



Canada is not doing enough to prevent mussel movement: Report

Ben Bulmer



A new report is highly critical of the federal government's commitment to keeping invasive species out of Canadian waterways.
Image Credit: Image Credit: Contributed/US National Parks Service

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OKANAGAN - A new report has criticized the lack of action by the federal government to prevent aquatic invasive species entering local waterways.

The report released today, Apr. 2, by the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development criticizes both Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Canada Border Services Agency for not taking enough action to prevent aquatic invasive species, such as zebra mussels, from becoming established in Canada's waters despite commitments to do so.

Okanagan Basin Water Board executive director Anna Warwick Sears told iNFOnews.ca there had been very little federal funding in the fight to keep invasive species out of the Okanagan's lakes and rivers.

Sears said the federal government in 2018 granted \$133,000 annually over three years for outreach and education and \$25,000 a year over four years for research, but the water board had asked for just over \$2 million.

"I'd like to see a lot more federal funding into prevention... prevention is by far the most cost-effective measure to take," she said. Sears said the audit was consistent with the water board's findings and showed far more detailed information than had been available in the past.

"The federal government has the unique ability to work across provinces to reduce the risk," Sears said.



A 2013 study commissioned by the water board estimated an annual cost of \$42 million to the Okanagan region if invasive zebra or quagga mussels were to establish here.

Member of Parliament for North Okanagan-Shuswap Mel Arnold called on the federal government for an immediate response to the audit.

"The Commissioner's report released today has exposed the government's mismanagement and neglect of their duty to protect our waters," Arnold said in a media release.

Sears pointed to the \$650,000 spent each year in the Okanagan to deal with the milfoil control and how preventing zebra mussels and other species is ultimately far more cost-effective.

According to the audit, there are about 174 species on the government's list of aquatic invasive species.

For more information about preventing the spread of invasive species go to www.dontmoveamussel.ca

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