contain the spread and eradicate where feasible. To ensure quick action, we need additional preparedness planning along with clarity on roles and responsibilities. Recommendations include clarifying and documenting roles, responsibilities, and decision-making authorities with all jurisdictions having legal authority for a response, working with the appropriate authorities to develop a process for declaring invasive mussel emergencies, and the need to hold regular response simulations, in addition to holding training workshops and drills.

I'd also like to note that defining roles and responsibilities is especially important in Oregon where responsibility for invasive mussel prevention, detection and response is decentralized and spread across multiple agencies, unlike in Washington State where they are all housed within the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Finally, I'd like to recap the key takeaways from this bi-state working group:

- Prevention is paramount: Invasive mussels may be established in Idaho and California, but prevention is still critically important to preventing further spread and reducing negative impacts
- Rapid response is essential: State response plans should be reaffirmed, improved, and practiced. Clear roles and responsibilities are crucial to success
- Partnerships are powerful. Many relationships are long-standing, yet additional partnerships are needed to face this imminent threat. Collaborative efforts among tribal, state, federal, and local agencies, as well as industry and conservation organizations, are essential to address this shared challenge.

- Research and innovation are vital: The longer we can prevent this problem, the more time we have to find cost-effective solutions and innovative approaches that may lead to breakthroughs in early detection, control, eradication, and long-term mitigation techniques.

Thank you for your time,

Robyn Draheim
Coordinator
Oregon Invasive Species Council