



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Quagga and Zebra Mussel Infestation Prevention Fee – Mussel Fee Sticker  
[dbw.parks.ca.gov/StopQZ](http://dbw.parks.ca.gov/StopQZ)

**1. Q: What changed in 2021 regarding the Mussel Fee Sticker?**

A: The process for purchasing the sticker from Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) has been revised. The sticker is now a separate transaction from vessel registration.

DMV no longer provides the option to purchase the sticker by phone, mail, or from a third-party vendor.

**2. Q: How do I obtain the Mussel Fee Sticker, how much does it cost, and how long is it valid?**

A: You can purchase the Mussel Fee Sticker from DMV online at [dmv.ca.gov/MusselFee](http://dmv.ca.gov/MusselFee) or visit a DMV field office. Upon payment of the \$16 Mussel Fee\* to DMV, DMV will provide two stickers, one for each side of the hull. The stickers will indicate the year through which they are valid. The color of each sticker will be the same as the color of the vessel registration stickers, which are purchased separately.

\*The mussel fee amount shall be \$8 when first paid during an even-numbered calendar year and \$16 when first paid during an odd-numbered calendar year. The mussel fee amount shall be \$16 thereafter and shall be valid for a period of two calendar years. The mussel fee sticker shall be valid through December 31 of every odd-numbered year. California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 5201.

**3. Q: What if I do not pay the Mussel Fee or do not place the Mussel Fee Stickers on my boat?**

A: Law enforcement officers may cite a freshwater boater operating a vessel without the Mussel Fee Sticker, using Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, Section 5212.

**4. Q: How do I obtain the Mussel Fee Sticker if I purchase a new boat?**

A: You may purchase the Mussel Fee Sticker from DMV's website at [dmv.ca.gov/MusselFee](http://dmv.ca.gov/MusselFee) or by visiting a DMV field office.

Note: if you will be using your boat in marine (salt) water exclusively, you are not required to purchase a Mussel Fee Sticker. You may check the appropriate box on DMV's Application for Registration Number Certificate of Ownership and Certificate of Number for Undocumented Vessel" form ([BOAT 101](#)), noting that you are exempt from the Mussel Fee Sticker.

**5. Q: What is the marine water exemption? What do I need to do if I am exempt?**

A: Boats used exclusively in salt water, such as along the California coast and bay areas such as San Francisco, Suisun Bay, Monterey, or San Diego are exempt from the Mussel Fee and you do not need to purchase the Mussel Fee Sticker. Fresh water boaters must pay the Mussel Fee and display the stickers issued by DMV.



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If you are exempt and are registering your vessel for the first time, check the appropriate box on DMV's form entitled "Application for Registration Number Certificate of Ownership and Certificate of Number for Undocumented Vessel" form ([BOAT 101](#)).

**6. Q: Why are marine water boats exempt from paying the Mussel Fee?**

A: Quagga and zebra mussels only live and reproduce in fresh water. Boat owners that do not operate in fresh water are exempt from the Mussel Fee Sticker for this reason.

**7. Q: What if I pay the fee but then become marine exempt because I no longer use my boat in fresh water?**

A: A refund of the Mussel Fee is subject to established DMV business rules and processing procedures. See DMV's [Application for Refund](#) form (ADM 399).

**8. Q: I have always used my boat in salt water, but I am thinking of occasionally using it in fresh water such as in inland waterways, rivers, lakes, reservoirs, wetlands or the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. Do I need the sticker?**

A: Yes, you will need to purchase the Mussel Fee Sticker(s) at: [dmv.ca.gov/MusselFee](http://dmv.ca.gov/MusselFee) or visit a DMV field office.

**9. Q: Why am I required to pay the "Mussel Fee" in addition to vessel registration?**

A: Legislation requires the DMV to collect an additional fee (the "Mussel Fee") on behalf of California State Parks Division of Boating and Waterways (DBW) on all recreational vessels subject to registration in the State of California.

By paying this Mussel Fee, you will aid and support infestation prevention efforts through grant funding, administered by DBW, to eligible agencies for quagga and zebra mussel prevention programs at reservoirs that allow boating and fishing recreation. Supplemental funding is also available for California Department of Fish and Wildlife's prevention activities.

**10. Who do I contact if my Mussel Fee Sticker is lost, damaged or stolen?**

A: Contact the DMV to obtain the replacement Mussel Fee Sticker(s) for \$16, from their website at [dmv.ca.gov/MusselFee](http://dmv.ca.gov/MusselFee) or by visiting a DMV field office.

For further questions you can [Click here](#) to see how to contact the DMV by phone, mail, or in person.

**11. Q: Who do I contact if I paid the Mussel Fee but did not receive my Mussel Fee Stickers?**

A: If you paid the Mussel Fee but you did not receive your Mussel Fee Stickers, you can indicate this on DMV's "Application for replacement Plates, Stickers, and



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Documents” form ([REG 156](#)), noting that the original stickers were not received from DMV.

**12.Q: Will my Mussel Fee Sticker allow me to boat in any freshwater reservoir or lake without paying for an inspection or cleaning?**

A: The Mussel Fee Sticker does not pay for individual boat inspections that may be required by local water agencies. Boat inspection programs are implemented by the water managers and may vary at each location. Please contact the waterbody manager directly for information regarding their program and requirement prior to your visit. For contact information click here: [California watercraft inspection](#) list.

**13.Q: I am not a California resident, but I plan to boat in California. Do I need to obtain the state’s Mussel Fee Sticker?**

A: If you are not a California resident, but you’re planning on boating in California, you are not required to purchase the Mussel Fee Sticker. However, we do recommend that you contact the manager of the waterbody that you are planning on visiting ahead of time, for information on local fees, restrictions, and/or inspections. For contact information click here: [California watercraft inspection](#).

**14.Q: Are government vessels, such as Coast Guard documented vessels, required to pay the Mussel Fee and display a sticker?**

A: No, government vessels are not required to pay the Mussel Fee or display Mussel Fee Stickers\*. However, individual water bodies may require boat inspections for the presence of aquatic invasive species; boaters may also be required to pay inspection fees prior to launch regardless of vessel origin, registration or documentation.

\*California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 5211.

**15.Q: Where do I place the Mussel Fee Stickers?**

A: Place one on each side of the boat, next to, and in line with the CF number and vessel registration stickers, so that law enforcement identification may be made. See graphic below.

