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Vernon

Flexing federal mussels

Kate Bouey - May 11, 2017 / 7:18 am | Story: 196751



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While many people are worried at the moment about too much water in the Okanagan Valley, there are also concerns about the future of area lakes - in particular the threat of zebra and quagga mussels.

A delegation from the Okanagan Basin Water Board sets out for talks in Ottawa at the end of the month.

OBWB chair Tracy Gray, vice chair Juliette Cunningham and directors Doug Findlater and Peter Waterman will be attending a conference in the nation's capital but are also expected to meet Fisheries and Oceans Minister Dominic LeBlanc. The meeting will take place on June 1, said Cunningham.

The water board has been asking the federal government to enhance border inspections and allocate funding to improve mussel education, containment and prevention.

Ahead of the provincial election, the Liberal government announced a plan to introduce a mussel-sniffing dog and additional inspection stations.

As well, 35 auxiliary conservation officers were to be hired, bringing the total to 68.

The OBWB's push for increased protection went into high gear last fall when nearby Montana announced it had discovered invasive mussels in its waters.

Zebra and quagga mussels originate from Eastern Europe and spread quickly. A single female can produce one million eggs a year.

A 2013 study estimated management could cost \$43 million a year if the mussels invade the Okanagan.

-with files from Jon Manchester

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