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NEWS RELEASE

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TRPA COLLABORATES ON TECH INNOVATION THAT MAKES WATERS SAFER FROM AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES

Lake Tahoe, CA/NV—An innovation in aquatic invasive species protection was unveiled last week at the Water Sports Industry Association’s 2014 Summit that could make Lake Tahoe and recreational water bodies around the nation safer from the spread of invasive species, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) said today.

Called the Mussel Mast’R Aquatic Invasive Species Filter System, the new pump system effectively filters out aquatic invasive species and their larvae before allowing them to be pumped into special ballast tanks or bladders commonly installed in boats designed for wakeboarding and other wake sports to temporarily increase the size of their wake. The system will be available through boat dealers this year.

Ballast tanks are a in the spread of harmful invasive species such as the quagga mussel and New Zealand mudsnail because they can transport live plants, shellfish, and larvae long distances and cannot be visually inspected, according to TRPA, which leads the Lake Tahoe Aquatic Invasive Species Program. Decontaminating ballast systems slows the inspection process for boaters at Lake Tahoe and raises the cost of the program. Constantly improving efficiency and the experience of boaters is a top priority for TRPA and the Tahoe Resource Conservation District (Tahoe RCD) who operates the inspection program.

“This is a great innovation from the watercraft industry that reminds us we are on a world stage at Lake Tahoe,” TRPA Executive Director Joanne Marchetta said. “When we work to protect our shores, sometimes we are protecting more than our beloved lake. Sometimes we are setting an example of environmental stewardship for others.”

Extensive biological testing of the filter system in Lake Mead by leading aquatic invasive species researchers at the University of Nevada, Reno has proven the system effective at keeping mussel larvae as well as other aquatic invasive species out of ballast tanks, live-wells, and bait-wells, thus eliminating the need to decontaminate those systems.

The new technology was designed by Florida-based manufacturer Wake WorkX to save boaters time and money. The company developed the system in partnership with TRPA, the Water Sports Industry Association, the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Colorado Parks & Wildlife. Boats that have such a system installed may spend less time at Tahoe inspection stations and could pay a smaller fee for

inspection services, according to Tahoe RCD Watercraft Inspection Program Administrator Nicole Cartwright.

“Our objective is to ensure Tahoe remains protected while giving boaters more time on the water and keeping the cost of the program down,” Cartwright said. “Our inspectors will be watching for this new system on boats and look forward to possibly decontaminating fewer ballast systems.”

This is not the first time Lake Tahoe policies have led to increased environmental protections elsewhere. In 1999, when TRPA prohibited carbureted two-stroke engines in the Tahoe Region, other water bodies, such as Donner Lake, and San Pablo Reservoir in California, followed suit with similar prohibitions on the high-polluting engines. Most recently, the National Parks Service prohibited carbureted two-stroke personal watercraft from Lakes Powell, Mead, and Havasu. Soon after the 1999 prohibition in Tahoe, scientific monitoring showed a significant drop in engine pollutants in high use areas of the Lake.

The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency leads the cooperative effort to preserve, restore, and enhance the unique natural and human environment of the Lake Tahoe Region, while improving local communities, and people’s interactions with our irreplaceable environment. For additional information, call Jeff Cowen at (775) 589-5278 or email him at jcowen@trpa.org.

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Background: Lake Tahoe Aquatic Invasive Species Program

In 2009, in response to the discovery of quagga mussels 350 miles to the south in Lake Mead, TRPA implemented mandatory inspections for all motorized watercraft before entering the Lake. TRPA and the Tahoe RCD launched a broad outreach campaign encouraging boaters to clean, drain, and dry their watercraft before launching in a new body of water. Invasive species such as quagga mussels, invasive weeds and New Zealand mudsnails can severely impact native fisheries, ecosystems, beaches, and water supply infrastructure. It is estimated that an invasive species introduction to Lake Tahoe could have a financial impact of \$20 million per year.

For more information on the Lake Tahoe Watercraft Inspection Program, visit www.tahoeboatinspections.com. For more information on the Mussel Mast’R or Wake WorkX, visit www.supersacr.com.