

## NEWS

## Zebra mussels stopped at Osoyoos border crossing



An OBWB-funded study estimated damage from zebra mussels could cost \$40 million to repair in the first few years of colonization in the Okanagan. Last week a boat from Texas, headed for Okanagan Lake was stopped at the boarder when several zebra mussels were found lodged on its hull.

— *Image Credit: Submitted*

by [Joe Fries - Penticton Western News](#)

posted Mar 20, 2014 at 3:00 PM— *updated Mar 21, 2014 at 8:51 AM*

Another [near-miss involving invasive mussels](#) on a boat headed for B.C. underscores the need for senior governments to get moving on new laws to block unwanted visitors, said Osoyoos Mayor Stu Wells.

Last week, a Canadian border guard at the Osoyoos crossing spotted what appeared to be zebra or quagga mussels on a boat being transported by a commercial hauler, who told officers the boat, which was on its way north from Texas, was going to be moored in Okanagan Lake.

The trucker voluntarily agreed to stop and allow the vessel to be inspected. Border guards then alerted B.C. conservation officers, who travelled to Osoyoos to decontaminate the boat

Conservation officer Barb Leslie said the mussels were later determined to be dead.

“We’d like to express our gratitude to Canadian Border Services for their ongoing vigilance,” Leslie added.

She noted that while it’s an offence under provincial law to transport or possess invasive species, there is no federal legislation that allows border guards to stop infested boats from entering the country.

The Okanagan Basin Water Board [has been pushing senior governments](#) to implement new rules to formalize the system that was put into action last week.

“The challenge now is we just have to legitimize this,” said Wells, a former chairman of the OBWB, told the board of the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen on Thursday.

“This was all done right from the Canadian Borders Services (but) they had no right to stop this boat.”

He said senior governments are “dragging their feet,” but that the OBWB’s public awareness campaign about the dangers posed by invasive mussels has proven to be effective.

“If we can just keep this high level of interest out there, we can maybe force the federal government into taking action,” Wells said.

Invasive mussels foul in-lake equipment, such as water intakes, and destroy ecosystems.

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The mussels, which entered North America in the 1980s through the Great Lakes, have been detected as far west in Canada as Lake Winnipeg, but have reached California in the U.S.

In 2012, dead mussels were found on a boat in Shuswap Lake.

*With files from Steve Arstad/Keremeos Review*