

Fight against invasive mussels in B.C. strengthened with funding of new inspection stations

By Steve Arstad

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Premier Christy Clark holds an educational sign about invasive mussels.
(JOHN MCDONALD /InfoTel Multimedia)

March 30, 2016 - 3:53 PM

KELOWNA - New permanent inspection stations will help in the battle to keep invasive mussels out of B.C. waters.

A \$2-million injection to the province's invasive mussel defence program was announced today, March 30. The money will be used to install eight permanent mussel inspection stations located at major entry ports along B.C.'s borders.

Okanagan Basin Water Board chair Doug Findlater said his organization is "ecstatic" at the news, although he has some concerns about long term funding. "This is a massive scale up and we're very happy although there is still some questions. It's not clear if this is annual funding although we are very glad the province is taking this seriously."

Funding from B.C. Hydro, Fortis B.C., Columbia Power and Columbia Basin Trust will add to the provincial program, along with in-kind contributions in staff, equipment and office space from the province.

Five inspections stations will be located along the B.C.-Alberta border and three along the B.C.-United States border. The stations, which are expected to be operational by April 1, will operate 10 hours per day and be manned by 32 conservation officers, seven days a week through to October.

During the announcement, Premier Christy Clark said last season's interception last season of 15 high-risk boats headed for the Okanagan underscored the threat the invasive species pose.

The program will also add increased highway signage and expand quagga and zebra mussel monitoring, in addition to expanding the Report All Poachers or Polluters response line coverage. There will also be more outreach activities to promote education and awareness of zebra and quagga mussels.

To contact a reporter for this story, email Steve Arstad at sarstad@infonews.ca or call 250-488-3065. To contact the editor, email mjones@infonews.ca or call 250-718-2724.

—Updated 5 p.m. Wed. March 30, 2016 with quotes from Okanagan Basin Water Board chair Doug Findlater and a photograph of Premier Christy Clark.

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