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May 12, 2026

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom,

I am writing on behalf of the Kern County Board of Supervisors to respectfully request that you proclaim a State of Emergency in response to the confirmed presence and ongoing spread of invasive golden mussels (*Limnoperna fortunei*) within California's water conveyance systems.

Recent confirmations by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife¹ and the U.S. Geological Survey² establish that golden mussels are present within Kern County infrastructure, including the California Aqueduct and associated State Water Project facilities. This is not a speculative or emerging threat, it is an active infestation within critical infrastructure that supports municipal water delivery, agricultural irrigation, groundwater recharge, and industrial operations across the Central Valley and beyond.

Kern County's economy and public health are uniquely dependent on the reliability of these state and federally operated water systems. The County's agricultural sector, one of the most productive in the nation, along with its energy production and industrial base, relies on uninterrupted water conveyance. Golden mussel infestations pose immediate risks to these systems through biofouling that restricts water flow, damage to equipment, reductions in efficiency, and significant increases to operational costs. These impacts are further compounded by California's ongoing drought conditions and groundwater sustainability requirements, which heighten the consequences of any disruption to water delivery.

¹ <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Invasives/Mussels/News/tag/golden>

² <https://nas.er.usgs.gov/queries/SpecimenViewer.aspx?SpecimenID=1897457>

While the State of California has taken important steps through its Golden Mussel Response Framework, current efforts are primarily focused on prevention and containment. These strategies, while necessary, are insufficient to address the immediate and ongoing risks associated with active infestations in major water conveyance infrastructure, particularly in regions like Kern County that depend heavily on imported water supplies.

Because these water systems are owned, operated, and regulated by state and federal agencies, including the California Department of Water Resources and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and serve millions of Californians, the threat posed by golden mussels is inherently a matter of statewide significance and responsibility. Local jurisdictions lack the authority and resources necessary to effectively respond to infestations occurring within these interconnected systems, yet bear substantial economic and operational consequences.

A statewide emergency declaration would provide the necessary framework to:

- Accelerate interagency coordination and response efforts
- Unlock critical state and federal funding
- Expedite regulatory approvals for treatment and mitigation strategies
- Support the protection of essential water infrastructure
- Advance the development and deployment of long-term control technologies

Given the scale, urgency, and statewide implications of this threat, Kern County respectfully urges your Administration to take immediate action to safeguard California's water supply, economy, and environmental resources.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration of this request. Kern County stands ready to partner with the State and federal agencies in addressing this critical issue.

Sincerely,



Phillip Peters, Chairman
Kern County Board of Supervisors

cc: Caroline Thomas Jacobs, Cal OES
Wade Crowfoot, Natural Resources
Meghan Hertel, CA Department of Fish and Wildlife
Karla Nemeth, CA Department of Water Resources
Eric Oppenheimer, State Water Resources Control Board
Honorable Members, Kern Legislative Delegation
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