



# KELOWNA CAPITAL NEWS



A mussel-infested boat intercepted at a roadside inspection station in 2015 in Alberta shows the ability of the mussels to form dense

## Invasive mussels found on 15 boats entering B.C.

Five of the boats were headed to the Okanagan but were stopped and quarantined, says the province.

ALISTAIR WATERS / Tue Aug 15th, 2017 5:00am / LOCAL NEWS NEWS



The province has dodged a bullet—15 bullets, actually.

Tracey Gray, chairwoman of the Okanagan Basin Water Board, said 15 boats entering the province were found to have adult invasive mussels attached to them, since April.

The boats—seven from Ontario, two from Texas, and one each from Quebec, Ohio, Illinois, Michigan, and New York—were among 117 quarantined over the last four months to meet the province’s required 30-day “drying time” to ensure the mussels were dead.

Gray said a total of 19,900 boats have been inspected on B.C.’s southern and eastern borders since April, when the province increased its number of inspection stations and their hours of operation.

“But these numbers are very concerning,” said Gray, who is also a Kelowna city councillor, after a Monday meeting.

She said there are still questions about the boats that were discovered with mussels onboard, but so far the province has only released the numbers, where the boats were from and where they were headed in B.C. It’s not clear where each crossed into B.C., or their points in between.

Five of the the boats were destined for the Okanagan, six for the Lower Mainland, and one each for the Kootenays, the Thompson-Nicola area, Vancouver Island and Alaska.

Currently, only the inspection station at Golden, near the B.C.-Alberta border is open 24-hours per day.

According to Victoria, of the 19,800 boats coming into the province that were checked between April and the end of July , 1,100 were identified as “high-risk,” and of those, 166 were issued decontamination orders.

Gray said with the potential for devastation to B.C. lakes and waterways so great from even one contaminated boat or water vessel getting through undetected, it's crucial any gaps in the current inspection system be filled quickly.

The OBWB has estimated that the cost to local governments could be as high as \$43 million per year if mussels were to get into Okanagan Lake. That does not take into account damage to private property or the long-term affect on the area's tourism industry, due to lost beach traffic.

As part of multi-pronged approach—including public education—the water board has to fight the introduction of invasive mussels into B.C., owners of boats, other water craft and even angling equipment are urged to wash their vessels and equipment, drain boat bilges and thoroughly dry all equipment every time they come out of the water.

