

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 28, 2017

Secretary Zinke
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

Secretary Zinke:

We write to request your assistance in addressing the recently discovered arrival of quagga mussel larva in Colorado's Green Mountain Reservoir. As you know, invasive mussels can damage water infrastructure that generates hydropower, and provides water to municipal, industrial, and agricultural users. Invasive species also wreak havoc on aquatic ecosystems, damaging fisheries and threatening the outdoor recreation economy in Colorado and states downstream. We urge you to respond rapidly, deploy available resources, and work with the state and local communities to prevent this initial detection from growing into a full infestation.

A rapid response is critical during the window of opportunity immediately after the detection of invasive species. As you know, the National Invasive Species Council has identified steps for the federal government to take when new invasive species are detected, including providing technical and financial support and additional human resources. We would like to know what steps the Department is taking to deploy these resources to support Colorado's monitoring, identification, inspection, and decontamination efforts. The Department of the Interior has also identified actions to strengthen coordination to address invasive mussels in the west, including rapid response teams to assist states with sampling. Please identify any rapid response teams, or other DOI resources, that have been deployed to respond to this invasive mussel detection in Colorado and might coordinate with state and local entities in this effort.

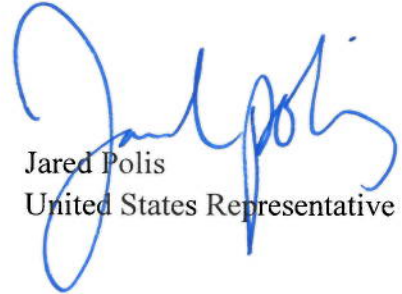
As a headwater state that is currently free of adult invasive mussels, the detection of invasive mussel larva poses a tangible threat to our economy. The Department of Interior has recognized the importance of preventing invasive mussel infestations in western headwater states, such as Montana where larva was identified in late 2016 and resources were deployed to the Columbia River Basin. Similar to Montana, in Colorado the federal government generally defers to the state on water issues and works in cooperation with the state in operating and managing reservoirs. The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) is also the recreational manager of eight at-risk water bodies in Colorado. We urge these federal agencies to financially and logistically support state activities to prevent the spread of invasive species, such as requiring boats to enter only at inspection stations, providing adequate decontamination facilities, and accelerating efforts to close unauthorized access points. Without support for these efforts, recreational access to these water bodies is at risk.

We thank you for your timely consideration of this request. A swift response now will limit future costs that would result from the long-term management of an invasive mussel infestation in Colorado.

Sincerely,



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Jared Polis
United States Representative



Cory Gardner
United States Senator



Diana DeGette
United States Representative



Ed Perlmutter
United States Representative



Doug Lamborn
United States Representative



Scott Tipton
United States Representative



Mike Coffman
United States Representative

cc: National Invasive Species Council; US Forest Service; Bureau of Reclamation; Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers