

**INVASIVE MUSSEL INSPECTION  
PLAN  
FOR THE  
HERITAGE RANCH OWNERS ASSOCIATION**

**April 27, 2015**

## **PREFACE**

The primary goal of the Heritage Ranch Owners= Association (HROA) Invasive Mussel Inspection Plan (PLAN) is to help prevent the transfer of quagga and zebra mussels from entering Lake Nacimiento. The second goal of the PLAN is to keep the waters open to boating and recreation for all HROA members and their guests to the greatest extent possible.

While it may only take one infested vessel to establish an invasive mussel population, the vast majority of vessels using Lake Nacimiento are not transporting mussels. HROA is in the early development stage of implementation of an effective prevention program. The long-term significant objective is to readily identify high risk vessels so that personnel can be focused where they are the most critically needed.

HROA anticipates periodic updates to the PLAN as a result of continued discussion and dialog, and in the sharing of ideas and goals with other agencies and organizations, and all HROA members. Changes to regulations at the local, state, and possibly federal level that occur may also require updates. Outreach to the members of HROA will be by e-mail ([mussel.hroa@gmail.com](mailto:mussel.hroa@gmail.com) and [generalmanager@hroa.us](mailto:generalmanager@hroa.us)), website ([www.hroa.us](http://www.hroa.us)), mailings, handouts, personal contact, and message center ((805) 226-7648).

This PLAN has been updated for the 2015 boating season and will serve as the PLAN until further notice.

## **BACKGROUND**

HROA is working directly with both San Luis Obispo and Monterey Counties to protect Lake Nacimiento from the spread of invasive mussels. In 2011, HROA became aware that stricter measures would be put in place to better monitor all vessels entering Lake Nacimiento. Prior to 2011 there was a self-certification program in place. For private ramp owners such as HROA, this means that all vessels utilizing the HROA launch ramp must undergo a mandatory screening process and receive a Vessel Permit from a Certified Inspector indicating the vessel was inspected prior to launching. All vessels moored in the water and tied to property owned or controlled by HROA must also be inspected. The Vessel Permits are valid for a maximum of 21 days with all vessels subject to leaving Heritage Ranch subject to re-certification. Two significant changes to the program beginning in 2011 include that: 1) the Certified Inspector must inspect all vessels, and 2) the Certified Inspector must sign and stamp the Vessel Permit in order for it to be valid.

Recreation at Lake Nacimiento and the Lake Nacimiento Resort is governed by Chapter 11.20 of the San Luis Obispo County Code. This entire chapter was revised in May 2010

by the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors; the revisions include language that strengthens water quality protection and also gives enforcement authority to the Monterey County Parks Department as well as the San Luis Obispo Sheriff=s Department. A fine of up to \$2,000.00 may be issued by San Luis Obispo and Monterey County peace officers on Lake Nacimiento for non-compliance with the Invasive Mussel Program. Both agencies have stated they intend to enforce the San Luis Obispo County Code to promote compliance. The enforcement began on May 27, 2011 and is on-going. Lake Nacimiento is also under the jurisdiction of the California Fish and Game. Section 2301 and 2302 regulate the transfer of mussels and requires any person, or federal, state, or local agency, district or authority that owns or manages a reservoir, to develop and implement a program designed to prevent the introduction of nonnative quagga and zebra mussels. The Monterey County Water Resources Agency is responsible for the Lake Nacimiento Reservoir.

HROA is expected to develop a PLAN in compatibility with these objectives and standards at the request of all entities sharing authority on Lake Nacimiento. HROA formally adopted their PLAN on June 10, 2011.

## **APPROACH**

HROA employs a Mussel Inspection Manager, an Assistant Mussel Manager and appropriate seasonal employees who will all become Certified Inspectors operating under the control of HROA (HROA CERTIFIED INSPECTORS). HROA intends to actively recruit volunteers to assist the paid staff to help reduce costs to the members and their guests in implementing this PLAN. Volunteers will not work separately from the paid staff, and all volunteers will report to the Mussel Inspection Manager. The Volunteer Program will focus on assisting HROA personnel, and on educating members and guests on quagga and zebra mussels related to Lake Nacimiento. All personnel will clock in and out at the Main Gatehouse. (Employees are expected to work less than 30 hours a week, and no more than 5 hours a day except in an emergency.)

It is important to note that it is not possible to certify vessels are free of mussels, only that the most current and effective protocols and standards have been applied in preventing mussel invasion. Only vessels which pose a minimal risk will be allowed to launch at the Heritage Ranch launch ramp. High risk vessels are ones which have been used in any body of water known or suspected of having zebra or quagga mussels in the past 30 days. Vessels may also be subject to risk if they are not clean, and to the extent practical, drained and dry.

To make a minimal risk assessment, and to establish effective protocols and standards for inspecting vessels, the HROA CERTIFIED INSPECTORS will utilize three (3) steps for inspecting all vessels on Heritage Ranch. These steps include:

- **Screening Interview**

- **Visual Inspection**
- **Certification or Exclusion**

Vessel owners must be present during the Screening Interview and Visual Inspection, except as otherwise stated in this document.

**Screening Interview:** The Screening Interview will consist of asking the owner of the vessel a series of questions prior to launching or entry that are designed to determine the level of risk posed by that vessel based on its recent history of use. A standard Screening Interview, at a minimum, will include the following questions: the primary address of the owner of the vessel; the specific location where the vessel was last used; the date of the last use; the location of where the vessel is registered, and the vessel CF Number. In order to be most effective, the Screening Interview should not rely totally on the responses given, but the person conducting the interview should be attentive enough to make sure that the responses given match the physical evidence available and are credible.

The Screening Interview should also be utilized to provide the opportunity to explain the importance of prevention and to educate the vessel owners on ways they can clean their vessels to keep them mussel free and have them prepared for an inspection. A hand-out can be provided for each type of vessel which demonstrates the type of self inspections that can be completed. Vessels that will be excluded during the Screening Interview will include the following:

- Any vessel that has been on an infested lake within the past 30 days
- Any reasonable suspicion of deception on the part of the owner of the vessel during the screening interview

**Visual Inspection:** The Visual Inspection will be in conjunction with the training provided to determine the presence or likelihood of mussel contamination. A checklist which will be part of the Screening Interview form will be used when conducting the Visual Inspection. The Visual Inspection will cease at any time it is determined the minimal risk assessment is exceeded. The vessel being inspected shall meet the following minimal standards or it will be excluded:

- Clean: Absent of visible mussels or attached vegetation, dirt, debris or surface deposits including mussel shells or residue on the vessel, trailer, or outdrive that could mask the presence of attached mussels.

- **Drained:** To the extent practical, all water drained from any live-well, bait-well, storage compartment, bilge area, engine compartment, floor, ballast tank, water storage and delivery system, cooler or other water storage area of the vessel, trailer or engine.
- **Dry:** No visible sign of standing water on or in the vessel, trailer or engine

Note on Ballast Tanks Areas that can maintain water or moisture for extended periods like ballast tanks and other hard to access and drain water storage areas do not dry sufficiently. When ballast tanks or other inaccessible water storage areas are present, a higher standard of scrutiny should be applied.

**Certification:** The Certification process will be completed for all vessels which are determined to pass the Screening Interview and Visual Inspection.

**Exclusion:** Exclusion will be only for vessels that exceed the minimal risk assessment, and for vessel owners who recklessly disregard any directive given by HROA personnel and volunteers including refusing to have their vessel inspected. Those vessels will not be allowed to be launched at Heritage Ranch and shall be directed to the public launch ramp at Lake Nacimiento Resort, and/or reported to the appropriate authorities including the HROA Board of Directors.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

**Vessels which must be Inspected:** All vessels using the Heritage Ranch launch ramp or on Lake Nacimiento and tied to property owned or controlled by HROA (including vessels which stay in Lake Nacimiento) must be inspected. Vessels in dry storage do not need to be inspected while they are in dry storage. The Vessel Permit is valid for a maximum of 14 days. When a Vessel Permit expires, a new one must be obtained. Any time a vessel leaves Heritage Ranch it also needs to be re-inspected. The types of vessels requiring an inspection include every description of watercraft used or capable of being used as a means of transportation on water (with limited exception), including motorized and non-motorized vessels, such as power boats, sailboats, personal watercraft, canoes and kayaks.

**Inspection Locations:** It is important for all persons to plan ahead when using Lake Nacimiento and to coordinate their intended launch dates with their mussel inspections based on the HROA Mussel Inspection Schedule provided. Please also review the Main Marina Gate Arm System below for additional information. For purposes of this document the boating season is defined as the Friday before Memorial Day through the Sunday after Labor Day.

HROA will set up an Inspection Station at the Main Marina, which will be manned throughout the boating season, Friday through Sunday. On Saturday the times are 7:00

a.m. to 5:00 p.m. On Friday and Sunday the times are 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (As long as you are in line by the specified times an inspection will be completed). Those who receive an inspection at the Main Marina will have their HROA Identification Card activated within one (1) hour of that inspection to use the Main Marina Gate Arm System.

Vessels moored in Lake Nacimiento can be inspected on the water if in an HROA owned slip, or on the HROA shoreline near the launch ramp (or at the public launch ramp at Lake Nacimiento Resort (according to the Monterey County Parks Department).

Certified Inspectors (other than those under HROA's control) may use the Main Gatehouse designated stamp, which is available 24-7, for their own vessels (only), and upon proof to the HROA personnel of their identification and ownership of the vessel. Those who are self-inspecting as Certified Inspectors will have their HROA Identification Card activated by 9:00 p.m., corresponding the date the Vessel Permit was appropriately presented to an HROA representative on or before 7:00 p.m. that same day.

Inspections at the Main Gatehouse are on a limited basis, as personnel are available. Those who receive an inspection at the Main Gatehouse will have their HROA Identification Card activated within one (1) hour of that inspection. Any other inspections will be handled on a case-by-case basis, through the Mussel Manager and Assistant Mussel Manager, and are expected to be on a limited basis as personnel are available.

Regarding the above schedule for all options shown, during the off-season, the Mussel Manager shall determine an appropriate schedule and post the locations, times and dates that inspections are available, and post that information on the HROA website and bulletin boards as needed.

No banding program is included in this PLAN at this time. HROA maintains a database of all inspections completed.

HROA will be issued 15 Certification Stamps from San Luis Obispo County, each having a unique number. Only HROA CERTIFIED INSPECTORS and designated HROA personnel will have access to the 15 Certification Stamps, which will be under the control of the Mussel Inspection Manager. Volunteers will not be issued Certification Stamps.

**HROA's 6 month and 12 month program:** HROA is offering a 6 month and 12 month (annual) program for those members who wish to have their vessels automatically inspected on a three week basis, which vessel does not leave Heritage Ranch during that time. This will be handled on a case-by-case basis and be up to the Mussel Manager and Assistant Mussel Manager to determine if the member qualifies for this program. Inspections are done at the member's residence, on one of the 80-Boat Slips, or on a private dock or shoreline, and if a release form is signed, HROA personnel will be able to conduct the inspection without the member being present. The completed inspection form would be available for pick-up at the Main Gatehouse (corresponding a short

screening interview), except for the 80-Boat Slip lessees, in which case the completed inspection form would be placed in a locked box on the slips. The inspections done at the 80-Boat Slips, docks and shoreline will be completed on every third Thursday between 9:00 a.m. and 12:00 noon.

## **MAIN MARINA GATE ARM SYSTEM**

ENTRY - A single entry lane with a gate, activated by two separate card readers and various cameras is set up to capture and record photographic information related to the driver, the vehicle and vessel utilizing the entry gate when entering the launching area. One of the card readers will be labeled "Autos Only" and the other will be labeled "Autos/Boats Only". When a person approaches the card reader station and holds up their current assigned Identification Card to be read, the first card reader for Autos Only will allow that individual to gain entry the same as at the entrances at the Main Gate, North Gate and Main Entry to 1910 at Heritage Ranch. The only difference is that a loop installed into the pavement behind the auto zone will not allow the gate arm to open if that vehicle is towing a trailer.

The second card reader for "Autos/Boats Only" will be programmed to only accept specified cards, and is expected to be used for all of those launching vessels, as explained above in relation to receiving a mussel inspection. The expectation is that once a person receives their mussel inspection, the inspector would provide data to the Main Gatehouse to activate the corresponding card for the specified period of time the mussel inspection is good for.

For a guest to be able to launch their vessel, they would need to utilize a temporary card which would be issued to them. When a guest registers at the Main Gatehouse and after they receive their mussel inspection, their temporary card would be activated to correspond to the dates they have paid to utilize the launch ramp for and/or received their mussel inspection. This card would only function at the Main Marina. If the guest does not return their issued card at the end of their paid stay date, it would not continue to function and a bill would eventually be sent to the owner responsible for that guest, to pay for a replacement card.

Those who have been given water rights by the member annually will be given a guest card, as required for Marina entrance. Those who have family members wishing to use their vessels when they are not on Heritage Ranch will be handled on a case-by-case basis by the Mussel Manager and Assistant Mussel Manager, potentially using a guest card to gain access, which can be picked up at the Main Gatehouse.

The card reader station is located behind the entry gate far enough, so that if a person cannot get the gate to raise to access the launch ramp, they can exit the entry lane through the parking lot behind the entry lane and find assistance from HROA personnel.

As an individual goes through the entry gate, cameras would transfer and record data via fiber optic. HROA would capture all vehicles and vessels going through the entry gate and be able to retain that information.

EXIT - The exit lane would operate the same as at the North Gatehouse. A loop in the pavement would activate the exit arm as the vehicle approaches it, allowing the person to leave the launch area.

HROA personnel are expected to be on duty during busy holiday weekends to assist those attempting to use the gate system and for assisting in verifying Vessel Permits.

**Other:** HROA will utilize the Vessel Screening Permit (Revision 12/27/13) form, a log-sheet, and a 3-Part Payment form for conducting inspections and logging in information.

## **FEES**

Beginning July 1, 2011 a small fee will be charged to recoup costs associated with this PLAN. The rates currently are:

- \$5.00 / Inspection at the Inspection Station or other Designated Areas
- \$5.00 / Inspection for Guest Vessel Inspections
- \$35.00 / 6 Month Program (for slip lessees)
- \$45.00 / 6 Month Program (other appointments)  
\$30.00 Each additional watercraft at same location
- \$65.00 / Annual Inspections Program (for slip lessees)
- \$85.00 / Annual Inspection Program (other appointments)  
\$55.00 Each additional watercraft at same location

A 3-Part form will be utilized for identifying fee amounts, which must be signed by the responsible property owner, and include payment in full at the time of inspection. Payment can also be made in advance through the HROA Office. Cash or checks will be accepted by HROA personnel (no credit cards). The Mussel Manager and/or Assistant Mussel Manager shall be responsible to account for all monies received, and deliver all funds received and a report of transactions, to the HROA Bookkeeper for processing.



## **REPORTING**

HROA will not take responsibility for any Certification Stamps not issued to them that are found on Heritage Ranch property, and HROA personnel and volunteers will be directed to report use of those unauthorized stamps to the appropriate authorities.

HROA personnel and volunteers will be directed to report any vessels seen launching at Heritage Ranch without a current Vessel Permit to the appropriate authorities.