



Kim Kaiser, Columbia Shuswap Invasive Species Society (CSISS), outreach program co-ordinator as of Jan. 1, 2019 checks for quagga mussels. (Photo contributed)

## Invasive mussels being held at bay in the Shuswap

The Columbia Shuswap Invasive Species Society sampling finds no sign of the mollusks

BARB BROUWER / Dec. 21, 2018 2:08 p.m. / NEWS



So far so good. That's the message from the Columbia Shuswap Invasive Species Society (CSISS).

The society has been completing early detection lake sampling in the Columbia Shuswap region for microscopic larvae of the invasive zebra and quagga mussels for the past four years. Throughout the 2018 season, CSISS staff collected 118 samples from 22 waterbodies in the Columbia Shuswap Region. Similar programs are taking place across the province, and as with previous years, there was no detection of zebra or quagga mussels were found in any sampled waterbodies in British Columbia.

"This is such great news," said Robyn Hooper, executive director of CSISS. "If mussels did get into B.C. waters, we could be looking at huge costs to just manage them on underwater infrastructure, let alone the damaging effects on fish and water quality, and the fact that our beautiful sandy beaches would become nasty banks of razor-sharp, stinking shells."

CSISS collaborated with many partners and stakeholders throughout the region to provide extended outreach and monitoring efforts in 2018. The Habitat Conservation Trust Fund funded CSISS to monitor waterbodies in the Columbia Shuswap region, and the Shuswap Watershed Council and Columbia Basin Trust funded aquatic outreach activities, along with extra monitoring.

Outreach at boat launches, aquatic-focused events, and a special marina-focused networking event attended by politicians and the BC Ministry of Environment's Invasive Mussel Defence Program was also held in June to increase awareness of the issue.

North Okanagan-Shuswap MP Mel Arnold has called for federal funding to be available to protect B.C. from the threat of invasive mussels. At present only a small proportion of the federal Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) budget is spent on Western Provinces.

Arnold has won unanimous support for a bill to study the federal government's approach to managing the spread of the aquatic invasive species.

### [Related:Regional district wants more done to prevent quagga mussel spread](#)

The Columbia Shuswap Regional District supported this study and asked about whether federal funds for these types of programs are distributed in an equitable way around the country.

The Okanagan Basin Water Board has called for the B.C. government to bring in legislation requiring all watercraft to be inspected before launching in provincial waters.

Citizens have a role to play in keeping these invaders out as well.

All watercraft users coming into B.C. are required to stop at provincial inspection stations, where decontamination may be required for potentially infested watercraft. It is mandatory to stop at the inspections stations if you are transporting any type of watercraft, including canoes, paddleboards, fishing float-waders, or any other type of boat.

It is also illegal to transport invasive mussels, dead or alive, on boats or related equipment into or within B.C. Failure to clean mussels off boats or equipment can result in a fine of up to \$100,000.

"We encourage all boat or watercraft owners to be sure to 'clean, drain and dry' your watercraft and water toys every time you move it to another waterbody," says CSISS outreach co-ordinator Sue Davies. "Clean off all weeds, mud, and any encrusting material (ensure your trailer is clean too), drain all water from all parts of your watercraft onto dry land and dry off your watercraft."

Invasive species are of concern across Canada, and humans can play a large role in preventing their spread. Anyone who sees a boat mussels cleaning to it or equipment is asked to report it by calling the Report All Poachers and Polluters (RAPP) hotline at 1-877-952-7277.

The Columbia Shuswap Invasive Species Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to the prevention, management and reduction of invasive species in the Columbia Shuswap Regional District. CSISS is thankful for the generous support of the Columbia Basin Trust, the Columbia Shuswap Regional District, and the Province of BC.

To learn more, go to the society's website at <http://www.columbiashuswapinvasives.org> or contact CSISS at [info@columbiashuswapinvasives.org](mailto:info@columbiashuswapinvasives.org), or call 1-855-785-9333.