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Invasive mussels invade BC

Wayne Moore - Jul 19, 2019 / 5:00 am



Photo: National Park Service

The Okanagan Basin Water Board is calling for additional resources to further protect provincial waterways from invasive mussels.

The OBWB points to recent stats which show, as of July 5, 10 vessels entering the province were carrying adult invasive mussels this year alone.

The watercraft, nine boats and one kayak, originated from various points in North America. Two were heading to the Okanagan.

"Until we know we are in the clear and there is no chance of invasive mussels making their way into our waters, we are going to be pushing for senior government to do all they can to protect our waters," said OBWB chair Sue McKortoff.

"Our lakes are not only an important tourist destination, they are important as a source of drinking water, to our fishery, the Okanagan's delicate ecosystem, and much more."

The OBWB is repeating calls for legislation requiring all watercraft entering the province be inspected before being allowed to enter B.C. waterways.

It also recommends implementing "pull the plug" legislation already in place in Alberta and in Northwest U.S. states which requires drain plugs be removed from watercraft before transport.

There are also calls for the province to increase funding for the program to at least 2017 levels of \$4.45 million to both expand, and strengthen the program.

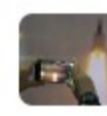
"It's wonderful that we have 64 inspectors, three full-status Conservation Officers who can chase down those who fail to stop at inspection stations, and two K9s to help sniff out mussels," McKortoff said.

"But we only have one of 12 provincial inspection stations that are open 24-hours a day and there is no requirement to get an inspection when a station is closed. We need to tighten things up."

The OBWB says a mussel infestation would cost the Okanagan at least \$42 million a year just to manage, meaning current efforts have potentially saved more than \$168 million in the Okanagan alone since the program was initiated in 2015.



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