

## Mussel findings raise concern



By Vernon Morning Star

Published: **July 08, 2016 01:00 AM**

Updated: **July 08, 2016 05:455 AM**

Boats carrying invasive mussels are being found and that has local officials calling for additional resources.

Of the 6,100 boats inspected so far this year in B.C., 240 came from high-risk jurisdictions and eight were infested with adult quagga or zebra mussels.

"What they are finding is a little scary. We're having close calls," said Doug Findlater, Okanagan Basin Water Board chairperson, who wants boat inspection stations at the Alberta border expanded.

"The big hole in the net is they are not operating 10 hours a day. We could see someone come through once the station is closed and drop it (boat) into the water," he said.

"An expanded program with hours makes sense. It just takes one boat and they are into a lake."

A crew of 32 trained mussel inspectors work seven days a week, 10 hours a day, at eight permanent inspection stations along B.C. borders to prevent the spread of invasive mussels.

Government representatives say the U.S. border stations are monitored 24 hours a day through Canada Customs while hours at the Alberta border stations are adjusted based on traffic.

"If we are missing some, we're not missing a lot," said Sgt. Josh Lockwood, with the Conservation Officer Service.

Martina Beck, invasive species co-ordinator, says the Ministry of Environment is trying to improve detection of mussels.

"We are collecting data on when watercraft are moving," she said.

"We will use that to maximize our program's efficiency."

All eight boats confirmed to have mussels originated from Ontario.

Quagga and zebra mussels can clog pipes, cause ecological and economic damage, displace native aquatic plants and wildlife, degrade the environment and affect drinking water quality.

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# News

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**RICHARD ROLKE**  
Morning Star Staff

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## Swan Lake water quality highlighted

**RICHARD ROLKE**  
Morning Star Staff

New data highlights the need to keep monitoring a Greater Vernon lake.

The Regional District of North Okanagan has received preliminary 2015 water quality testing done on Swan Lake.

"We want to help improve the quality of the lake," said director Bob Fleming.

The results, so far, suggest elevated ammonia levels, specifically at two locations at the southeast end of the lake. They may be a result of failing septic systems or possible pollution.

Elevated sulfate concentrations were found along the east, north and southwest shores likely due to agricultural activities.

High uranium levels have also been identified. This could be



Bob Fleming

a natural occurrence or a result of calcium and chloride levels changing the solution chemistry of near-surface groundwater, which has increased the solubility of uranium.

Elevated sodium levels, possibly attributed to road salt, have also been recorded.

Further water quality testing is expected this year.

"We want to see if there is a trend in these initial findings," said Laura Frank, regional planning projects manager.

BX Creek provides about 90 per cent of the water in Swan Lake while the remainder comes from some smaller creeks and groundwater.

The water quality studies are linked to the regional district's investigation into a possible sewer service for the Swan Lake corridor.

## Okanagan real estate market remains hot

Morning Star Staff

Residential sales in the Okanagan continue to be brisk.

Sales of 1,263 units were posted to the Multiple Listing Service in June, up 38 per cent from June of last year from the North Shuswap to Peachland, and including the North Okanagan.

"While days to sell rose slightly in June to 81 days from 77 in May, consumers looking to buy are still likely

to feel pressure to respond quickly and decisively to listings," said Anthony Bastiaansen, Okanagan Mainline Real Estate Board president.

The average MLS residential price in June was \$475,091, slightly down from \$486,636 in May and representing a 16 per cent increase over the same month last year.

In all regions served by OMREB, active listings dropped 21.3 per cent

compared to this time last year.

"We are seeing more buyers looking to regions outside the core in order to find homes in line with their budget," said Bastiaansen.

"Average residential pricing that is slightly down from May could be an indication of this, reflecting a higher proportion of lower-priced sales in the make-up of product sold in this time period."

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