

Action called for mussels

Watershed Council & Basin Board pen letter on invasive mussels

John Lawless · Dec 23, 2019 · 5:00 am



Photo: Contributed

The Shuswap Watershed Council and the Okanagan Basin Water Board have sent a joint letter to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans about their concern over the possibility of invasive mussels in the region, and calling for action.

The organizations say the threat of the Zebra and Quagga mussels are a serious hazard to the ecosystem and its water.

"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," says Sue McKortoff, the OBWB Chair. "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."

There are no known infestations of these mussels in the province, if they do make their way into B.C. waters, they could pose a danger to water quality, property values and fish populations. They say the cost of managing this threat could cause an estimated \$42 million just in the Okanagan, which could fall on taxpayers.

According to the SWC and OBWB, the Shuswap and Okanagan Lakes are at risk from these species due to a number of watercraft coming from infested waters of North America.

They are asking the federal government to expand on their previous commitment of \$400,000 from last year, hoping to cover the costs for water inspection, early detection monitoring and education and outreach. To learn more about this issue, you can visit www.dontmoveamussel.ca. For the complete letter, you can find it [here](#).