



August 2025 NEWSLETTER

NRWMAC vs MCWRA Lawsuit Update

We're pleased to share some important developments in our ongoing lawsuit as we continue to fight for our community's water rights.

Strengthened Legal Team: We've partnered with INTERA, (An environmental and water resource consulting firm out of Texas.) to serve as our hydrologist consultant and expert witness. Their specialized expertise brings valuable insights and momentum to our case.

Refocused Strategy: We've refined our legal approach to concentrate on what matters most—holding Monterey County accountable for their excessive water releases. This focused approach allows us to concentrate our resources where they'll have the greatest impact.

Moving Forward Strong: Our lawsuit against Monterey County is advancing steadily, and we remain committed to securing the water rights our *community* depends on.

California Water Rights Working Together for Efficient Water Storage

The Simple Truth: Lake Nacimiento's water belongs to all California citizens. Proper management requires balancing the needs of ranchers, farmers, businesses, domestic users, and recreational enthusiasts through transparent planning and adherence to state permits.

As a NRWMAC director, I'm frequently asked what can be done to keep water levels higher in Lake Nacimiento. The answer, while complicated, is also straightforward – there *must* be proper management of the water that serves ALL of us!

Water Rights Belong to Everyone

Let's be clear about water rights. Water in California is protected for the use and benefit of all its citizens. California's waters cannot be owned by individuals, groups, businesses, or governmental agencies. Permits, licenses, and registrations give individuals and others the right to beneficially use reasonable amounts of water.

The water in Lake Nacimiento is shared through state permits for irrigation, domestic, municipal, industrial, and recreational use. There are **five groups with interest rights** that share this water, and **ALL FIVE are entitled to it:** ranchers, farmers, businesses, domestic users, and recreational enthusiasts. No single group owns the water, and there are no specific percentages allocated for any one use.

The Challenge: Balancing Storage for Everyone

Proper water management is something that requires understanding, planning, and then balancing the needs of wet and drought years. All of us—whether we're ranchers needing water for livestock, farmers irrigating crops, businesses serving the community, or families enjoying weekend recreation—want the water stored efficiently so it's available during drier periods.

NRWMAC has worked diligently with Monterey County to develop plans that ensure water availability for everyone, not just recreational users. We all have a stake in this resource, and we all suffer when poor water management becomes evident during drought years.



Current Management Concerns

Excessive Water Releases: The Monterey County State Water Board permit restricts releases to no more than 180,000 acre-feet of water per calendar year. Yet in several years, Monterey County has released up to 480,000 acre-feet— nearly three times their permitted limit. This issue is why NRWMA is currently in litigation with the county.

Artificial Low Lake Levels: Despite infrastructure improvements including bladders, a new spillway, and a plunge pool designed to enable higher lake levels, Monterey County rarely allows the lake to fill to capacity, maintaining artificially low limits, apparently to avoid using the plunge pool system they installed.

The "30-Day Rule" Loophole: Monterey County releases significant amounts of water under a "30-day rule," which allows water to be released before 30 days without counting it as "storage", essentially circumventing storage requirements.

Rejection of Collaborative Solutions: NRWMA proposed a "sliding scale" approach for water releases, working out details for managing water levels in both wet and dry years with smaller releases when possible and larger releases only when necessary. This collaborative approach was not adopted.

NRWMA's Collaborative Track Record

Our commitment to working WITH all water users is demonstrated through our history:

Watershed Protection: One of the original NRWMA directors co-chaired the Nacimiento Watershed Committee, responsible for creating the watershed plan for 650 square miles around Lake San Antonio and Lake Nacimiento. This plan, endorsed by both San Luis Obispo and

Monterey County Boards of Supervisors, is one reason Lake Nacimiento receives such excellent water inflow—benefiting farmers, ranchers, and recreational users alike.

Infrastructure Development: The Interlake Tunnel Project, presented by MCWRA at Heritage Ranch in 2015, proposed to capture water that would otherwise flow to the ocean. While NRWMA supports this water conservation goal, our analysis suggests the current design may actually reduce water levels at Lake Nacimiento. NRWMA continues to seek answers from MCWRA to address critical questions about construction methods, intake levels, and lake operations to ensure this project truly benefits our community.

Our Shared Economic Interest: Proper water management creates a win-win scenario. When lake levels are maintained appropriately, recreation brings substantial revenue to both counties through their wineries, breweries, restaurants, and hotels. Simultaneously, ranchers and farmers have reliable water access, supporting agricultural businesses that form the backbone of our regional economy. Poor water management hurts everyone—recreational businesses lose customers, agricultural operations struggle with insufficient water, and the entire community suffers economically.

Moving Forward Together: NRWMA's goal is straightforward: maximize water storage at Lake Nacimiento through a management plan that optimizes water storage and which serves ALL users. We want Monterey County to develop and implement this plan transparently, showing how their decisions benefit ranchers, farmers, businesses, domestic users, and recreational enthusiasts alike.

Farmers, ranchers, wineries, businesses, and recreational enthusiasts—we ALL share the same goal of efficient, maximized water storage that works for everyone. The water belongs to all of us, and proper management benefits our entire community.



How You Can Help

- Attend Monterey County Water Resource Agency meetings to show support for transparent water management.
- Contact your county supervisors to advocate for adherence to state water permits.
- Support NRWMAC's collaborative approach by attending our public meetings, signing up to help support our events, and donating to support our efforts.
- Share this information with other water users in your network – whether agricultural, business, or recreational.

Together, we can ensure Lake Nacimiento serves all Californians as intended.

Mussel Up!

The Golden Mussel Infestation in California

In October, California water managers discovered golden mussels in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta—the first detection of this invasive Asian species in North America. The fingertip-sized mussels, likely arriving on a freighter, were first found near the Port of Stockton.

The invasion has spread rapidly to over 50 locations across four counties (Sacramento to Merced, plus Contra Costa and Napa), infiltrating major water systems serving nearly 30 million people and millions of acres of farmland.

Unlike other invasive species, golden mussels cannot be eradicated once established. Water agencies have shifted to mitigation, closing boat ramps and retrofitting infrastructure. California has implemented a comprehensive Golden Mussel Response Framework, including expanded WID programs across 1,000+ lakes.

This invasion represents the species' first North American foothold, raising concerns about potential spread to other western states.

NRWMAC's long-term commitment to mussel awareness and prevention continues with ongoing training and certification classes. Working with San Luis Obispo and Monterey counties, new additional programs are being planned to help push back against this new, aggressive mussel. Both counties are encouraging greater use of the WID program, with violations carrying 90-day launch denials.

If you are interested in becoming an inspector, re-certifying or joining the resident vessel program, please register with San Luis Obispo County at druedas@co.slo.ca.us or contact the NRWMAC for more information.

Upcoming Mussel Classes – September 20, 2025 at Cal Shasta

9:00 AM: Resident Vessel Class: Pre-Register with Barrie Valencia bvalencia@co.slo.ca.us (805) 781-1455 **You MUST Pre-Register at least 2 weeks prior to the class.**

11:00 AM: Re-Certification Class. Register with Danielle Ruedas druedas@co.slo.ca.us (805) 781-5109

12:00 Noon: WID Training: Register with Danielle Ruedas druedas@co.slo.ca.us (805) 781-5109

Important Permit Update:

New Mussel stamps will be issued to all currently certified Mussel Screeners. The new stamps will be green and will be effective on Jan 1, 2026. The red stamps will be invalid effective Jan 1, 2026. Anyone caught on the lake with a red stamped permit after Jan 1, 2026 will receive a \$2000 citation.

Please practice responsible boating by ensuring that all your watercraft are cleaned, drained, dry, and mussel-free before launching.





Make a Donation Today

We Need Your Strongest Support Now! Your Lake Depends on It

Our legal battle with Monterey County over water mismanagement at Lake Nacimiento has reached a pivotal moment, and our legal team is hard at work. However, mounting an effective case against a major municipality requires substantial resources.

The Reality: Quality legal representation, expert hydrologists, and compelling expert testimony cost \$5,000-12,000+ per month during active litigation phases. Right now, we're in that critical period and are facing this expense now.

NRWMAC is 100% community-funded, and has no government grants or corporate sponsors. Generous people **like you** are the ONLY source of funds supporting NRWMAC's efforts to protect our lake. Even if you have previously donated, **we urgently need you to donate now!**

We need champions who understand what's at stake. If you have the means to make a transformational gift of \$1,000 or more, please do so now. If you have any concerns or questions, please do not hesitate to contact us directly at 805.591.4738 or info@nrwmac.org to discuss how your contribution can make the decisive difference.

Your Impact:

- \$1000+ funds expert witness testimony for a full day
- \$500+ covers specialized legal research for key motions
- \$250+ supports crucial court filings and documentation

Every contribution matters. Whether it's \$50, \$100 or \$1000, you're directly funding the fight to save Lake Nacimiento.

Your donation, in any amount, can be made at the following locations – and Thank you!

GoFundMe

www.gofundme.com/lake-nacimiento-save-the-dragon



Private Donation

(via PayPal)

www.nrwmac.org/donate#Private-Donation



If you prefer to write a check, please make it out to NRWMAC and mail it to: NRWMAC, PO BOX 398, Paso Robles, CA 93447.