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DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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Division of Wildlife Resources

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Division Director

October 13, 2020

Dear San Juan County Commissioners:

My name is Krystal Tucker and I am a Sergeant with the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources. I am currently working within the Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Program. This program focuses on preventing quagga mussels and other invasive species from spreading throughout the state.

One of our most valuable and effective prevention strategies includes contacting watercraft off-water and conducting inspections to verify their mussel-free status. When mussels are found or the vessel doesn't meet clean, drain, dry standards, we provide a cost-free hot water wash inside and outside of the vessel. This program has ensured our beautiful waters in the state remain clean and mussel-free. Due to the hard work and determination of UDWR staff, we've successfully kept mussels out of all waterbodies in the state except Lake Powell, which was infested around 2013.

We want to make sure Quagga mussels do not spread to additional waterbodies because they 1) potentially damage essential drinking water sources by leaving a foul taste and smell 2) Infiltrate and clog up water filtration pipes 3) Clean healthy bio-nutrients out of the water and remove fish food supply 4) Cause potentially millions of dollars of damage and mitigation work. Worst of all- there is no current way to remove mussels so once they have infiltrated a waterbody, they are likely there to stay.

Just this year, we've seen an estimated 25% increase in boaters travelling through Utah, many from surrounding states such as Arizona, Colorado, and California. Recapture Reservoir is an excellent example of a waterbody receiving increased use. Many boaters after leaving Lake Powell, both out of state and locals, choose to recreate at Recapture Reservoir. If they didn't follow proper protocols after leaving Lake Powell, they pose a very large threat to potentially spreading quagga mussels into Recapture.

Due to an overwhelming increase in boating throughout the state, UDWR recognizes the need for additional locations for our mandatory inspection stations (MIS). A MIS located at the south end of the town will provide a layer of protection against infestation of your favorite local waters. Also, by providing a MIS nearby, local boaters in the Blanding and Monticello area will have a convenient area for decontamination of their boats.

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The MIS would be staffed robustly from around April to October and still operational but with minimal staffing during the off season, around November through March. Between 15-20 staff would be needed during the busy season for full and part time work. We would hire locally to help provide job opportunities to residents. Having a MIS nearby would entice visitors and likely increase business locally at restaurants, gas stations and various other businesses.

We look forward to building partnerships with the City of Blanding as well as San Juan County to make this plan become a reality. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Krystal Tucker

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