

Five boats heading to the Okanagan caught with invasive mussels

By Jenna Hickman



All watercrafts coming into B.C. must report to inspection stations to be checked for invasive mussels.

Image Credit: FACEBOOK/Okanagan WaterWise

August 15, 2017 - 1:05 PM

KELOWNA - The chair of the Okanagan Basin Water Board is concerned about the number of boats travelling to the valley found with invasive mussels so far this season.

Since inspections began in April this year, 19,800 boats coming into B.C. have been checked, according to statistics from the provincial government provided to Kelowna city council. Of those, 15 were found carrying adult invasive mussels, five of which were headed for the Okanagan.

Vessels found with the quagga and zebra mussels are required to be quarantined for 30 days in order to dry out and ensure they are dead.

Coun. Tracy Gray, who also chairs the Okanagan Basin Water Board, says the work the inspection stations are doing is really important.

"These are very concerning statistics," Gray says.

Boats found with the invasive mussels had traveled from as far away as Ontario and Quebec, and several U.S. states including Texas, Arizona, Ohio, Illinois, Michigan and New York.



Once Zebra and quagga mussels get into a waterway, there is no known way of getting them out.

Image Credit: SUBMITTED

Gray says it would be helpful to know what routes those boats took so gaps in the inspection system can be discovered.

"That information would be very valuable," she says.

In 2016, out of the 24,500 inspected boats, 17 were infected with invasive mussels.

Earlier this year, the province of B.C. provided funding for two new inspection stations, increased inspection hours and the training of B.C.'s first mussel-sniffing dog.

Gray says with the recent change in provincial government, the funding is something the Okanagan Water Basin Board will be following up on.

"Unless something is an actual budgeted item you never know," Gray says. "Especially with having a new government, we want to make sure they're aware of the issue and continue to fund it."

Stopping at inspection stations is mandatory for boaters in B.C., and those who fail to stop can be issued a \$345 fine. Transporting invasive mussels into B.C. can cost first time offenders \$50,000.

The Don't Move a Mussel campaign strives to educate people about the danger of invasive mussels.

Find past stories on invasive mussels here.

— *This story was corrected at 2:50 p.m. Thursday, August 17, 2017 to say the mussel sniffing dogs were B.C.'s first, not Canada's.*

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