

THE **Review**

BREAKING NEWS

Quagga mussel scare

by [Steve Arstad - Keremeos Review](#)

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An alert Canadian border crossing agent may have staved off a potential disaster for Okanagan Lake after spotting quagga mussels on a pleasure boat making its way into Canada.

On the evening of March 12, a Canada Customs official notified the BC Conservation Officer service that they found what looked like zebra and/or quagga mussels on a large pleasure-craft boat being transported from the U.S., across the Osoyoos border into Canada.

Canadian Border Services Authority notified local conservation officers through the RAPP hot line, who were able order a full decontamination of the boat.

“We have since received a report back on analysis of the mussels samples sent to our expert in Victoria,” said Regional Inspector in charge of Conservation Officer Service Barb Leslie on March 20, “we were able to confirm that the samples were Quagga mussels. The samples we sent were dead.”

Leslie also noted that under provincial legislation, it is considered an offence to possess or transport invasive species, alive or dead.

“A popular rule of thumb says if the boat has been out of the water for a month, any mussels attached to it should be dead - but that is not necessarily the case.” Leslie said damp or wet spots within the boat’s hull - bait containers, bilges, etc. - could harbour mussels that could be alive for some time after the boat leaves the water.

The consequences of zebra or quagga mussels establishing themselves in the Okanagan - Similkameen are predicted to be expensive, with estimates ranging from 21.6 to 43 million dollars annually.

“We’d like to express our gratitude to Canadian Border Services for their ongoing vigilance,” Leslie said.

CBSA currently has no legislative authority to refuse entry of contaminated boats into Canada.

The Regional District Okanagan Similkameen and interest organizations such as the Okanagan Basin Water Board and the Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society have expressed their concerns to the federal government, urging them to establish proper inspection stations and legislation to deal with the looming threat.

The boat in this particular case originated in Texas, and was headed to the Central Okanagan to be moored in Okanagan Lake.