



Kelowna

Don't move a mussel

Nicholas Johansen - Aug 10, 2016 / 4:45 pm



The Okanagan Basin Water Board has been working diligently since 2013 to keep invasive mussels out of Okanagan Lake, and while staff have been successful so far, they are now reaching out for the public's help in continuing to keep the devastating species out of the local waters.

Doug Findlater, OBWB chair and mayor of West Kelowna, is urging the public to spread the message about the dangers of zebra and quagga mussels spreading to Okanagan waters.

"We're asking people to gently make interventions all on their own, take the message and spread the message seriously," Findlater said, during a presentation at Hot Sands Beach in Kelowna's City Park Wednesday morning. "If you have family on the east coast of Canada that is going to drag their boat, or from Ontario, out to B.C., have a talk with them about zebra and quagga mussels."

The cost of preventing the introduction of invasive species in the lake pales in comparison to the money that will be required if the mussels take hold in the lake.

James Littley, OBWB operations and grant manager, said the current awareness and prevention program costs \$600,000 per year, while a program to deal with mussels once they infiltrate the lake could cost upwards of \$45 million per year.

This summer, eight inspection stations in B.C. have inspected almost 13,000 watercrafts for the presence of the invasive species.

Of those inspected, 439 were found to be coming from a "high risk" area, and nine were carrying invasive species of mussels.

Additionally, 37 people were given tickets for failing to stop at inspection stations.

Findlater warned the public that the invasive mussels can be brought into the lake on any type of water device, including kayaks, inflatable boats and hip waders.

While inspections are being carried out 10 hours per day, Findlater said it's not enough to eliminate the threat.

"We're playing Russian roulette," Findlater said. "There are less bullets in the gun, but they're still in the gun, and that's the scary part."



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