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## Just 1 in 1,500 boats found to have issue with mussels

Ron Seymour Nov 3, 2017 0



A boat inspection program designed to keep a troublesome mussel out of Okanagan lakes found very few of the creatures attached to hulls and propellers.

Just one of every 1,500 vessels entering B.C. that were checked this year were found to be contaminated with zebra or quagga mussels.

More than 35,000 boats were inspected, and only 24 were determined to have mussels attached to them, according to a wrap-up report on this year's program from the Okanagan Basin Water Board.

Fourteen of the infected boats were being towed from Ontario, but contaminated boats also came from as far away as New York and Texas.

While few mussels were actually found, inspectors nevertheless issued orders requiring the decontamination of 276 so-called high-risk vessels, and the owners of 192 watercraft were told to put their boat in quarantine for 30 days.

There were 10 watercraft inspection stations around B.C.'s borders this year, nine of which operated during daylight hours. The station at Golden on the Trans-Canada Highway was open 24 hours.

Compliance with the mandatory inspections was a problem, with an estimated 20 per cent of drivers towing boats failing to stop for a mussel check.

For next year, the OBWB hopes the NDP government will increase funding for the mussel inspection program, so the number of check-points can be increased and their hours of operation expanded through the night.

There are 11 500 caterers preparing holiday meals.]

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British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and the U.S. states of Washington, Idaho, and Oregon are among the few remaining jurisdictions in North America believed to be mussel free.

The mussels, which originated in Eastern Europe, are considered an invasive species in North America.

They're a problem because they disrupt the natural ecology of lakes and rivers, and jeopardize fish populations. They also clog water intakes and damage other aquatic infrastructure, growing to a density of 700,000 per square metre.

Mussels also cause algae blooms that lower water quality, and with their sharp edges make beaches unusable.

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