

## Okanagan: Skepticism voiced over mussel eradication in Lake Winnipeg



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Published: **June 20, 2014 10:00 AM**

Updated: **June 20, 2014 02:452 PM**

The head of the Okanagan Basin Water Board is skeptical about the results of a potash treatment to eradicate zebra mussels from Lake Winnipeg.

CBC reported this week that Manitoba was “declaring victory in its first battle with invading zebra mussels,” having sealed off four harbours in mid-May and injected the water with potash to suffocate the shellfish.

“I don’t know the geography of those harbours, but the larva are very, very tiny and they are dispersed through the water, so I’m skeptical as to how applying potash in one harbour will take care of the problem for the lake as a whole,” said Anna Warwick Sears, executive director of the Okanagan Basin Water Board, whose background is in population biology.

Quagga and zebra mussels are extremely invasive as one mussel can lay up to a million eggs annually. Their presence has, thus, destroyed many aquatic environments in the Eastern United States, Canada and, most notably, the Great Lakes.

The OBWB has launched an extensive media campaign to put the issue in the public eye and draw the necessary political dollars to try and seal off B.C.’s borders with a multi-pronged approach: border inspections, publicity campaigns and decontamination sites.

Residents are being asked to write to their MLA and MP to urge action “to communicate the importance of the issue” to the politicians, Warwick Sears said.

“My understanding is that there is nothing that has been shown to eradicate the mussels once they are in the lake system,” she added.

Alberta is also ramping up efforts to stem the tide of invasion as the mussels migrate across North America and up from the United States.

Earlier this spring, the B.C. Liberals passed a motion to bring funding initiatives to the floor of the provincial legislature.

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