



AQUATIC INVASIVE MUSSEL¹ PROGRAM

BOAT LAUNCH PROTOCOL



STANDARDS:

San Luis Obispo and Monterey counties are authorized under San Luis Obispo County Code 11.20.120 and Monterey County Code 14.12.080 to establish and designate health, sanitation, and pollution standards for vessels operating at Lake Nacimiento. To protect the lake, it shall be unlawful to:

- Launch or place into contact with any waters within Lake Nacimiento, any vessel or vessel trailer that is polluted, infested with invasive aquatic species, or is not seaworthy or sanitary.
- Launch any vessel or vessel trailer that has been on any infested lakes within the past 30 days or failed a vessel inspection. No decontamination certificates will be accepted.
- Launch any vessel or vessel trailer that has not been "cleaned, drained, and dried" before being placed in Lake Nacimiento waters.
- Launch any vessel that a certified vessel screener has not inspected², nor has been issued a **valid vessel screening permit**³ for Lake Nacimiento.

All boats, vessels, and trailers must pass an initial inspection before launching at Lake Nacimiento. Monterey County and San Luis Obispo County can prohibit access to Lake Nacimiento for all vessels and trailers that do not conform to the following requirements.

All vessels on Lake Nacimiento must either carry a valid, current Vessel Screening Permit **or be actively enrolled** in the Lake Nacimiento Resident Vessel Program. Failure to present a valid permit while on the lake may result in fines up to \$2,000 under the authority of California Fish and Wildlife Code §§ 2300–2302; San Luis Obispo County Code § 11.20.120; Monterey County Code §§ 14.12.130, 1.20, and 1.22; Penal Code § 853.6, Title 3, Part 2; and Public Resources Code § 5380.

¹ Quagga, Zebra, and Golden mussels are invasive species that damage the environment, negatively impact recreational boating, and threaten California's economy. If these non-native species are introduced to a body of water, they will be nearly impossible to eliminate. Among other things, invasive mussels may:

- attach to any hard surface such as piers, water intakes, and the hulls, engines and steering components of boats;
- filter feed on the microscopic plants and animals that form the base of the food chain;
- disrupt native species; and spawn multiple times a year.

Boats are the primary transporters of invasive mussels to uninfested areas either as adults attached to vessels or as larvae in engine, bilge, or live well water. Golden mussel importation, transportation, and possession are prohibited as of 12/19/24 per California Code of Regulations Title 14, § 671.

² A certified Vessel Screener is a person who has attended and passed a County of San Luis Obispo or Monterey County WIT 1 Screening class. To remain a valid screener for Lake Nacimiento, each screener will need to attend a recertification class every three (3) years.

³ A certified vessel screener will perform a visual inspection of your watercraft and ask for a current vessel registration. Vessel Screening Permits are required for all watercraft capable of holding standing water, including but not limited to: motorized vessels, canoes, kayaks, paddle boards, and pedal boats that bear assigned serial numbers and are valid for 21 days.

1. Screening permits are only valid for entry to Nacimiento Lake and are valid only for the length of the current visit and may not **exceed 21 consecutive days**.
2. A certified screener must officially stamp a Vessel Screening Permit for it to be valid.
3. During an official lake-wide event (fishing tournaments, races, etc), all vessels participating in the event must be screened at the main Nacimiento Lake launch ramp by a certified screener. No self-screening will be permitted at any private community ramps for vessels participating in the event.

No Launch Policy:

Vessels are prohibited from launching if they have been on a zebra, quagga, or golden mussel-infested reservoir within the past 30 days. Decontamination certificates will not be accepted.

Vessel Inspection Preparation (Prior to Visit)

Goal: Arrive with a completely DRY boat (no standing water anywhere). Adult mussels and microscopic veligers can survive in trapped water for weeks.

Do these steps before heading to the lake or inspection station:

1. **Drain immediately after exiting any waterway** As soon as you pull the boat out of the water, remove the drain plug(s) at the ramp and leave them out (store in a visible place or use a “Remove Before Launch” tag). Keep plugs out until you relaunch.
2. **Fully drain all internal water-holding systems** Empty ballast tanks, live wells, bait wells, bilge areas, and any other compartments completely. Run ballast pumps and open all drain valves while still at the lake or ramp if possible. Finish draining in your driveway if needed.
3. **Dry the engine/exhaust system (outboard or sterndrive boats)** Lower the outdrive or outboard motor fully for several days (ideally 3–5 days) before your trip. This allows trapped water in the exhaust Y-pipe, manifolds, and cooling system to drain and evaporate.
4. **Hot-soak the boat after your last trip** When you get home from the lake, park in a sunny spot, open all compartments, hatches, and ballast drains, and let the engine and compartment heat dry the boat. Mussels can survive up to 30 days in cool, moist, shaded areas—heat and dryness kill them quickly.
5. **If you flush the engine with a garden hose** Do this several days (minimum 3–5) before departure. Water introduced during flushing can get trapped in the exhaust system.
 - Lower the outdrive/outboard while flushing.
 - For inboard/V-drive boats: point the stern downhill and raise the trailer tongue as high as possible so water drains out the exhaust flaps. Allow full drying time afterward in warm/dry conditions.
6. **Leave built-in ice chests empty until after inspection** Do not add ice or water to onboard coolers/ice chests. Melting ice creates standing water in the bilge and will cause an automatic failure or extended drying delay at the inspection station.

7. **DO NOT wash or wet the boat on the day of departure** Wash and detail the boat several days earlier. On the day you leave:
- Remove the boat cover (if used) and let it air out in the sun for a few hours.
 - Double-check all compartments, lockers, anchor storage, etc., and wipe up any moisture.
 - Keep drain plug(s) removed while trailering to the lake.

Summary for the morning of departure: Boat should be bone-dry inside and out, drain plug(s) removed, all compartments open and dry, no ice in chests, engine/outdrive lowered for days prior (if applicable), and no recent washing or flushing without adequate drying time.

Following these steps greatly increases the chance of passing inspection quickly and helps protect California waters from invasive mussels.

Lake Nacimiento Vessel Inspection Steps

To ensure the safety of our local reservoirs and prevent the spread of invasive species, all vessels must undergo an inspection process before launching. Please review the steps and requirements below carefully:

Vessel Screening Permit Application (Day of Visit)

- All boaters must fill out and sign an affidavit verifying:
 - Current boat registration with Vessel#, Registration #, and/or Description (for vessels without registration numbers)
 - Date the vessel and trailer were last used and where it was used.
- To receive a vessel inspection by a certified screener, you are allowing permission for the screener or mussel dog to enter your boat and perform the inspection. A mussel dog is trained to smell mussel veligers and mussels that may not be visible to the human eye. All locations on the boat are subject to inspection.
- Only certified screeners can sign and stamp the vessel screening permit.
- If the vessel has an intact Lake Nacimiento band, wait for the screener to remove the band. ONLY Lake Nacimiento bands are valid.
- All boats and other vessels must have on board any safety equipment required for their vessel.
- All tackle must be clean and dry.
- Inspections are recorded through the Western Identification Database (WID); boat's last location will be verified through this system.

False or Misleading Information

Providing false or misleading information about a vessel's last launch location may result in a 90-day launch ban at all local reservoirs:

- Santa Margarita Lake
- Lopez Lake
- Lake Nacimiento
- Lake San Antonio

Inspection Results

- **Pass:**
 - Vessel(s) receive WID clearance and screening authorization approval to launch.
 - The owner/operator of the vessel must maintain and carry a copy of a valid vessel screening permit signed by a certified screener. Failure to have a completed vessel screening permit on your vessel may result in a fine of up to \$2,000.
 - Vessel screening permits are only valid for the length of your stay and may not exceed 21 consecutive days.
- **Fail:**
 - A Launch Prohibition Form will be issued
 - Launch denial and reason for denial will be recorded in the WID.
 - Visitors may still enjoy other park amenities, but their vessel and trailer must be locked in the parking lot by resort staff and may not be used at the reservoir.
 - If the vessel failed the inspection because it was not clean, drained, and dry at the time of inspection—**and it has not been on an infested body of water**—the owner will be required to clean and dry the vessel, then wait a minimum of 24 hours before it can be rescreened.

Mussel Detection Dogs

Specially trained dogs may be utilized at the public launch ramps.

- These specially trained dogs are used as an inspection tool, and do not exempt the vessel from the other requirements of the program:
 - Vessel must be Clean, Drained, and Dry.
 - Off a known or suspected infested body of water for 30 days.
- If a mussel dog detects anywhere on the vessel:
 - A full level 1 inspection will occur, all equipment on board will need to be inspected.
 - If the inspection results in a failure, it will result in automatic 30-day quarantine for all SLO and Monterey County Lakes.
 - If all requirements are met and the inspection passes, the boater will be allowed to schedule a dog reinspection,
 - If a dog detects again, it will result in an automatic 30-day quarantine for all SLO and Monterey County lakes.

Banding at Exit

Boats leaving the Lake Nacimiento main marina launch ramp in Monterey County may receive a band for easier reentry, which allows for a simplified vessel inspection process. To request a band, you must present a valid and up-to-date mussel screening permit. The bands must remain intact and untampered with in order to be valid for launching without the need for a reinspection.

Thank you for helping protect our lakes!

If you have questions about inspection procedures or requirements, please ask a certified screener at the launch ramp.

CDFW hotline (866) 440-9530 for more information or to report a quagga, zebra, or golden mussel sighting.

For more information:

Lake Nacimiento Resort

Telephone: 805-237-4924

Website: <https://golakenaci.com/more/faqs/>

San Luis Obispo County

Telephone: 805-788-6006 Mussel Hotline (Leave a message and someone will return your call)
805-781-5111 (M-F 7a.m. -5 p.m.)

Email: PW.MusselPrevention@co.slo.ca.us

Website: <https://www.slocounty.ca.gov/departments/public-works/services/programs-outreach/invasive-mussels>

Notes:

- No live bait except for commercially purchased night crawlers and worms. No waterborne bait is allowed.
- Not accepting other lake or community bands.
- The use of the lake requires proper payment of annual or day-use fees.
- Park personnel have the right to refuse service as necessary.