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Mussel collection. (Contributed)

Volunteer to monitor for invasive mussels and clams in the Okanagan

The Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society has launched the initiative

DANIEL TAYLOR / Jul. 23, 2020 9:30 a.m. / NEWS



The Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society (OASISS) is launching a citizen science initiative to help monitor for zebra, quagga mussels and Asian clams in Okanagan lakes.

The project offers two types of volunteer positions during August and September that involve community members in aquatic invasive species detection.

The first position seeks homeowners who have private docks on Kalamalka, Wood, Okanagan, Skaha, Vaseux or Osoyoos lakes to monitor for zebra and quagga mussels. Volunteers will receive a pair of mussel monitors to be attached to their docks and will be required to check them every two weeks.

“Our society has been checking for invasive mussels for eight years, however, this initiative will greatly expand our efforts to regions of the lakes that were previously inaccessible,” said Lisa Scott, executive director of OASISS.

The citizen science initiative also offers an opportunity for shoreline surveys looking for Asian clams along Osoyoos Lake.

“Asian clams are already established on the Washington side of Osoyoos Lake,” said Scott. “The shoreline surveys will allow us to monitor and protect this high-risk lake from further infestations on the Canadian side.”

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According to Invasive Species Society, invasive mussels and Asian clams are not known to occur in the Okanagan valley. If they were to arrive they could cause irreversible damage. In regions where they are already established, invasive mussels and Asian clams damage sensitive ecosystems, clog intake pipes and water infrastructure, affect water quality, impact tourism and the local economy.

“We are extremely concerned about the possibility of invasive mussels or Asian clams arriving here,” said Scott. “It’s imperative as a community to do everything in our power to protect our lakes from an invasion.”

The current project is being funded in part by the Okanagan Basin Water Board and is to run in conjunction with their ‘Don’t Move A Mussel’ initiative. The society has also received a grant from the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation to support the monitoring of Okanagan lakes for invasive mussels through both water sampling and monitoring stations.

To register for the project, contact oasiss.register@gmail.com or call Sierra at 250-718-7901.

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