

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 2, 2026

The Honorable Brian Nesvik
Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Director Nesvik:

We write to raise urgent concerns about the rapid spread of invasive golden mussels in California waterways and to urge the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to make emergency funding immediately available to support state and local response efforts.

Golden mussels pose a unique threat given they reproduce at exponential rates, clog water delivery systems, and damage water infrastructure. Golden mussels spawn several times throughout the year producing microscopic larvae in numbers reaching up to one million eggs annually per female. This has led to the unrestrained spread of larvae throughout California and has made eradication efforts especially challenging. The development of mitigation methods and necessary scientific research are underway but need extensive state and federal coordination to be effective. Golden mussel colonies infiltrate critical infrastructure, such as pipelines, pumps, and hydropower systems, by attaching to surfaces, reducing water flow, overheating pumps, and potentially causing catastrophic failure of water conveyance systems. These impacts have reduced water conveyance capacity, damaged equipment, and driven-up maintenance costs for water agencies and ratepayers alike.

After golden mussels were first detected in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (Delta) in late 2024, they have rapidly spread, threatening major water systems like the State Water Project and the Central Valley Project. These projects supply water to millions of Californians and irrigate more than 4,000,000 acres of farmland. Kern and San Joaquin Counties recently declared a local state of emergency in response to an active infestation within critical water infrastructure, citing immediate operational risks to drinking water supply, agriculture, energy production, and regional economic stability. The scale and reach of these water projects underscore the statewide risk to California's water supply, environment, and agricultural infrastructure.

Based on early golden mussel response estimates from impacted counties, local water districts are already incurring mitigation costs highlighting the severity of the threat and the growing strain on local resources. With golden mussels already spreading across more than 350 miles through connected waterways, the likelihood of a broader statewide emergency is increasing.

Despite the magnitude of this threat, dedicated federal funding streams remain limited. We urge USFWS to:

1. Expedite the availability of emergency funding through existing invasive species authorities, including programs administered under the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force.
2. Prioritize California for assistance under existing grant funding and future funding cycles, including State and Interstate Aquatic Nuisance Species Management Plan grants.
3. Increase funding allocations for early detection, rapid response, and containment efforts, particularly for large-scale water infrastructure systems that cannot be easily isolated.
4. Coordinate with federal partners, including the Bureau of Reclamation, Army Corps of Engineers, and Environmental Protection Agency, to ensure a whole-of-government response to this rapidly evolving threat.
5. Expedite the listing of golden mussels on the injurious species list under the Lacey Act.
6. Provide a status update on the development of the golden mussel National Control and Management Plan to eradicate established golden mussel populations and prevent further spread, as directed by Congress in the FY26 Interior Appropriations Report.

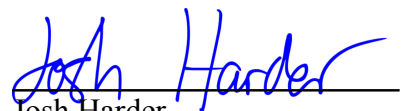
Without immediate federal support, California water agencies, farmers, and communities will continue to bear escalating costs as this invasive species spreads. Early intervention and sustained investment are essential to prevent long-term, systemwide damage to the nation's most critical water infrastructure network.

We appreciate your attention to this urgent issue and stand ready to work with USFWS to ensure an effective and coordinated response.

Sincerely,



Vince Fong
Member of Congress



Josh Harder
Member of Congress



David G. Valadao
Member of Congress



Jim Costa
Member of Congress