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Inspection station frustration

Jennifer Zielinski - Apr 15, 2016 / 5:00 am



Photo: Jon Manchester - File photo

Confusion over where an [invasive mussel inspection station](#) will be set up is causing problems in Osoyoos.

According to David Karn with the Ministry of Environment, a recent announcement that one of the eight inspection station would be located in Penticton, and not at the border, caused concern over boats entering from the U.S. and heading either east or west away from the possible Penticton station.

"There has been some confusion over the base office locations for the inspection crews and the actual location of the inspection stations," said Karn. "In the case of the Penticton-based crew, the inspection station is being operated near the Osoyoos border crossing. We are not publishing the exact locations of the inspection stations as this is a compliance monitoring program."

Although the stations are considered permanent, the teams will have mobile capability and may shift locations to respond to a high risk incident.

Corrine Jackson with the Okanagan Basin Water Board said the Penticton station will also cover the area through Midway, Osoyoos and Kaleden.

“The only permanent stations will be in Golden, Valemont and Dawson Creek. The Penticton station will cover the surrounding area just like the station in Cranbrook, Invermere, Nelson and the Lower Mainland.”

In March the province announced a \$2 million program for the 2016 boating season to set up the inspection stations, as well as to hire and train 20 additional auxiliary conservation officers as aquatic invasive species inspectors. Funding will also go to the purchase of six new mobile decontamination units, to add to the two purchased by the province last year, ensuring each station is equipped with a unit.

Karn said there shouldn't be concern over the lack of inspection stations at the border, as the Canadian Border Services Agency is trained to conduct inspections when a boat comes across.

“On the southern border there are at least 14 border crossings and we are working in collaboration with the CBSA to cover these many crossings,” explained Karn. “We have worked with the CBSA to develop a standard operating procedure and provided training so that border agents can recognize high risk boats.”

Jackson is pleased to hear that CBSA officials can now check boats at the border as it was something the OBWB had been calling for.

“They don't have the ability to do decontamination. So, if they find invasive mussels on a boat, paddleboard, you name it, then they will call in the province and have them do a secondary inspection and decontamination as required,” she said.

CBSA officials as well as federal Fisheries officers will have the ability to inspect and detain boats that transport zebra or quagga mussels.

The five mandatory inspection stations set up at key crossings along the B.C.-Alberta border will be near safe areas that can be used to pull traffic off the highway, such as CVSE weigh scales or other pullout sites, to inspect, and if necessary, decontaminate a watercraft.

However, Karn does recognize there might be an issue with boats that cross the border while the inspections stations are closed - as they are only set up 10 hours a day - or may be in another location.

“No jurisdiction is operating inspection stations 24 hours a day as it is considered unsafe to do so at night,” he said. “Every driver of a vehicle transporting a watercraft (including kayaks, canoes and car toppers) must obey the watercraft inspection signs.”

If a boat is entering B.C. outside of operational hours, it is the owner's responsibility to have the vessel inspected before entering any waterways. Tickets will be issued to drivers who have not reported to watercraft inspection stations.

Jackson said the OBWB doesn't have an issue with current arrangement of the stations and is confident with CBSA officials conducting inspections.

“The ability to be flexible with the stations is important. The station based in Penticton will be able to work these other roads coming into the Okanagan.”

The Ministry of Environment chose the sites for the inspection stations on the basis of last year's

pilot program that determined the amount of traffic coming over the border and the destinations of those with watercraft.