Natural Resources Building
P.O. Box 40917
Olympia, WA 98504-0917

1111 Washington St. S.E.
Olympia, WA 98501

(360) 902-3000
TTY: (800) 833-6388

E-mail: Info@rco.wa.gov
Web site: www.rco.wa.gov

STATE OF WASHINGTON

RECREATION AND CONSERVATION OFFICE

May 13, 2021

Barak Shemai, Regional AIS Coordinator
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
P.O. Box 1306
Albuquerque, NM 87103-1306
Submitted via E-mail to Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Mr. Barak Shamai:

On behalf of the State of Washington Invasive Species Council, I am writing to express strong support for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Enforcement application for Fiscal Year 21 *Implementation of the Quagga and Zebra Mussel Action Plan (QZAP) in the Western United States* funding to protect the Columbia River Basin's aquatic resources and economy from damaging invasive species through prevention and enforcement activities.

The Washington State Legislature established the council in 2006 to develop and implement a strategic approach to prevent and control invasive species that threaten Washington's environment and economy. Preventing invasive species from being introduced to Washington and Columbia River Basin is the most efficient and cost-effective approach to protecting the resources of our state. As such, the preventative approach of keeping aquatic invasive species from the Columbia River Basin through watercraft inspections is the best approach. When prevention fails, invasive species are often unable to be eradicated or contained. Looking only at Washington, we estimate costs higher than $100 million annually to keep water infrastructure working if invasive freshwater mussels establish. Costs throughout the Columbia River Basin are expected to be exponentially higher.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife AIS Enforcement Program has a proven track record of protecting Washington and the Pacific Northwest's aquatic resources and economies. Water is the backbone of Columbia River Basin agriculture, recreation, hydropower, and economy with a combined value of billions annually. Investing in prevention and will protect our basin with a substantial return on the relatively low investment when compared with annual costs for managing and mitigating the aquatic invasive species.

In summary, the Washington Invasive Species Council strongly supports your funding of this proposal. Please contact me at justin.bush@rco.wa.gov or 360-902-3088 with any questions you may have regarding our support of this important work.

Justin D. Bush, Executive Coordinator