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## NEWS

# Additional cash pumped into mussels fight



Eric Foster, Vernon-Monashee MLA, announces expanded funding to fight invasive mussels Wednesday at Kin Beach. — Image Credit: Lisa VanderVelde/Morning Star



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by [Richard Rolke - Vernon Morning Star](#)  
posted **Mar 30, 2016** at 3:00 PM

Efforts to prevent a potential invasion of the Okanagan are getting a cash infusion.

The provincial government has announced that an extra \$2 million will go towards eight permanent inspection stations along B.C. borders to try and stop the arrival of invasive quagga and zebra mussels.

“It’s a big step in combatting the possible invasion of mussels,” said Eric Foster, Vernon-Monashee MLA, as he stood along Okanagan Lake, at Kin Beach, Wednesday.

“This enhances the pilot program we started last year.”

The mussels, which have spread across North America, can clog pipes and other infrastructure, displace native aquatic plants and wildlife, degrade the environment and affect drinking water quality.

Five permanent stations will be set up near the Alberta border (Cranbrook, Invermere, Golden, Valemount and Dawson Creek), and three stations will be near the U.S. border (Lower Mainland, Penticton and Nelson).

Thirty conservation officers will work at the stations 10 hours a day, seven days a week, from April to October. This is an increase of 20 crew members from last year’s pilot.

While there are numerous border crossings, Foster says the inspection units at the eight will be able to move to other areas as the need arises.

“There is also lots of signage going up and education for boaters. We will depend on the public to do its due diligence,” he said.

The \$2 million is coming from B.C. Hydro, FortisBC, Columbia Power and the Columbia Basin Trust, and that has a local politician concerned about the financial viability of the program.

“We have to make sure that the funding continues and I’m not sure the external funders will want to do that,” said Juliette Cunningham, a Vernon councillor and Okanagan Basin Water Board director.

Foster insists the funding will occur annually and the provincial government is contributing staff, equipment and office space.

Akbal Mund, Vernon mayor, welcomes Wednesday’s announcement.

“It shows the provincial government is listening to all of the stakeholders. It’s great for our region,” he said.

The Regional District of North Okanagan is also praising the investment of funds for inspections.

“This is important for Shuswap and Mara lakes because of Trans-Canada Highway (traffic),” he said.