

ENVIRONMENT

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Water board seeks public help to stop invasive mussels



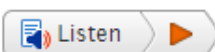
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The Okanagan Basin Water Board is asking Okanagan residents to be proactive about reminding others to take precautions to help keep the mussels out of British Columbia.

Jim Douglas / Global News



Many Okanagan residents are well aware of the potential risks posed by invasive

mussels.

The Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) estimates if the non-native zebra or quagga mussels spread to our region, it would cost the Okanagan more than \$40-million annually.

However, preventing the mussels from being introduced to Okanagan lakes requires the cooperation of locals and tourists alike.

That's why the OBWB is asking Okanagan residents to be proactive about taking precautions to help keep the mussels out of British Columbia.

“We are asking for members of the public to become more directly involved in educating their friends, their neighbours and their family to take personal action. If they have relatives dragging a boat out to B.C. from eastern Canada [we are asking them] to suggest that they clean, drain, dry their boat and take it to an inspection station,” Doug Findlater, chair of the OBWB, said.



OBWB points to milfoil, another invasive species, as an example of the harm invasive species can do if they are introduced. The water board says it has spent millions over the decades trying to deal with the plant.

“I get calls almost every day from property owners, beach goes and even the odd tourist requesting milfoil control because it interferes with their boating or swimming. Mussels will interfere with a lot more than that,” said James Littlely, operations and grants manager with the OBWB.

The invasive mussels have been found in Ontario, Quebec and Manitoba, as well as more than 30 U.S. states.