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COVID-19 hasn't kept invasive mussel-infested boats out of Okanagan

[Rob Munro](#)



B.C. inspectors found 17 boats carrying invasive mussels this past summer.
Image Credit: SUBMITTED/Okanagan Basin Water Board

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Even though the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered travel restrictions over the past two summers, boaters are still coming to the Okanagan and bringing invasive Zebra and Quagga mussels them.

Over this past summer, 33,000 inspections were held with 153 boats decontaminated, 100 ordered to be decontaminated and 18 quarantined to make sure they didn't enter waterways within 30 days of their last use.

Out of all those boats, only 17 were confirmed to be carrying mussels. Those included seven from the United States, seven from Ontario, two from Manitoba and one from Quebec.

That's only one more boat that carried mussels into B.C. than in 2020, even though there were 3,000 more inspections that year.

In 2019, before there were any COVID travel restrictions, there were 52,000 inspections, finding 22 boats with mussels.



READ MORE: ['It's a big deal': B.C. conservation officers on alert after invasive mussels found in pet store aquarium](#)

"According to Insp. Dave Webster, in charge of the mussel defence program for the B.C. Conservation Officer Service, compliance appears to be increasing as public awareness continues to grow," reads a report going to the Okanagan Basin Water Board on Tuesday, Dec. 7.

"Most who are unaware seem to have only acquired a watercraft since the beginning of the pandemic, as people were staying closer to home."

Of the boats carrying mussels, eight were destined for the Okanagan, four to the Lower Mainland, three to Vancouver Island, and one each to the Kootenays and Skeena.

Mussels have infested lakes in Ontario, Manitoba and numerous U.S. states so far, but none have been found in the Okanagan.

If they do arrive, the water board estimates, in 2013, it would cost \$42 million in direct costs and lost revenue in the Okanagan.