

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

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Governor Bullock Forms Rapid Response Team to Address Aquatic Invasive Species

Helena, MT – Governor Steve Bullock issued an [executive order](#) today declaring a statewide natural resource emergency for Montana water bodies due to the detection of the larvae of invasive aquatic mussels at Tiber Reservoir and suspected detections at Canyon Ferry Reservoir and the Milk and Missouri rivers. The signing of the Executive Order triggers the deployment of an interagency rapid response team to respond to the emerging situation.

“Aquatic invasive species are a serious threat to Montana’s critical infrastructure and economy. The deployment of the multi-agency rapid response team will work quickly to identify and contain existing mussel populations, and prevent future introduction to other water ways,” Bullock said. “The potential economic, ecological and recreational impacts for Montana and our region must be addressed quickly and every effort must be taken to prevent the additional spread of this threat.”

Bullock has directed the Montana Invasive Species Advisory Council, Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, and Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks, to form a coordinated Rapid Response Team to immediately respond to the situation.

“We’ve been working statewide and regionally for decades to prevent the introduction of aquatic invasive mussels into Montana,” said incident commander Matthew Wolcott, who is leading the rapid

response team. “With these detections we’re quickly transitioning from prevention efforts to a control and containment strategy to protect Montana water bodies and others within region.”

Last month, aquatic invasive mussel larva was discovered in samples at Tiber Reservoir. Further testing at Tiber confirmed the presence of mussel larvae. Ongoing sampling and testing efforts turned up water samples from Canyon Ferry Reservoir, the Milk River downstream of Nelson Reservoir and the Missouri River upstream of Townsend that were suspect for the mussel larvae. Additional samples from suspect water bodies are still being analyzed to provide further confirmation. Those tests results are expected within the next two weeks.

Montana is a headwater state for three regionally significant river systems and the economic, environmental and recreational impacts of an invasive aquatic mussel infestation has national implications. The location of the detections, the value of the fisheries and recreational resources, the proximity to critical state infrastructure such as hydroelectric dams, municipal water supplies, and irrigation structures require an effective and coordinated response.

“Montana has prepared for this event and has the response structure in place,” said Bryce Christiaens, chair of the Governor’s Council on Invasive Species and a member of the response team. “With the support from the Governor and of regional invasive species partners, we have the ability to respond with an intense and coordinated effort.”

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