

The Weather Network
Kelowna, BC
0°C
Light snow



Water groups ask Ottawa for help in fighting mussels

Special to The Daily Courier **Dec 20, 2019**



The Shuswap Watershed Council and the Okanagan Basin Water Board have sent a letter to the new federal minister of fisheries and oceans, Bernadette Jordan, to express their ongoing concern about the threat of aquatic invasive zebra and quagga mussels and call for more action from the federal government.

“Every year, we experience invasive mussel-infested watercraft arriving at our borders, heading to the Okanagan, the Shuswap and other B.C. locations, with the vast majority coming from mussel-infested waters within Canada.

“And every year, our water is put at risk — for drinking, for fish and other wildlife.

“Our famous beaches, our water infrastructure, and more, is also put at risk,” said OBWB chair Sue McKortoff.

Although there are no known infestations of zebra or quagga mussels in B.C. or Western Canada, an introduction would have devastating and costly impacts to water quality, fish populations and habitat, water utilities, hydroelectric facilities, beaches and property values. The cost of managing an infestation is conservatively estimated to be \$42 million per year in the Okanagan alone.

Shuswap and Okanagan Lakes are especially at risk of an invasion because they see a large influx of watercraft each summer.

Additionally, federal research has noted that the Okanagan and Shuswap are at high risk due to warm water temperatures and high calcium content in the waters, which increases the chance of the mussels’ survival.

The letter cites a report on aquatic invasive species by the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development which identifies a lack of urgency and intervention by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in preventing and containing the mussels.

More recently, a report from the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans in June also found that the federal government’s protection of Canadian lakes and waterways against aquatic invasive species is inadequate.

An infestation in B.C., the letter states, would cause a catastrophic collapse of Pacific salmon stocks in our waters.



“We are very concerned that zebra or quagga mussels could arrive in British Columbia,” said Paul Demenok, chair of the Shuswap Watershed Council.

“We know from the experience of others who are now dealing with the invasive mussels that the cost of effective prevention is so much smaller than what it costs to manage the mussels once they arrive.

“We still have the opportunity to keep them out, but we need stronger support from the federal government.”

The SWC and OBWB are asking the federal government to build upon a previous financial commitment of \$400,000 in August 2018.

Specifically, they are asking for a new investment in B.C. that could support the expansion of three key programs including watercraft inspection, early detection monitoring, and education and outreach.

The SWC and OBWB are also asking the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans to contain known mussel infestations by enforcing new prevention measures, such as watercraft inspection and decontamination for travellers leaving infested watersheds, and new measures to prevent float planes and amphibious watercraft from transporting aquatic invasive species.



Submit Your News

We’re always interested in hearing about news in our community. Let us know what’s going on!

[Go to form](#)

Newsletters

Daily Headlines

Receive daily headlines on local news, sports, entertainment, and more right to your inbox. Sign up now!

[Manage your lists](#)

Upcoming Events

- JAN 7** Central Okanagan Photographic Society
Tue, Jan 7, 2020
- JAN 8** Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous (FA)
Wed, Jan 8, 2020
- JAN 10** Essentrics® Class
Fri, Jan 10, 2020
- JAN 11** UBCO - Creative and Portfolio Days
Sat, Jan 11, 2020


Most Popular

Articles




- Gorman Bros. deflects forestry downturn
- Asking price still tops assessment for Kelowna homes
- Costco site bends current and future city plans - critic
- Kelowna's New Year's Baby waits on a name
- Heavy snow, deep freeze coming to Kelowna
- Cool activities for final day of the decade
- Happy New Year! You're poorer than you think
- Drag artist Freida Whales voted Kelowna's Newsmaker of 2019
- Trail pulling double duty as a logging road
- The 10 best films of the decade, by James Miller

AUTOokanagan



\$32,109 **KELOWNA HYUNDAI**
2020 Hyundai Kona Ultimate



\$41,795
\$38,295 **Anthony's SUBARU**
2019 Subaru Outback Limited
Continuously Variable Transmission (CVT)