

Director dives into water board position

By Vernon Morning Star

Published: **February 22, 2013 01:00 AM**

Updated: **February 21, 2013 02:42 PM**

A representative for the Regional District of North Okanagan has an executive role with the Okanagan Basin Water Board.

At the board's recent meeting, Rick Fairbairn was elected among the board directors as vice-chairperson.

Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen representative Stu Wells will serve as chairperson.

Besides Fairbairn, also representing RDNO at OBWB are Juliette Cunningham and Doug Dirk

Mussel inspection

The Okanagan Basin Water Board wants an inspection program to stop invasive mussels.

An infestation of zebra or quagga mussels in Okanagan lakes could cost \$43 million annually in added water infrastructure maintenance and lost revenue (e.g. tourism), says aquatic biologist Heather Larratt.

This does not include the irreparable ecological damage, she added.

To help prevent the mussels from reaching the Okanagan, the board is sending a letter to the federal and B.C. governments urging an inspection program, similar to ones in the U.S., to stop the spread of this and other invasive species.

The board is asking Okanagan local governments to send similar letters.

Zebra and quagga mussels have been spreading quickly through the east coast of Canada and U.S. and are making their way west, fouling water infrastructure, destroying natural lake ecosystems and costing governments millions each year to manage. Okanagan waters are considered some of the most at risk in B.C.

Milfoil control

After two years of meetings with the province to discuss the Okanagan Basin Water Board's program for milfoil control and ways to also protect native freshwater mussels, the board is asking for a long-term permit.

The board is forwarding its request to B.C.'s Minister of Forests, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations, recognizing the need for winter rototilling while respecting the economic and social needs of Okanagan citizens and the needs of the environment.

The board will be asking Okanagan local governments to also send letters.

Find this article at:

<http://www.vernonmorningstar.com/news/192360991.html>