

Demand grows for zebra mussel inspections

By Vernon Morning Star

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Both the federal and provincial governments should work together to establish mandatory inspection stations and a public education program about the invasive [zebra and quagga mussels](#), according to the Regional District of Central Okanagan.

Board members have approved a resolution to go forward to the Southern Interior Local Government Association conference to lobby senior governments to take action against the threat.

Vice-chairperson Gail Given said their hope is that the regional association would approve the resolution and forward it to the Union of B.C. Municipalities convention, as it should be a provincial and national issue, not a regional matter.

The resolution resulted from a presentation by the Okanagan Basin Water Board regarding the economic and ecological threat posed by the invasive mussels which could be transported from the eastern states and provinces and the southern U.S., where they have already caused billions of dollars in damage.

It's estimated if the two non-native species of mussel get into Okanagan waters, it could cost more than \$42 million a year to try and manage the damage they would do here to boats, aquatic infrastructure such as water intakes and sewage outfalls, beaches and tourism.

"Bylaws in one area won't protect the entire province, so this needs to be dealt with at a province-wide level," said Given.

Because the international border is a control point, it would be logical to set up inspection stations there for incoming boats.

That would prevent contaminated boats from bringing the larvae of the mussel into this province to contaminate local waters.

"An action plan is needed so they can't get in," said Given.

Once they've entered local waters, it's almost impossible to eradicate them, and they propagate at a furious rate.

One can grow to one million in a single growing season and trillions in three years, according to a report on the mussels completed this spring by local aquatic biologist Heather Larratt.

She reported that they can alter a water body's food web and cause bird and fish kills.

OBWB is asking councils and regional districts to approve resolutions calling for senior government action on this issue.

Provincial legislation was passed in December with fines of \$100,000 or a year in jail for transporting any stage of the mussel — alive or dead.

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