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## Water board pushing for enhanced invasive mussel-fighting legislation

Steve Arstad



The Okanagan Basin Water Board continues to advocate for tougher legislation to require mandatory invasive mussel inspection of out-of-province boats prior to launching in B.C. waters.  
 Image Credit: Brynne Morrice/Mussel Threat

November 21, 2018 - 1:08 PM

The Okanagan Basin Water Board continues its push for legislation to require mandatory out-of-province boat inspections in an effort to stop invasive mussels from entering the province's waterways.

The board said in a press release issued today, Nov. 21, it was renewing the call for legislation in a letter sent to B.C. Minister of Environment and Climate Change George Hyman. The legislation would require all incoming watercraft to present for inspection of zebra and quagga mussels before being allowed to launch in the province's lakes or rivers.

"This legislative change was the first priority in our list of action items provided to your ministry on October 20, 2017, following our meetings at the 2017 Union of BC Municipalities conference," water board executive director Anna Warwick Sears said in the letter.

"We feel that there is still sufficient time before the 2019 boating season for the province to pass this legislation, and ensure that inspections are available in centralized locations for those with watercraft who do not report to a roadside station," she said.

Under current legislation someone entering B.C. with any type of watercraft is only bound to stop for inspection if an open inspection station is passed en route, leaving gaps from unmonitored routes and periods when inspection stations are closed for mussel-fouled boats to slip through.



While Warwick Sears admits the province will never be able to completely seal the border, the legislation would allow for spot-checking of out-of-province watercraft and enhanced enforcement of the law.

There were some improvements made to the program this fall, with \$1 million in stable annual funding announced for the fight against invasive mussels.

A second Conservation Service sergeant has been added to mussel fighting personnel to help address non-compliance and inspection stations increased from 10 to 12 in 2018. A second mussel-sniffing dog has also been added to the effort.

Twenty-five watercraft were found to be carrying invasive mussels during inspections in 2018. The boats were heading for the Lower Mainland, Vancouver Island, the Thompson-Nicola, Okanagan and the Kootenays.

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