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San Francisco District

## MEDIA ADVISORY

### For Immediate Release

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## Quagga/Zebra Mussel Sniffing Dog to Inspect Boats at Lake Sonoma, Lake Mendocino this Labor Day Weekend



(Santa Rosa, CA) Boaters going to Lake Sonoma and Lake Mendocino this Labor Day weekend will undergo voluntary inspections by a quagga/zebra mussel sniffing dog named Popeye. The inspection program will help prevent the spread of invasive quagga and zebra mussels from infesting North Coast waterways. Members of the media are invited to meet Popeye and watch him sniff for invasive mussels on boats at a special media availability Friday, August 31 between 9 a.m. and 10 a.m. at Lake Sonoma's public/government boat launch ramp located at 3333 Skaggs Springs Road, Geyserville, CA 95441 (Follow the signs to the boat ramp once you reach this location).

Before entering the lakes, boaters will be asked to allow Popeye to inspect their watercraft for the tiny mussels that have devastated the environment, fisheries and infrastructure in 26 California reservoirs. Boats are the primary vector for the spread of mussels from infested waterways to non-infested waterways. The mussels first arrived in the Great Lakes from Europe in the 1980's and have spread to many water bodies in the eastern and Midwestern United States, including California. The first confirmed

find of zebra mussels in California occurred in 2008 in San Benito County at San Justo Reservoir. That reservoir is now closed to boating recreation due to the mussel infestation. Quagga mussels have now been found in waterways within San Diego, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Orange counties. The mussels are on the top of reservoir operator's most wanted list and have caused more than \$500 million in damage nationwide. Once infested, the mussels reproduce quickly to overtake a waterway and destroy its natural habitats and fisheries, clog water infrastructure and result in millions of dollars in maintenance costs.

To help prevent the spread of the mussels into North Bay waterways and keep Lake Sonoma and Lake Mendocino open to boating recreation, the Sonoma County Water Agency, in partnership with the County of Mendocino and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, has organized the mussel dog inspections for this Labor Day weekend. A mandatory boat inspection program is currently being planned to take effect in summer 2013 by a consortium of North Coast local governments and reservoir operators.

Popeye will randomly inspect boats at both reservoirs between 8 a.m. and 1 p.m. according to the below schedule:

**Lake Sonoma:** Friday, August 31 and Saturday, September 1

**Lake Mendocino:** Sunday, September 2 and Monday, September 3

If a mussel is found on a boat, the boat will not be allowed to launch and the California Department of Fish and Game will be immediately notified.

**What:** Labor Day quagga/zebra mussel inspections at Lake Sonoma and Lake Mendocino by Popeye, the mussel sniffing dog. Media will be given special interview access to Popeye and his trainer, and shown a demonstration of his mussel sniffing capabilities.

**Who:** Popeye, the quagga/zebra mussel sniffing dog, local officials including Sonoma County Water Agency Director and Sonoma County Supervisor Mike McGuire, Mendocino County Supervisor Carre Brown, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers rangers, Sonoma County Water Agency officials

**When:** Media availability, interviews and demonstrations will be held on Friday, August 31 between 9 a.m. and 10 a.m.

**Location:** Lake Sonoma, public/government boat launch ramp, 3333 Skaggs Springs Road, Geyserville, CA 95441 – Follow the signs to the boat ramp.

**MEDIA RSVP:** Contact Brad Sherwood (707) 547-1927 or (707) 322-8192 (cell)

For more information about the quagga and zebra mussels, visit [dontmoveamussel.com](http://dontmoveamussel.com)

[Download Radio Commercial \(MP3\) announcing this media availability](#)

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*The Sonoma County Water Agency is working to secure our future by investing in our water resources, community and environment. The Water Agency provides water supply, flood protection and sanitation services for portions of Sonoma and Marin counties. Visit us on the Web at [www.sonomacountywater.org](http://www.sonomacountywater.org).*