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B.C. invasive mussel fight continues into fall season

Steve Arstad


 FILE PHOTO
Image Credit: US National Parks Service

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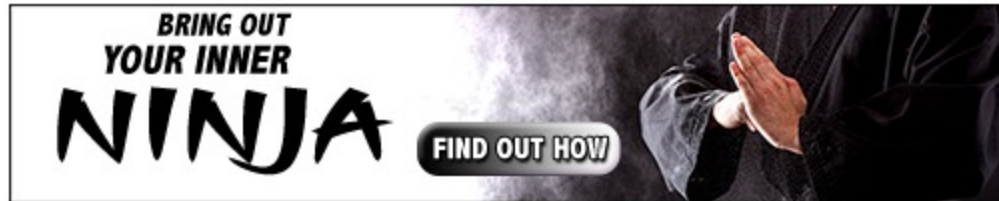
The battle for funding to keep invasive mussels out of B.C. lakes continues as another boating season winds down for the year.

Okanagan Basin Water Board communications director Corinne Jackson says their request for federal funding earlier in the year was a partial success, with a federal announcement in mid-August of \$133,000 annually over three years and \$25,000 annually for research.

Jackson says the board has responded with a request to reconsider the amount to match the over \$2 million in provincial funding. The U.S. federal government has provided \$16 million in matching funds to states in the Pacific Northwest.

"We're happy to see some movement, for the first time funding provided," Jackson says.

She says there is evidence the issue is a federal one, based on the most recently available statistics that say 12 out of 20 mussel-fouled watercraft that were intercepted coming into B.C. this summer were from other provinces, with the remainder coming from the United States.



Four of those watercraft were bound for the Thompson-Nicola-Shuswap area, and four were headed to the Okanagan.

"It was interesting to see those numbers. In 2017, we saw the majority of mussel-fouled boats found were coming from somewhere else in Canada," Jackson says.

The water board is currently waiting for the latest update from the province, expected for next week, in addition to a summary following the recent Pacific Northwest Economic Region summit before determining next steps, Jackson says.

The water board continues to advocate for increased lake monitoring, enhanced inspection program resources, more education and outreach, better coordination and preparedness, support of expanded B.C. inspection timings and activities, and increased capacity for the B.C. Conservation Officer Service K9 unit.

Jackson says the province has recently stepped up with further support, including the addition of a second dedicated conservation sergeant to the invasive mussel program. The conservation officers tour the province, providing extra support to inspection staff to address non-compliance at the mussel inspection stations.

B.C. law requires motorists hauling watercraft to stop at inspection stations. As of Aug. 17, 79 tickets were issued for failing to stop and 44 warnings handed out.

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