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Central Okanagan posted June 17, 2015 by Stacy Penner

## New Mussel Regulations Applauded by Okanagan Water Board

The federal government announced new regulations for aquatic invasive species on Wednesday, getting a positive response from the Okanagan.

“I actually woke up to a tweet from Dan Albas, MP, from Ottawa, saying that they had been approved, so great way to start my day,” said Doug Findlator, Chair of the Okanagan Basin Water Board. He had a meeting with MPs Dan Albas and Ron Cannan in early December when the regulations were put out for public comment and has since been waiting patiently for them to be approved.



BC's Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator Matthias Herborg demonstrates decontamination procedures. (Photo Credit: KelownaNow.com)

The regulations are in effect immediately, prohibiting the import, possession, transport, and release of significant risk species—including quagga and zebra mussels. Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Gail Shea said that the new regulations will help the Department and provinces to prevent the introduction and spread of these invasive species and improve the ability to respond rapidly to invasions or manage the current spread.

Before, the federal government says there was simply “a patchwork of inconsistent regulations and policies” at various government levels, creating inconsistency across Canada.

The Government of Canada has now made it illegal to spread the invasive zebra and quagga mussels further throughout the country. In addition, border officials now have the authority to stop, inspect, and bring charges against someone who brings the mussels into Canada's waterways. According to Communications Director for the Okanagan Basin Water Board Corinne Jackson, the fines for bringing the mussels in are quite stiff (anywhere between \$100,000 to \$500,000) and can include jail time.

“It puts some teeth in the enforcement related to zebra and quagga mussels,” added Findlater.

The Okanagan Basin Water Board has been calling for both the federal and provincial government to step up in the fight against invasive mussels, recently [refusing responsibility](#) for mussel control if the province doesn't enact appropriate prevention.



Quagga mussels. (Photo Credit: Dave Britton/Ontario's Invading Species

Awareness Program)



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