

Mussels headed our way

Wayne Moore · Aug 15, 2017 / 11:59 am



Photo: National Park Service

Five boats said to be infested with invasive mussels were stopped before reaching the Okanagan.

Okanagan WaterWise released an initial report, Monday, on the inspection of boats headed into the province.

According to the report, 15 boats entering B.C. were confirmed to have been infested with either adult quagga or zebra mussels.

Seven of those originated in Ontario, while one came from Quebec. The remainder originated in the United States, one from as far away as New York.

Kelowna Coun. Tracy Gray, chair of the Okanagan Basin Water Board, says she is concerned so many boats were able to travel long distances with the invasive mussels on board.

While there are inspection stations across the country and in the U.S., Gray says she is concerned about gaps in the system that would allow this to happen.

She's also interested in whether the American boats drove through the U.S. and entered B.C., or entered the country through Ontario or Quebec and then travelled west.

Of the boats infested, a third were headed to the Okanagan while six were destined for the Lower Mainland. The others had a final destination in the Kootenays, Thompson-Nicola, Vancouver Island and Alaska.

Gray acknowledged, despite a rigorous inspection program set out by the province, the only 24-hour inspection station is in Golden.

To date this year, nearly 20,000 boats heading into the province have been inspected. Of those, 166 decontamination orders were issued and 117 were issued quarantine periods to meet the required 30-day drying time to ensure mussels were dead.