

# Penticton & South Okanagan NEWS

## Mussels scare water board

by [Ragnar Haagen](#) | Story: 111456 - Mar 20, 2014 / 4:09 pm



*Photo: Contributed - Wikipedia*  
Zebra mussels

Members of the Okanagan Basin Water Board are calling it a very close call. They are concerned with the news that a [boat](#), covered with invasive mussels, was stopped at the Osoyoos border crossing.

“I think that we dodged a bullet. I think the people who are at the border crossing and conservation officers did a really excellent job of responding to the situation,” says Anna Warwick Sears, executive director for the OBWB.

“The guy who was transporting the boat was cooperative, but it points to the fact that we need to get better prepared and that these boats are going to be coming to the Okanagan and we need to figure out how to anticipate that.”

The vessel in question was being commercially transported from Texas, with Okanagan Lake as the stated destination. Border officials do not currently have the authority to prohibit boats containing invasive species from entering the country, but some regulations are currently under review in Ottawa that would change that.

Sears says there are a couple of ways to stop the spread of quagga and zebra mussels, but the first line of defence should be the border. Some people have spoken out for specialized inspection stations along the highways, but the border just makes more sense.

“You’ve already got the border there, you have a guard stopping cars and you have places for people to move over. It’s cheaper to do it that way,” she says.

“It really has to be a partnership between border services and the provincial government. The province does have a law in place that says it’s illegal to introduce invasive aquatic species to the lakes and rivers of the Okanagan.

“So you can get a very large fine if you have a live zebra mussel in your boat and you put it in the water, but they also have the power to order a decontamination – which includes a very hot pressure washing.”

That is what was done in this most recent case from March 12, using a portable decontamination unit brought in the following day.

Sears hopes this latest incident will help spread awareness that the problem of invasive species which cause irreparable damage is everyone’s responsibility.

“We’d like the public to be engaged and know what the issues are, because it can’t just be the government or the border guards who are involved with this. We all want to have the lake to be maintained in its beautiful condition and we all have to take some responsibility.”