



## Grant boosts battle to keep invasive mussels out of Okanagan lakes

\$17,500 to support the monitoring of five Okanagan lakes for zebra and quagga mussels

KRISTI PATTON / Jul. 25, 2018 12:53 p.m. / LOCAL NEWS / NEWS



The battle to keep invasive mussels from getting into Okanagan lakes is getting an injection of support.

The Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society received a grant from the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation for \$17,500 to support the monitoring of five Okanagan lakes for zebra and quagga mussels.

“Our society is thrilled to receive this financial boost at a time when mussels seem to be inching closer to British Columbia every year” said Lisa Scott, executive director of OASISS. “This will be our sixth year of monitoring the lakes but the additional funding allows us to greatly expand our program.”

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The organization has partnered with the Osoyoos Lake Water Quality Society who have been monitoring the health of Osoyoos Lake since 1994 but will now be taking additional steps to watch for this unwanted invader. The lakes being monitored include Osoyoos, Skaha, Okanagan, Wood and Kalamalka Lakes

“Our society is very concerned about the devastating impacts a mussel invasion would have on Osoyoos Lake. Being involved in this monitoring project is a logical and crucial addition to our annual data collection,” said Birgit Arnstein, president of OLWQS. “We look forward to partnering with OASISS to prevent the introduction of invasive mussels into our vital fresh waters.”

**Related:** [False alarm on invasive mussels found boat at Osoyoos border](#)

Invasive mussels were introduced to North America from the Baltic Sea in the mid 1980s. They were discovered in Lake Winnipeg, Manitoba in 2013 and Montana in 2016. At this time, B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan, Oregon, Idaho and Washington are believed to be free of invasive mussels.

The presence of zebra and quagga mussels could harm fish populations and sensitive ecosystems, as well as impact water supplies and tourism. The monitoring program is critical for early detection of mussels if they do arrive in B.C.

“The Okanagan Basin Water Board is pleased to see the ongoing investment by the provincial government in the mussel prevention program. We are extremely concerned about the potential invasion of zebra and quagga mussels into B.C.; the mainstem lakes of the Okanagan Basin are particularly vulnerable,” said Anna Warwick Sears, executive director of the Okanagan Basin Water Board. “The invasion of these mussels is a clear and present danger to the health of our lakes and the waterfowl, fish, and other species dependent on them.”

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