

Regional district looking for mussels

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A Regional District of Central Okanagan boat launch is part of a Valley-wide network of monitoring stations for invasive mussels.

A monitoring device has been installed at the Okanagan Centre Safe Harbour Regional Park boat launch, which is maintained by the regional district.

The Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society (OASISS) installed the monitoring station and checks it monthly through the fall, along with taking a plankton sample for any signs of zebra and quagga mussels.

Bruce Smith, with the regional district, said the monitoring station consists of a rope with a weight at one end and a series of small sections of PVC pipe and mesh.

“If the invasive mollusk species, which range from a grain of sand to thumbnail size, is present, it will attach to this artificial, solid surface,” said Smith. “The monitor is intended to act as a warning device as this would be a likely location that any mussels would show up, being transported on or in boats and trailers.”

The society and the Okanagan Basin Water Board’s Okanagan WaterWise program are encouraging all owners of personal watercraft and boats to check their vessels for signs of the invasive mussels, especially if they have been out of the province.

“By adopting the "Clean, Drain, Dry" protocol, residents and visiting boat owners can help protect B.C. lakes from these species, which have caused havoc and created a major economic cost in other jurisdictions because they rapidly colonize on hard surfaces, impacting tourism, recreation and infrastructure,” said Smith.