

Enderby joins the battle over invasive mussels



By Vernon Morning Star

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The fight over invasive species is making waves in the Shuswap.

Enderby's Shuswap River Ambassadors are helping promote the Don't Move A Muscle campaign about zebra and quagga mussels, which attach themselves to boats, piers and water intakes.

"The ambassadors not only work to protect the users of the river, but also the river itself," said Courtney Boucher, Shuswap River Ambassadors manager.

The ambassadors are partnering with the Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society to educate boat operators about preventing the spread of invasive mussel species.

Prevention involves cleaning plants, animals, and mud from vessels, draining any item that can hold water and drying all items before launching into another body of water.

The idea for the partnership initially came from Mayor Howie Cyr.

“As the river ambassadors already provide information about river safety and respect at many boat launch locations, connecting this initiative to the Don’t Move A Mussel campaign creates a natural synergy,” he said.

“We are leveraging a successful, well-established local program to take on this environmental and economic threat proactively.”

The Shuswap River Ambassador program was established by the Enderby Chamber of Commerce in 2010.

Both mussels are native to eastern Europe and they have spread across North America since the 1980s. These mussels clog water intake pipes, pumps and boat motors. They also deplete food sources for fish and produce toxins that kill fish and birds and contaminate drinking water.

Based on the potential impact to drinking water infrastructure, fisheries, tourism and real estate values, it's believed the mussels could cost the Okanagan \$43 million annually.

For more information, go to www.DontMoveAMussel.ca.

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