



MEDIA CONTACT:

Justin Caporusso/Caporusso Communications

justin@caporussocommunications.com

(916) 412-0571

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Fishmas is Here! Opening Day of Regular Fishing Season Set for April 25, 2026,
with New Mandatory Watercraft Inspections**

MONO COUNTY, Calif. (April 7, 2026) - Get ready to cast your lines! Eastern Sierra locals and visitors alike are celebrating "Fishmas," the official start to the regular fishing season on April 25, 2026. This highly anticipated day marks the beginning of a season filled with angling excitement across Mono County's pristine lakes, streams, and reservoirs.

"We are thrilled to welcome anglers back to our beautiful waters for the 2026 season," said Mono County Board of Supervisors Chair Jennifer Kreitz. *"With robust stocking efforts and accessible lakes, it promises to be a fantastic year. However, protecting our fisheries is more critical than ever, so we are asking everyone to do their part and comply with the new mandatory watercraft inspections to keep invasive species out of our region."*

2026 stocking and current conditions promise abundant opportunities, with Mono County investing \$110,000—an increase of \$10,000 over the past several years—to stock 18 local bodies of water. Lakes and streams will be stocked with planters and trophy trout starting in early April.

Following two major winter storms in December and February, the region is holding a good snowpack, and most bodies of water are expected to be ice-free by Opening Day. Additionally, Monitor Pass is already open, and officials hope to have Sonora Pass open well before Memorial Day.

New Mandatory Watercraft Inspections for 2026: New ordinances in Inyo and Mono Counties now require mandatory watercraft inspections before launching to protect our waters from the highly invasive golden mussel.

Golden mussels were detected in the Port of Stockton in October 2024 and have spread more than 250 miles south within a year. They attach to almost anything (docks, rocks, boats, motors) and can survive in the Eastern Sierra's low-calcium waters. If introduced here, they could permanently damage lake and stream ecosystems, deplete plankton that fish depend on, threaten recreational fishing, and drastically increase water and power costs by clogging infrastructure.

- **Who Needs an Inspection?** Boaters will be required to visit a Watercraft Inspection & Decontamination station and obtain an Eastern Sierra mussel sticker before launching in any waterbody in Inyo or Mono Counties, including the Town of Mammoth Lakes.
- **What Watercraft Are Included?** This applies to all trailered watercraft, including boats, jet skis, and any vessel capable of being launched. Regular pressure washing does not kill golden mussels; only high-temperature, high-pressure decontamination systems at official WID stations are effective.
- **Sticker Requirements:** Residents must be inspected annually, while visitors will be inspected monthly. An additional inspection is required any time a boat enters a waterbody outside of Mono or Inyo County, regardless if you already got your annual residential or monthly visitor inspection.
- **Watercraft Inspection & Decontamination Locations:** Inspection stations are tentatively planned for Bridgeport and Bishop. All information including locations and hours can be found at EasternSierraWID.com.
- **Hours and Fees:** Stations will likely open in late April with tentative hours of 6:30 AM to 3:00 PM. There will be no fees for inspection, decontamination, or the Eastern Sierra Mussel Stickers in the first year.
- **Enforcement:** The first two offenses will result in an infraction. A third offense is a misdemeanor and may result in boat impoundment.
- **Non-Trailered Watercraft:** Canoes, kayaks, paddleboards, float tubes, and rafts are generally excluded from inspection requirements, but all gear (including waders) must follow Clean, Drain, Dry practices, and are encouraged to be inspected and decontaminated.
 - Clean boats, trailers, and gear of all visible plants and mud.
 - Drain all water from boats, livewells, ballast tanks, and equipment.
 - Dry everything thoroughly before entering another water body.

For full details on the new inspection program, please visit the newly launched website: EasternSierraWID.com.

Multiple agencies—including the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP), Mono County, Southern California Edison (SCE), United States Forest Service, Sierra Forever, Inyo County, California Trout, Trout Unlimited, the Town of Mammoth Lakes, Mammoth Lakes Recreation, and Mammoth Lakes Trails and Public Access—have partnered on these prevention efforts. Learn more at one of the upcoming community events:

- April 11: California Department of Fish & Wildlife Town Hall event at the Fairgrounds in Bishop (see flyer below)
- April 21: [Mammoth Lakes Chamber Power Lunch](#) at Mammoth Brewing Co.
- May 12: [Sierra Nevada Aquatic Research Laboratory \(SNARL\) Seminar Series](#)
- July 30: [Mammoth Lakes Tourism Community Coffee](#)
- TBD: Virtual "Town hall"

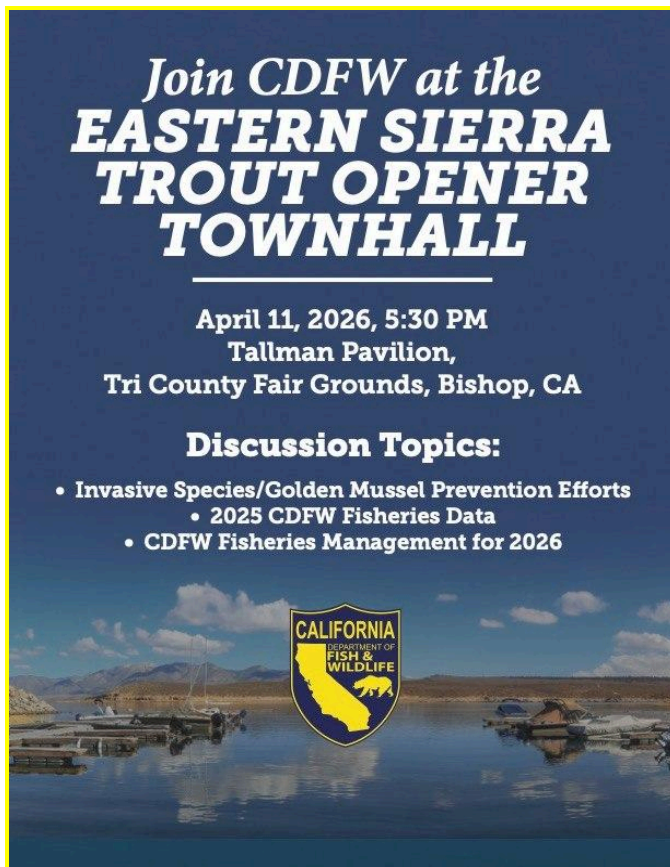
Possible mussel sightings should be reported immediately to CDFW by emailing Invasives@wildlife.ca.gov or calling (866) 440-9530. Please include clear, close-up photos with an object for scale.

Crucial Regulations Reminder: Do not rely on printed materials. Regulations can change. Please verify all regulations by visiting the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) website: wildlife.ca.gov/Regulations or by calling the Bishop CDFW office at 760-872-1171.

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Additional Resources

- 2026 Mono County Fishing Events: Plan your fishing adventures by checking the Mono County fishing events calendar at monocounty.org/things-to-do/fishing/fishing-events/
- [Mono County Fishing Images](#)
- For more on lakes, guides, and regulations, visit MonoCounty.org/fishing
- For a free Fishing Map and/or Mono County Visitor Guide by mail, submit a request at MonoCounty.org/plan-your-trip/visitor-guides/
- Check the spring blog for seasonal alerts and updates, including lake and road conditions at <https://www.monocounty.org/blog/post/spring-update-and-current-conditions/>




Join CDFW at the
**EASTERN SIERRA
TROUT OPENER
TOWNHALL**

April 11, 2026, 5:30 PM
Tallman Pavilion,
Tri County Fair Grounds, Bishop, CA

Discussion Topics:

- Invasive Species/Golden Mussel Prevention Efforts
 - 2025 CDFW Fisheries Data
 - CDFW Fisheries Management for 2026



The poster features a scenic background of a lake with mountains in the distance. The California Department of Fish & Wildlife logo is prominently displayed in the center. The text is white and yellow, providing high contrast against the dark blue background.