

Don't Move a Mussel

Boaters urged to protect waters as mussels move closer to B.C.

May 18, 2017

 [RSS](#) [Print](#)

  1 of 5



Dor
Samp



OBWB



Okanagan Basin Water Board

Beautiful warm waters. Hot sandy beaches. Great fishing. The lure of the lakes. It's what the Okanagan is known for.

Now imagine not being able to launch your boat because your favourite spot is closed to boat traffic. The reason: to prevent an invasive mussel infestation - or worse - because invasive zebra mussels have been discovered in the waters and a natural resource emergency has been declared.

It's not far-fetched. As of March 2017, Parks Canada has banned the use of power boats and trailer-launched watercraft from Waterton Lakes National Park in Alberta to protect its waters. Why? Invasive mussels were discovered in Montana last fall, a half-day's drive to Waterton. Until now, Montana was considered part of our Northwest perimeter defence against the mussels. And the Okanagan, like Waterton, is only a few hours from Montana.

About the mussels

Zebra and quagga mussels were introduced into the Great Lakes in the 1980s after vessels traveling from Europe discharged ballast water. They've been spreading ever since, travelling waterways and hitchhiking on boats, kayaks and other watercraft, fishing gear and other water recreation-related items.

It's easy to understand why the mussels spread so easily. At their youngest stage, the mussels are the size of a grain of sand, and at their largest the size of a thumbnail (1.5 to 2 cm).

They can live up to 30 days out of water and they get established quickly since each female can produce about one million eggs per year.

There is no proven method to eradicate the species that doesn't also cause significant environmental impacts. Their impact has been devastating: clogged pipes, toxic algae blooms, beaches ruined with broken and smelly shells, and more. A [study](#) conducted for the Okanagan Basin Water Board estimated the cost to our valley at \$43 million each year in lost revenue, added maintenance of aquatic infrastructure and irreparable ecological damage. Boating, fishing and beach-bumming won't be the same if mussels arrive here.

Don't Move A Mussel

If you love our lakes, help protect our waters.

It is more important than ever to follow the "Clean-Drain-Dry" protocol. Whenever traveling from one water body to another, make sure to **CLEAN** off all plants, animals and mud from your boat and related equipment (e.g. boots, waders, fishing gear). If a power washing station is available, use it. **DRAIN** (on dry land) any item that can hold water (e.g. buckets, wells, bilge and ballast). And **DRY** all items completely before launching the watercraft into another body of water.

It is mandatory to stop at B.C. inspection stations. It is illegal to transport zebra & quagga mussels in the province – dead or alive – and could cost a \$100,000 fine.

If you want to boat in a state or province that has mussel-infested waters, consider options that don't use your own watercraft, such as renting. You'll avoid the hassle of inspections, decontaminations and a possible 30-day quarantine. Plus, no one wants to be responsible for bringing an invasive species home and introducing it into our lakes.

Have "The talk!"

Help spread the message, not the mussel. Talk with fellow boaters and make sure they're following proper Clean-Drain-Dry procedures, and stopping at inspection stations.

For more information on the mussels, risks to the Okanagan, prevention tips – including Clean-Drain-Dry procedures, visit DontMoveAMussel.ca.

May 18, 2017