



CAPITAL news

Proudly Serving the communities of the Central Okanagan

HOME NEWS SPORTS BUSINESS ENTERTAINMENT COMMUNITY LIFESTYLES OPINION DRIVEWAY WORLD IMPR
PLACE CLASSIFIED AD BROWSE CLASSIFIEDS BC JOBS



KAL TIRE PLACE
Vernon, BC

Saturday July 23rd @ 7PM
& Sunday July 24th @ 2PM



TICKETS & INFORMATION
www.okanagantattoo.ca
250-549-7469 (SHOW)

Connect with Us  

NEWS

Okanagan water board: Not enough being done to stop mussels



 Like 10

 Pin it

 G+ 0

 Tweet

 SHARE

by Editorial - Kelowna Capital News

posted Jun 10, 2016 at 12:00 PM — updated Jun 16, 2016 at 12:36 PM

The Okanagan Basin Water Board is calling for a stronger inspection program to keep invasive mussels out B.C. waterways

GMC
20%
ON 2016 GMC TRUCKS
ON SELECTED MODELS
ENDS J



YOUR BEST

Server
Welcome Inn

Strawberry
Good 'N' Pler

Program St
Whitevalley (

mussels out B.C. waterways.

Provincial mussel inspection stations only opened April 1, but already the stats show the need for a stronger program says the Okanagan Basin Water Board.

According to the province, as of June 6, their five stations along the B.C.-Alberta border, and three along the B.C.-Washington border have inspected 3,200 watercraft, of which 124 were identified as high-risk for invasive mussels. Of these 124, six were transporting adult invasive mussels and 16 were quarantined to meet the required 30-day drying time. Of the six carrying mussels, there's a strong chance that they were alive, says government staff.

"We've been calling for action since 2012, concerned that we were at risk for an infestation of zebra and/or quagga mussels. But these stats demonstrate this is a real possibility," said OBWB Chair Doug Findlater. "Remember, one mussel can reproduce a million. It only takes one to devastate our lakes, our drinking water, tourism, fishery, beaches and economy."

Specifically, the OBWB is recommending the Province expand inspection station hours from 10 hours/day, seven days a week, to at least daylight hours and hire more Conservation Officers (auxiliaries and full-status COs) as needed for the extended hours.

In May, a driver hauling a boat failed to stop at an inspection station near Elko, B.C. and the auxiliary on site was not empowered to pursue the vehicle. Fortunately a law enforcement officer was present to chase the person down. The boat was found to be carrying invasive mussels and was decontaminated. More fully-empowered COs would help address this issue, says the OBWB.

Also, the board suggests the province revise its legislation to require all watercraft entering B.C. to report to an inspection centre prior to launching in provincial waters. Currently legislation only requires watercraft to be inspected when they travel past an open inspection station.

"We commend the outstanding work of the Ministry of Environment staff, and the Conservation Officers involved in this program to date. We also believe that even more resources are warranted given the clear threat the province is facing," the letter states. The letter was sent to B.C.'s Minister of Environment Mary Polak, Minister of Finance Mike de Jong, and Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations Steve Thomson.

A separate letter was also sent to federal Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Ralph Goodale, and to the attention of Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) President Linda Lizotte-MacPherson, and CBSA's Regional Director General Rosalyn MacVicar for Pacific Region and Kim Scoville for Prairie Region.

"We remain highly concerned that not all points of entry (POEs) place the same priority on stopping a potential infestation of invasive mussels. As stated in (Min. Goodale's) correspondence, currently Border Service Officers have only received mussel inspection training at 'several high-risk' points of entry," the letter states.

"We call on all POE Chiefs of Operations to require mandatory enforcement of the (federal government's) Aquatic Invasive Species regulations through the use of the Uniform Minimum Protocols for Watercraft Interception Programs."

Estimator
ArborCare Tr

Click here to
678-7833

Noti



THE ALL



mazda D

Loc



In the vast majority of cases, explained Findlater, this would simply require a standard interview to find out, for example, where the watercraft has been and how long it has been out of water, and then a short visual inspection to determine if it's at risk of carrying the mussels.

"The legislation is in place, but it needs to be enforced," he added.

In addition, the OBWB is calling on the federal government to provide funding to the prairie provinces and B.C. to help contain the current infestations in Manitoba's Lake Winnipeg and Cedar Lake, and prevent the mussels from spreading to Saskatchewan, Alberta and B.C. The U.S. federal government recently provided \$4 million in matching prevention funds to its northwestern states. The OBWB is calling on the Government of Canada to match or exceed that commitment to the provinces.

"We've definitely seen movement on this issue from the Province and the feds, but we're also seeing that more needs to be done, and done now," Findlater said.

The OBWB chair acknowledged this week's announcement of a joint Western Canada Invasive

Species Agreement, between B.C., Alberta, Yukon, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, formalizing their coordination efforts. "It's a good move," he said.

"We continue to be concerned that B.C. is operating its inspection stations based on funding from BC Hydro, Fortis BC, Columbia Power and Columbia Basin Trust," Findlater added. "While we are thankful that these agencies stepped forward for 2016, there is no clear plan for future years. We need the province to commit to ongoing core funding, ensuring the stability of this important program."

For its part, the OBWB and its Okanagan WaterWise program has relaunched its spring/summer Don't Move A Mussel initiative, raising awareness regarding the mussels and doing outreach, and is providing support to partner agencies, including the Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society, to do the same.

An extensive 2013 study conducted for the OBWB estimated that zebra or quagga mussels could cost at least \$43 million each year to the Okanagan alone, in lost revenue, added maintenance of aquatic infrastructure and irreparable ecological damage. The Pacific NorthWest Economic Region estimates a cost of \$500 million a year to the Pacific Northwest.

Last year's provincial inspection results found 36% of high-risk boats (the largest portion) entering the province were headed to the Okanagan, and 51% to the Southern Interior. Looking at these stats, Findlater noted it's in everyone's interest to help 'Spread the message. Not the mussel.'

"If you have neighbours or family members who boat, kayak, paddle board, or fish, talk with them," added Findlater. "As far as we know, we remain mussel-free and we all need to help keep it that way."

For more information on the mussels, the risks to the Okanagan, and prevention tips, visit www.DontMoveAMussel.ca.

