

## Gov't funded mussel tests?

Wayne Moore - Feb 14, 2016 / 8:48 am | Story: 158438

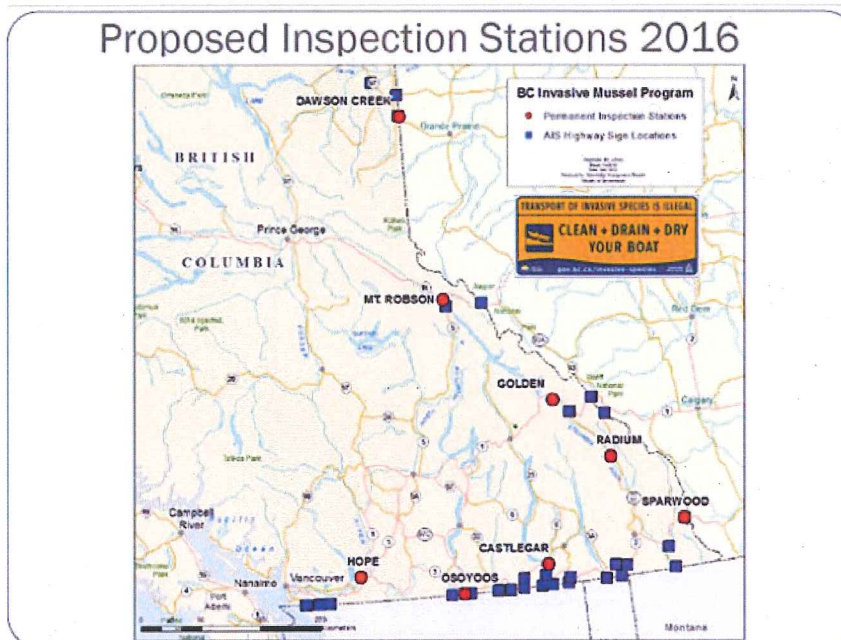


Photo: Contributed

Could the provincial government be moving toward establishing mandatory inspection stations to prevent the spread of invasive mussels?

That's apparently what Environment Ministry staff are recommending, with the full support of the Okanagan Basin Water Board.

The board has sent a letter to both the environment and finance ministers urging them to implement and fund recommendations for eight, full-time, mandatory inspection stations.

In part, the letter says, "We are pleased to see that the plan builds on information gathered throughout the 2015 boating season by the B.C. Conservation Officer Service and Ministry of Environment.

"The establishment of these stations would bring B.C.'s inspection regime on par with the most effective and efficient systems in North America, and would meet obligations to protect our waters, while supporting the protection of waters in neighbouring jurisdictions through the Pacific Northwest."

The province has estimated an infestation could cost the province \$43 million a year.

The Pacific Northwest Economic Region estimates it could affect the regional economy by more than half a billion dollars per year.

"Implementing the province's 2016 inspection plan, with an ongoing commitment for resources is a crucial step in protecting provincial water and preventing significant costs in the future," the letter went on to say.

Under the recommendation, five inspection stations would be set up along the B.C.-Alberta border with three more along the border with Washington State, including one at Osoyoos.

The board is hoping the recommendations and a funding program will be announced as part of the provincial budget which will be unveiled Tuesday.