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## Okanagan board supports inspection stations to stop spread of invasive mussels

BY BRIAN MORTON, VANCOUVER SUN FEBRUARY 12, 2016

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The Okanagan Basin Water Board wants the B.C. government set up eight inspection stations along the Alberta and Washington state borders to stop the spread of invasive zebra and quagga mussels into the province.

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The Okanagan Basin Water Board wants the B.C. government set up eight inspection stations along the Alberta and Washington state borders to stop the spread of invasive zebra and quagga mussels into the province.

In a letter to Environment Minister Mary Polak and Finance Minister Mike de Jong supporting ministry staff recommendations for the eight inspection stations, board chair Doug Findlater said the province has conservatively estimated that an infestation of invasive mussels could cost B.C. \$43 million per year.

"A recent estimate from the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER) suggests it could cost over \$500 million per year to the economy of the Pacific Northwest," added Findlater. "The resources required to carry out the 2016 inspection plan are relatively modest when compared to the cost of an infestation.

"The establishment of these stations would bring B.C.'s inspection regime on par with the most effective and efficient systems in North America, and would meet obligations to protect our own waters, while supporting the protection of waters in neighbouring jurisdictions throughout the Pacific Northwest."

Findlater said it's essential that the province establish the full-time, mandatory inspection stations.

"We have also called on the federal government to provide funding and resources to the province to support these efforts, recognizing that their recent commitment to infrastructure improvement faces a significant challenge should invasive mussels be introduced to hydro, agricultural and water supply systems in B.C.," added Findlater in his letter.

According to a B.C. pilot project in 2015, a total of 4,350 boats were inspected by six inspection crews, with 70 boats identified as coming from a zebra/quagga mussel-infested province or state.

Fifteen of the boats were confirmed to have invasive mussels or larvae and six of the boats issued a 30-day quarantine order.

The mussels, which originate from Europe, spread quickly with a single female able to produce a million eggs per year.

The stations would include five along the B.C.-Alberta border and three along the B.C.-Washington border.

About 36 per cent of the high-risk boats were destined for the Okanagan, with about 12 per cent each headed to the Lower Mainland

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and Vancouver Island.

Over 60 per cent of the high-risk boats came from other parts of Canada.

*[bmorton@postmedia.com](mailto:bmorton@postmedia.com)*

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