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Invasive mussels present a threat to Okanagan lakes, two organizations say (file)

More funding needed to combat invasive mussels in the Okanagan

An open letter was sent to the minister of fisheries demanding the government do more

CONNOR TREMBLEY Dec. 20, 2019 2:37 p.m. / NEWS



The Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) and the Shuswap Watershed Council (SWC) have sent an open letter to minister of fisheries Bernadette Jordan, calling for more preventative measures from the federal government to combat the threat of invasive mussel species in regional bodies of water.

While \$400,000 in funding was already announced by the federal government last August to combat the issue, the letter said that more funding is needed to expand existing monitoring and inspection programs.

[READ MORE: Okanagan dock owners urged to monitor for invasive mussels](#)

OBWB board chair Sue McKortoff said the letter is meant to raise more awareness about the issue.

“Every year we experience invasive mussel-infested watercraft arriving at our borders – heading to the Okanagan, the Shuswap, and other B.C. locations,” said McKortoff.

“Every year, our water is put at risk – for drinking, for fish and other wildlife.”

If Zebra and Quagga mussels were to infest waters, the boards estimate that it would cost around \$42 million annually to address the issue in the Okanagan Valley alone.

The Shuswap and Okanagan lakes are also at risk from infestation because of its warm water temperature and high calcium content, which are conditions the letter said would help to keep the mussels alive.

SWC chair Paul Demenok said it’s time to act now on the issue before it’s too late.

“The cost of effective prevention is so much smaller than what it costs to manage the mussels once they arrive,” said Demenok.

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

This isn’t the only invasive species the OBWB is trying to address in the region.

Earlier this month, The OBWB entered into a five-year agreement with the provincial government to clarify where they could [rototill for invasive millfoil](#) around Okanagan lakes.

To read the full letter, you can visit SWC’s [website](#).

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