

The Province

Okanagan waterways spared devastating mussel infestation thanks to one careful look

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Alert border officials are being credited for stopping an invasive species of mussel from entering waterways in B.C.'s Okanagan region. Native mussels from the inter tidal zone of the Georgia Strait are shown in this file photo.

Photograph by: Nick Didlick , PNG Files

VERNON - Alert border officials are being credited for stopping an invasive species of mussel from entering waterways in B.C.'s Okanagan region.

A routine check spotted what appeared to be zebra or quagga mussels on a large pleasure boat being trucked across the border at Osoyoos, bound for moorage in Okanagan Lake.

The boat was decontaminated the next day, but without the trucker's agreement, officials could not have halted it because the Canadian Border Services Agency has no authority to refuse entry.

Invasive mussels have not yet been found in B.C. waters and Okanagan officials are demanding federal legislation allowing border guards to inspect watercraft and prohibit entry of contaminated vessels.

An infested ship brought zebra and quagga mussels into the Great Lakes system in 1988 and the freshwater bivalves have since spread westward across the U.S. and Canada.

Their rapid and prolific growth alters ecosystems, clogs water intake pipes and overwhelms other infrastructure, causing untold damage.

(CKIZ)

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