

Kelowna NEWS

Education at Water Week

by [Ragnar Haagen](#) | Story: 111272 - Mar 19, 2014 / 5:00 am

This week is Canada Water Week and the [Okanagan Basin Water Board](#) is using it as an opportunity to both educate the public and make a plea to boaters, with summer just around the corner.



Photo: Contributed - Wikipedia
Quagga Mussel

The issue of quagga and zebra mussels is once again at the forefront with news of another incident where the invasive species were brought across Washington State from Idaho – the third such case this year.

This concerns Corinne Jackson, Communications Director for the Okanagan Basic Water Board, who says it wouldn't take much to infest any of the the lakes in the Okanagan.

"These things are so small and can be in the bilge and all sorts of areas that you wouldn't think to necessarily check. It's pretty easy to see how these things can infest waters," Jackson says.

"Each female mussel can produce one-million babies, so it doesn't take very long for pretty severe damage to happen."

Idaho has checkpoints for these types of incidents, but there is nothing in Washington State. Jackson says they received an email stating this most recent event was a houseboat being commercially hauled to Seattle from Lake Powell when it was stopped. The previous incidents involved commercial carp fishing boats.

Quagga and zebra mussels, which are closely related mollusks originating from Europe, are not native to North America. They live in freshwater – such as lakes and rivers – and are invasive, known to encrust and corrode hard surfaces and cause serious harm to waters where they become established.



Photo: Contributed - Wikipedia

Zebra mussel

Jackson says they've already had issues in the Okanagan when a boat carrying the mussels was launched into Shuswap Lake two years ago, and another incident last year with a boat that had been bought in the US and hauled up to Vernon. The latter however was examined before being launched into any body of water.

She says the mussels can clog water intakes for public infrastructure, devastate fisheries and tourism, ruin beaches and devalue lake front properties.

“At a conservative estimate, we're talking \$43-million per year just to manage the situation if they come into the Okanagan.”

This and other issues will undoubtedly be brought up at the OBWB's Annual Public Forum that will be held Thursday evening at the Lural Packinghouse beginning at 5 p.m.

Speakers will include:

- Anna Warwick Sears – OBWB Executive Director, speaking on issues facing water in our valley;
- Keith Veerman – FortisBC's Manager of PowerSense Programs, on the connection/interdependence between water and energy, what the utility is doing to conserve and what they are doing to help customers conserve;
- Kiel Wilkie – District of Lake Country – Engineering Technician, on the district's multi award-winning micro-hydro power plant and other water/energy solutions it's developing.
- Deren Sentesy – Co-chair of Cascadia Green Building Council (Thompson Okanagan branch) and owner of En Circle Design Build, on the latest in energy/water conservation for homeowners (new build and retrofit)
- Brian Guy – Okanagan homeowner who recently built a water/energy efficient home from the ground up on lessons learned.

More info on invasive mussels and the harm they cause can be found [here](#).