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## Okanagan Basin Water Board Calls for Action

The Okanagan Basin Water Board will again launch a campaign this summer to press for action on invasive zebra mussels that could threaten Okanagan waters.



Zebra Mussel (Photo Credit: US Fish and Wildlife)

The Board has begun the "Speak out!" campaign, which encourages Okanagan residents to <u>go online</u> and write to their MLA and MP to urge action from government.

"We need the provincial and federal governments to step up to the plate. Zebra and quagga mussels are a triple threat to our well-being," explained OBWB Chair Doug Findlater. "They pose a significant environmental threat, a threat to our infrastructure which we'll all pay for with increased taxes, and an economic threat – to tourism and more."

The mussels, which originated from Europe, could cost the Okanagan more than \$43 million a year to manage if an invasion were to happen. There is no proven method to eradicate the mussels once they enter a new environment. They are known to litter

beaches with sharp shells, clog boat motors, push fish and ecology out of lakes and stimulate toxic algae blooms.



Quagga Mussel (Photo Credit: National Park Service)

"We've done our research, boat inspections stations and the right legislation in place are key," Findlater noted. "It's impractical to be at each boat launch with so many private launch sites. But, there are only so many roads into the province and these can be monitored much more easily."

The province has an estimated the cost of an inspection program would be \$2.4 million per year, with 15 stations along the borders.