



*The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California*

# NEWS RELEASE

P. O. Box 54153, Los Angeles, California 90054-0153 • (213) 217-6485 • [www.mwdh2o.com](http://www.mwdh2o.com)

Contact: Bob Muir, (213) 217-6930; (213) 324-5213, mobile

July 18, 2007

## METROPOLITAN TO SHUT DOWN, DRY OUT COLORADO RIVER AQUEDUCT OVER 10 DAYS TO CONTROL SPREAD OF INVASIVE QUAGGA MUSSELS

Major stretches of the 242-mile Colorado River Aqueduct will be drained and dried out this month in the latest effort to control the spread of highly invasive quagga mussels in Southern California, officials from the Metropolitan Water District announced today.

Metropolitan scheduled the 10-day aqueduct shutdown—which begins Friday, July 20—after inspections late last month indicated that quaggas had spread further into the water system and grew in greater densities.

“By shutting down the aqueduct, we hope to learn even more about effectively containing the quagga by re-examining specific portions of the aqueduct that are most susceptible to invasion, particularly underground siphons, tunnels, canals and pumps,” said Debra C. Man, Metropolitan’s assistant general manager and chief operating officer.

“Along with the inspections, we will dry out 63 miles of open aqueduct to effectively eliminate any quagga larvae that may exist. Drying out larvae has proven to be one of the most efficient methods to control the spread of quaggas,” she added.

Man stressed that the reliability and quality of water supplies to Metropolitan’s member public agencies would not be affected by the outage.

Introduced to U.S. waterways from Ukraine about two decades ago in the ballast tanks of large container ships, quagga mussels are an invasive species that disrupts traditional aquatic ecosystems. The tiny freshwater bivalve mollusk, along with the similar zebra mussels, have severely affected water infrastructure in the Great Lakes and have caused billions of dollars of damage by clogging water systems primarily on the East Coast.

more . . . . .

The upcoming action marks the second time Metropolitan has used an aqueduct shutdown to monitor and control quaggas. After mussels were initially discovered along the Colorado River in Lake Mead in January and subsequently at the intake of the MWD's Colorado River Aqueduct, Metropolitan took advantage of a previously planned shutdown in March to inspect its aqueduct system and monitor the status of the mussel.

During the March shutdown, Metropolitan found more than 750 quaggas, with most discovered along a string of buried pipelines—or siphons—in the initial 21 miles of the aqueduct system. Those mussels were found in low concentrations, generally in a range of two to 10 per square meter, Man said.

“Although the total number of mussels found during the March shutdown was unanticipated, we were encouraged that they were sparsely distributed,” Man said. “Recent inspections, however, indicated that mussels are now 125 miles downstream from our Colorado River intake, after being discovered attached to a pump at the last of our five pumping plants along the aqueduct system.”

Along with the location of the mussels, Metropolitan detected quantities of mussels near 500 per square meter at its river intake, which biologists have attributed to the spring quagga spawning in the lower Colorado River.

“With this latest shutdown, we’re being as proactive as possible to control the spread of quaggas not only in our system, but throughout California,” Man said. “When pumping resumes, we will increase chlorination in the aqueduct system to destroy mussel larvae in an attempt to prevent the reintroduction of mussels.”

Metropolitan continues to work closely with California’s departments of Fish and Game, Water Resources and Boating and Waterways, as well as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other local, state and federal agencies to identify and implement additional detection and control measures, she added.

Boaters are urged to clean and inspect their boats after leaving any Western lake or waterway to prevent the spread of invasive species. Tips on how to clean boats can be found on the state Department of Fish and Game’s Web site, [www.dfg.ca.gov](http://www.dfg.ca.gov), or at [www.dvlake.com](http://www.dvlake.com).

###

*The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California is a cooperative of 26 cities and water agencies serving 18 million people in six counties. The district imports water from the Colorado River and Northern California to supplement local supplies, and helps its members to develop increased water conservation, recycling, storage and other resource-management programs.*