

Fight against mussels escalates in the Okanagan



By Vernon Morning Star

Published: **August 10, 2016 01:00 AM**

Updated: **August 10, 2016 12:3912 PM**

More muscles are being added to the fight against mussels.

The Okanagan Basin Water Board is expanding its campaign to prevent quagga and zebra mussels from arriving in local lakes.

"As we see the number of mussel-infested boats being caught continue to climb, and as we hear about the number of watercraft being quarantined, and the growing number of folks being ticketed for not stopping at mandatory inspection stations, we all need to step up our game," said Doug Findlater, chairperson.

The DontMoveAMussel.ca website has been updated with information, and the goal is to have Okanagan residents talk to their neighbours and visitors about the risk mussels present.

"We know that it isn't always easy to have such a conversation, encouraging people to be good stewards of our waters. But if you love our lakes, it's OK to have the talk," said Corinne Jackson, OBWB's communications director.

"We need people to understand that the best way to prevent the spread is to clean, drain and dry their watercraft. We need people to understand the importance of stopping at roadside inspection stations."

Between April 1 and July 27, almost 13,000 watercraft have been inspected at since eight inspection stations at B.C.'s borders. Of those, 439 boats were identified as coming from high-risk areas and nine were found carrying invasive mussels, all from Ontario.

"The greatest number of high-risk watercraft intercepted – 36 per cent – were headed to our valley and our waters," said Jackson of the Okanagan Valley.

According to a 2013 study, it is estimated zebra or quagga mussels could cost more \$40 million each year to the Okanagan in lost revenue, added maintenance of aquatic infrastructure, reduced property values, and irreparable ecological damage.

"If you, or someone you know, uses any kind of watercraft on multiple lakes, it's important to understand, our lakes are at risk if even just one invasive mussel is introduced," said Jackson, adding that each female can produce about a million eggs in a single year.

Find this article at:

<http://www.vernonmorningstar.com/news/389769331.html>