

## Not weak on mussels

by [Darren Handschuh](#) | Story: 141949 - Jun 11, 2015 / 9:40 am

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*Photo: Contributed*

Invasive zebra and quagga mussels have never been detected in British Columbia's waters – and the provincial government wants to keep it that way.

With the addition of the mussel early detection and rapid response program announced earlier this year, officials are stepping up co-ordinated efforts to keep the province mussel free.

“Our strengthened invasive mussel defence program currently underway includes three mobile decontamination units, six trained auxiliary conservation officers, expanded monitoring for zebra and quagga mussels and increasing Clean, Drain, Dry education and outreach activities,” said Mary Polak, minister of environment.

“Through the new program, teams are now on B.C. roads performing boat and boat trailer inspections and, as necessary, decontaminating boats entering B.C. The teams are also responding to boats identified as a concern by the Canadian Border Services Agency, as well as U.S. partner agencies. Mobile units have the flexibility to provide extended coverage near border crossings and throughout the province, especially on popular, high-traffic routes.”

The teams are educating citizens about the dangers of invasive aquatic species and how to prevent them from entering the province's waterways. The province has also installed signage at significant entry points.

B.C. is already working with partner agencies in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana and Nevada, as well as Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, to ensure information is immediately exchanged when mussel-infested boats are detected, said Polak.

"Together with these other jurisdictions, we are co-ordinating training for our frontline staff, and are also co-ordinating the timing and locations of boat wash stations. We also support new federal legislation allowing Canadian Border Services Agency staff to check and detain mussel-infested boats at the southern border."

[Earlier this month](#), the Okanagan Basin Water Board gave notice it will not be responsible for "for the long-term treatment, mitigation or control of zebra or quagga mussels if the province fails to enact appropriate prevention measures" to keep the invasive species out of area lakes.

With June being Invasive Species Action Month, the board released a position statement on the issue.

"Awareness is great, but action is better," said board chairman Doug Findlater.

"The water board is doing all it can within its mandate to prevent the spread of these species into the Okanagan," he added, noting the launch of the Don't Move a Mussel campaign, efforts to help local communities prepare, and an ongoing push on those with greater authority to do more.

"Ultimately, it is up to senior levels of government to bring in the appropriate laws and enforce them," Findlater said.