

CASTANET Tuesday, Apr 25

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Lake protection welcomed

Jon Manchester - Apr 1, 2017 / 5:00 am



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The Okanagan Basin Water Board is welcoming improved protection of B.C. waters from invasive mussels.

"We have been working to raise awareness regarding invasive mussels since 2012," said board chair Tracy Gray.

"A lot of the items that have been on our wish list were announced (Thursday)," Gray said of a provincial announcement introducing a mussel-sniffing dog and additional inspection stations.

The new stations will be located at Yoho and Midway, where inspection stations were already established.

The two new stations will be located at Yank and Midway, joining ones already established at Golden, Valemount, and Dawson Creek, as well as mobile stations at Cranbrook, Invermere, Nelson, the Lower Mainland, and Penticton.

An additional 35 auxiliary conservation officers will also be hired, bringing the total to 68.

The OBWB's push for increased protection went into high gear last fall when nearby Montana announced it had discovered invasive mussels in its waters.

The board is also pushing the federal government to increase Canada Border Service Agency training to contain the mussels to provinces already infested (Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba).

"We encourage everyone to do their part," said Gray. "We need boaters and others who use our lakes to clean-drain-dry their equipment."

Zebra and quagga mussels originate from Eastern Europe and spread quickly. A single female can produce one million eggs a year.

A 2013 study estimated management could cost \$43 million a year if the mussels invade the Okanagan.