

Opinion

BC needs border inspection

by [Jon Manchester](#) | Story: 136947 - Apr 6, 2015 / 3:47 pm



Photo: Jennifer Zielinski

The provincial government's recent announcement of \$1.3 million to keep invasive quagga and zebra mussels out of B.C. is welcome news.

But it's not enough.

So far, British Columbia has been riding on the coat-tails of neighbouring jurisdictions and their efforts to keep the waterway-clogging mussels out. Because they've done a good job, B.C. has had to do practically nothing.

Environment Minister Mary Polak's funding announcement on the shores of Okanagan Lake acknowledged that should the mussels arrive in B.C. waters, the result could be catastrophic.

Once established, it would cost billions in maintenance to keep our water systems useable and could squeeze out native aquatic species.

We don't want to go down that road. That's why it's cheaper to spend some money now, rather than a whole lot once it's too late.

That's why B.C. needs border inspection stations like you see in California for fruit and produce.

These don't need to be stand-alone facilities. An extra border agent at major crossings into the United States and on Highways 3, 5 and the Trans-Canada into Alberta would be sufficient and likely wouldn't cost any more money.

Stopping the mussels at our border would be better than blindly chasing random boats around the province with three mobile decontamination units. And education is nice; but enforcement is better.

Ever declare some fruit in the vehicle when driving into the U.S.? Either the fruit doesn't come in – or you don't come in. Period. The same should hold true for boaters entering our province. Got mussels? Sorry, you're not coming in until they're gone.

West Kelowna Mayor Doug Findlater, who serves as chair of the Okanagan Basin Water Board, points out: "Every year (the mussels) are not here saves local governments tons of money because if they get here, you know who is going to bear the cost of the maintenance on the water, sewer systems, the docks and marinas. It will be local government, it won't be the provincial government."

Boats have already been found containing the invasive mussels – but that's more through luck than vigilance. B.C. needs to up its game, or the costs could be more than any of us imagine.

– News Director Jon Manchester