



SUMMERLAND REVIEW



Avoiding invasive mussels

Invasive species can have devastating effects on the environment

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Invasive mussels have been a problem at lakes in many parts of Canada and the United States, but so far, the lakes in the Okanagan Valley have not been infested.

The risk still remains, and the Okanagan Basin Water Board is working to keep the mussels out of our lakes, and to have a plan in place to cope with them should they arrive.

The latter would put this valley in an uncomfortable position.

Managing invasive mussels in Okanagan Lake would have an estimated cost

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Managing invasive mussels in Okanagan Lake would have an estimated cost of \$42 million a year.

That's money which could otherwise be put to other uses in the valley.

And the \$42 million cost would not eradicate an invasion of zebra mussels or quagga mussels. At best, the efforts would control an infestation.

It's an unpleasant scenario, since the lake plays an important role in this valley. It is a source of drinking water and irrigation water, and it is important for tourism.

Invasive species can have devastating effects on the environment.

Long-time Okanagan Lake residents know this, as in past years, mysis shrimp, another invasive species, wreaked havoc on the lake and on kokanee populations.

Dealing with the shrimp was a difficult and costly challenge.

That's why the effort must now be on keeping zebra mussels and quagga mussels from entering the lake.

Extra care now can help us avoid a huge problem in the future.

The recommended measures of cleaning, draining and drying boats and ensuring bait buckets are free from the mussels will go far in averting an invasion.

The message has been shared, and Okanagan residents are becoming familiar with the clean, drain and dry slogan.

Now the message must be repeated.

Complacency now could result in difficult and expensive problems later.

