

ENVIRONMENT

B.C.'s invasive mussel defence program intercepts 5 contaminated boats from Ontario

By Jasmine King · Global News

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Five watercraft contaminated with invasive mussels were intercepted coming into B.C. Two were headed to the Okanagan, two to the Lower Mainland and one to Vancouver Island – Jul 8, 2022

VIDEO LINK: <https://globalnews.ca/news/8977726/b-c-invasive-mussel-5-ontario-boats-intercepted/>



The province's [invasive mussel defence program](#) reeled in five contaminated boats recently.

This week, the [Okanagan Basin Water Board](#) (OBWB) announced that the Ministry of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship, plus B.C.'s [Conservation Officer Service](#), gave updates on how the program was faring this year.

The program guards [British Columbian waters](#) against zebra and quagga [mussels](#) via eight inspection stations.

READ MORE: [Okanagan water board asks for more federal funding to fight invasive mussels](#)

Corinne Jackson of the OBWB says if invasive mussels enter the Okanagan's water system, there would be substantial impacts.

"We're talking water quality because they create toxic algae blooms. If you've seen any of the beaches that have totally been destroyed by these mussels, they cover them and they're razor-sharp. They can cut your feet," said Jackson.

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As of July 3, five mussel-infected watercraft were detected at inspection stations. All five were traveling from Ontario.

"Two of those five were headed to the Okanagan, two of them to the Lower Mainland and one to Vancouver Island," said Jackson.

The OBWB is asking the government to increase funding to maintain the stations in order to further prevent invasive species.



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In 2019, there were 12 stations with 64 inspectors. This year that number is down to eight with only 36 inspectors.

"We're thankful for the inspection stations, but we are quite concerned they aren't 24-7," Jackson says.

In 2021, the inspection stations were operational from April 1 to October 24. The province released a report with the findings and highlighted that approximately 33,000 inspections were completed.

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"During the inspections, 244 watercraft were identified as high-risk. 100 decontamination orders were issued and 18 watercraft were issued quarantine periods to meet the required drying time. The Conservation Officer Service aquatic invasive species inspectors completed 153 decontaminations," the report read.

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The OBWB launched its "Don't Move a Mussel Campaign" in 2013. The goal is to raise awareness and prevent invasive mussels from entering water systems.

"It was estimated that in the Okanagan, it would conservatively cost about \$43 million just to manage these mussels," said Jackson.

She said if local water becomes contaminated, it would never be cleared out and that mussels weigh down aquatic infrastructure.

"Eradication at this point is not something we would be able to do in the Okanagan," she said.

The OBWB wants to remind boaters to get their watercraft inspected by trained invasive mussel defence inspectors before launching, and that failure to do so could result in a fine and potentially foul local lakes and rivers.



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