

## Province considering permanent inspection stations against invasive mussels at border crossings into B.C.

By  
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The provincial government may establish eight full-time permanent inspection stations along its borders this year to counter the threat of invasive zebra and quagga mussels.

The Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) is urging the province to move forward with a Ministry of Environment proposal, which would provide the stations the OBWB has been calling for since 2012.

The mandatory inspection stations would be in place for the 2016 boating season, if adopted, the OBWB says.

Recreational boats that have not been properly cleaned, drained and dried after being used in infested waters are the main means that mussels have been spread over much of North America.

The mussels cover any surface in the water including water intakes, docks, boats, bridges and other infrastructure. Their razor-sharp shells cover beaches.

The Pacific Northwest Economic Region (PNWER) recently estimated costs to the region of a mussel invasion would be more than \$500 million a year.

While other jurisdictions in the region have adopted permanent inspection stations, B.C. so far has only provided roving inspections, which the OBWB doesn't believe are sufficient.

The government has not yet accepted the Ministry of Environment recommendation.

"The government is considering a proposal from MOE based on our experience with the pilot delivered last year and our ongoing work with other agencies and the communities most affect," said ministry spokesperson David Karn in an email.

OBWB Chair Doug Findlater wrote last Friday to Environment Minister Mary Polak and Finance Minister Michael de Jong urging them to go forward with the proposal.

"We congratulate the Ministry of Environment for developing a strong, strategic and efficient plan," Findlater wrote, urging the government to fully fund it.

"Every year B.C. commits to programs that keep us free of invasive mussels is an investment in the economy and environment of our province," Findlater concluded.

The proposal was outlined in December at a Mussel Prevention Leadership Forum in Vancouver.

The forum was co-hosted by PNWER and the Invasive Species Council of B.C.

Inspection stations are proposed near Osoyoos, Hope, Castlegar, Sparwood, Radium, Golden, Mount Robson and Dawson Creek.

During the 2015 pilot project, six inspection crews inspected 4,350 watercraft. Of those 70 were identified as coming from a mussel-infested province or state, 15 were confirmed to have invasive mussels or larvae and six were issued

a 30-day quarantine order.

More than half of high-risk watercraft were coming from Ontario or Manitoba, and 36 per cent were headed to the Okanagan.

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