

SMALL SHOP

Free parking. Because we like you

March 24, 2018

downtownkelowna.com



this week
FEATUR

Penticton

Feds answer to mussel worry

Colton Davies - Mar 6, 2018 / 3:53 pm



Photo: Contributed

The federal government has told the Okanagan Basin Water Board that it "takes very seriously" risks posed by zebra and quagga mussels, after the board raised concerns last month.

In a letter issued on Feb. 19, Minister of Fisheries Dominic LeBlanc said the Department of Fisheries and Oceans will soon be meeting with the B.C. government and key stakeholders, including the OBWB, to discuss aquatic invasive species.

The letter was in response to the OBWB [calling out the feds](#) for not following up from an in-person meeting the two sides had last June, regarding the risk of invasive mussels in B.C.

B.C.'s waterways have been deemed to be in imminent danger of invasive zebra and quagga mussels for [about two years](#).

The mussels, which commonly hitchhike on boats, have been found as close west as Montana. To date, none have been detected in B.C.

The federal government is divvying out \$43.8 million between 2017 and 2021 to combat aquatic invasive species, and the OBWB raised concern that, if divided equally among regions, "much more protection is needed to avert a very costly infestation" in B.C.

In his letter, LeBlanc said the funding won't be distributed by region or by species, but rather it will be used for the DFO to expand operations, research and "national co-ordination."

LeBlanc added about 40 per cent of that money will be used to enhance aquatic invasive species regulations — something the OBWB said needs to be reworked to prevent invasive mussels from spreading further.

In 2017, more than 35,000 vessels coming into B.C. were inspected for mussels. Of those, 25 were found to be infested with invasive mussels and were given decontamination orders.

A total of 400 samples from 100 lakes in the province came back negative for having invasive mussels.

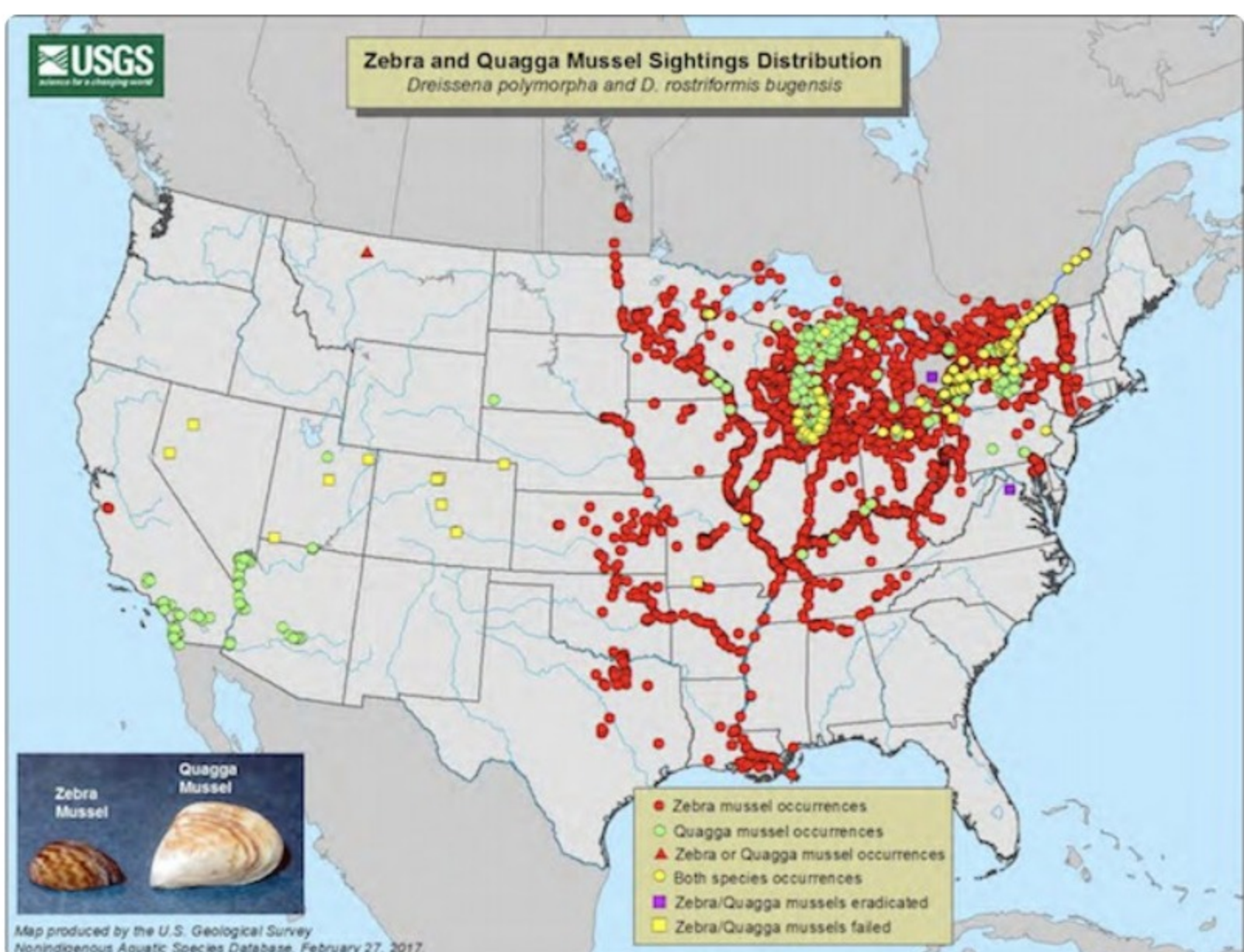


Photo: OBWB

A map showing where invasive zebra and quagga mussels have been detected in North America.