



Lake Tahoe

Federal Advisory Committee

February 6, 2013

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Re: Additional Measures to Prevent the Spread of Aquatic Invasive Species

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

I am writing to you with recommendations respectfully submitted by members of the Lake Tahoe Federal Advisory Committee (LTFAC). Through your leadership as Co-Chair of the National Invasive Species Council (NISC), we believe you can initiate actions that will make a real difference in the fight against the spread of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS), especially in the western United States.

1) We recommend that additional policy and regulatory actions be taken to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS) from lands and waters under federal management.

2) We urge that the quagga mussel be listed as injurious and that enforcement under provisions of the Lacey Act be aggressive so as to increase both the scope and effectiveness of efforts to prevent the spread of AIS.

Background

Each year, vessels arrive at Lake Tahoe from across the country carrying dangerous AIS. Introduced non-native species are already in Lake Tahoe and have caused documented changes to water quality and ecosystem structure. Our concern, like others nation-wide, is to prevent colonization by additional invaders that would have new and even more significant impacts. Prior to being allowed into Lake Tahoe, all vessels are inspected and decontaminated by trained inspectors employed by our

Watercraft Inspection Program. **Despite these rigorous inspections, the transport of AIS from federally managed lands and waters continues to put Lake Tahoe and other lakes and water bodies in our region at serious risk.**

AIS is a serious threat to Lake Tahoe's status as recognized national environmental treasure and *Outstanding National Resource Water* (ONRW). The spread of AIS threatens to undo the more than \$1.6 billion that has been invested by federal, state and local partners in environmental restoration and improvements throughout the Lake Tahoe watershed. AIS also threatens the region's tourist-based economy. Should quagga mussels, zebra mussels, the spiny water flea (a small planktonic crustacean), or others now firmly established east of the Mississippi, take hold at Lake Tahoe, studies estimate the economic loss at tens of millions of dollars. We fear that both environmental and economic damage from AIS may be irreversible.

We understand that efforts to address these issues have been initiated within the Department of Interior in coordination with the National Invasive Species Council (NISC). As Co-Chair, and with the participation of the USDA Forest Service and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service on the AIS Task Force, our Committee asks that you make it a priority to work with the Departments of Interior and Commerce **to identify additional policy and/or regulatory solutions to the threats that Lake Tahoe and the country face from the spread of aquatic invasive species. We appreciate your leadership in this regard.**

We submit these recommendations consistent with our charter under the Federal Advisory Committee Act and our purpose – to make recommendations to the Department of Agriculture and the Lake Tahoe Federal Interagency Partnership as established in Executive Order 13057. We note that the Interior Department is also a valued member of this Partnership.

The Lake Tahoe Federal Advisory is proud to have played a role in supporting the establishment and funding of the Lake Tahoe Region AIS Management Plan and the multi-agency Lake Tahoe AIS Coordinating Committee. We thank you in advance for your consideration of these recommendations for additional actions and protections. We invite your response to share with members of LTFAC and participants in the AIS Coordinating Committee as time may allow.

Very sincerely yours,

/s/Steve Teshara

Steve Teshara
Chair, Lake Tahoe Federal Advisory Committee

cc: Mr. Randy Moore, Regional Forester, USDA Forest Service, Region 5
Ms. Nancy Gibson, Forest Supervisor, Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit
Mr. Jeff Marsolais, Deputy Forest Supervisor, Designated Federal Official,
LTFAC
Ms. Lori C. Williams, Executive Director, National Invasive Species Council
Mr. Susan Mangin, Executive Secretary, Aquatic Invasive Species Task Force
Ms. Carolyn Wells, Deputy Assistant Field Supervisor, USFWS, Nevada Fish and
Wildlife Office
Ms. Joanne Marchetta, Executive Director, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency
Mr. Ted Thayer, AIS Program Coordinator, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency
Members, Lake Tahoe AIS Coordination Committee
Members, Lake Tahoe Federal Advisory Committee