

THE DAILY COURIER

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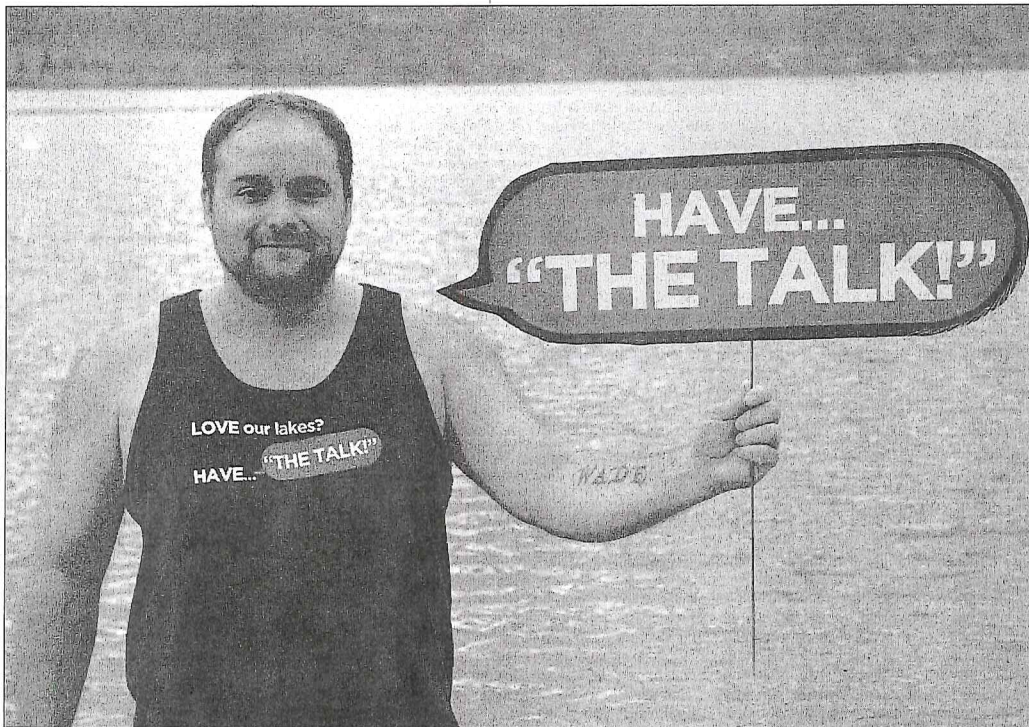
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ANDREA PEACOCK/The Daily Courier

James Little, Okanagan Basin Water Board operations manager, holds a sign encouraging Okanagan residents to speak with out-of-town guests about the threat of invasive mussels in our lakes.

ENVIRONMENT

Residents urged to spread word about danger posed by mussels

Water board wants locals to warn visitors against bringing invasive species to Okanagan lakes

By ANDREA PEACOCK
The Daily Courier

Okanagan residents need to step up and warn visitors about the risk of spreading invasive mussels to our lakes, says the Okanagan Basin Water Board.

In 2013, the board launched an awareness campaign concerning the threat of invasive zebra and quagga mussels in the Valley.

"According to B.C.'s mussel inspectors, the Okanagan has the highest level of awareness of anywhere in B.C.," said OBWB chair Doug Findlater, the mayor of West Kelowna.

The program is now expanding to encourage residents to talk with out-of-town guests about invasive mussels.

"People are definitely getting the message in the Okanagan, but we're now concerned that it's not really people in the Okanagan that are going to bring



ANDREA PEACOCK/The Daily Courier

Corinne Jackson, spokesperson for the Okanagan Basin Water Board, speaks at Hot Sands Beach in Kelowna about the threat of invasive mussels in the Valley. The OBWB is enlisting the public's help in keeping invasive mussels out of our lakes.

the invasive mussels here, unless they've gone to Ontario and they had their boat sit there for quite a while then they brought it back, or if they're buying a boat from Ontario," said James Little, OBWB operations manager. "It's really our out-of-town friends who are coming who bring their boats."

Since eight inspection stations opened in B.C. on April 1, almost

13,000 vessels have been inspected, said Corinne Jackson, spokesperson for the OBWB.

Of those, 439 vessels were identified as coming from high-risk areas, and nine — all from Ontario — were found carrying invasive mussels.

Another 50 vessels were quarantined to meet the 30-day drying-off period to ensure any mussels attached were dead.

In addition, 37 people were issued violation tickets and 27 were given warnings for failing to stop for inspection.

The inspection stations in B.C. are currently open eight to 10 hours a day, seven days a week.

The water board is pushing to expand these hours in an effort to catch more invasive mussels that may be coming into the province.

"The more hours of inspection, the more protection we have," said Findlater.

The OBWB estimates that a zebra or quagga mussel infestation could cost more than \$40 million a year in the Okanagan in lost revenue, added maintenance of infrastructure, reduced property values and ecological damage.

While zebra and quagga mussels are prevalent in Ontario lakes and have spread to Manitoba, other jurisdictions, such as Ohio, Oregon and Wisconsin, have been successful in preventing the spread of the invasive mussels for decades, said Little.

"The longer we prevent them, the better the solutions will become."

For more information, go online to dontmoveamussel.ca.

VALLEY IN BRIEF

Knox Mountain closed to vehicles

Extreme fire risk has prompted the City of Kelowna to close the upper portion of Knox Mountain Park to motorized vehicles.

The park closed Tuesday afternoon, when a small grass fire ignited. Fire crews managed to extinguish the fire quickly, but vehicle traffic is no longer allowed past the upper gate.

Residents and visitors can still reach the first lookout by vehicle. However, people wanting to go further up the mountain will have to do so on foot or by bicycle until the fire danger rating improves, said Blair Stewart, urban forestry supervisor.

"Park users are asked to be vigilant, and anyone who notices smoke or fire in any park should immediately call 911 to speak to the fire department or *5555 on your cellphone for the BC Wildfire Management Branch," said Stewart.

Auction extended for computer gear

The City of West Kelowna's auction of used computer equipment has been extended for another week.

Last month, the city put used computer equipment up for auction on eBay for public bidding.

The original auction closed on Aug. 6, but the city has reopened it until Aug. 19.

Bidding for many items starts at 99 cents.

Items for sale include a laptop, 24 PC desktop computers, 24 iPhone 5Cs, 24 flip phones and two receipt printers.

All equipment is in good working order.

Purchases are as is and are for local pickup only, with the exception of phones, which can be shipped.

Buyers can access the auction at ebay.ca/usr/westkelownacity.

Police on lookout for missing woman

Kelowna RCMP are searching for a missing local resident.

Kaylee Foster, 26, was last seen on Saturday.

"There is nothing to indicate foul play at this time, and police believe she is either in Kelowna or Vernon," said Const. Jesse O'Donaghey.

Police have followed up on several leads and possible sightings,

but Foster remained missing as of Wednesday afternoon.

"Police are very concerned for Kaylee Foster's health and well-being, and friends and family report that it is out of character for her to be out of contact for this long," said O'Donaghey.

Foster is described as a five-foot-four-inch Caucasian woman, weighing 122 pounds, with long dark brown hair with a purple tinge and brown eyes.

She was last seen wearing black capri pants, a black tank top and pink flip-flop sandals, and carrying a blue and red beach bag.

— The Daily Courier



Foster