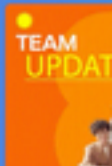




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BOATERS MUST 'PULL THE PLUG'

B.C. boaters must now pull their drain plug before transporting between water bodies

Nicholas Johansen - May 16, 2024 / 4:54 pm



Photo: Mark Hoffman

Zebra Mussels on Wisconsin's Lake Winnebago Beach.

Boaters in B.C. must now pull their drain plug before transporting watercraft between bodies of water.

B.C.'s chief veterinarian Theresa Burns has issued the new order, which takes effect on Friday, that will make it illegal to transport all watercraft in the province with the drain plug still in place.

"This order is part of our ongoing actions to contain and prevent further spread of whirling disease and keep invasive mussels out of B.C. waterways," said Nathan Cullen, Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship.

"Beginning May 17, 2024, boat operators in British Columbia are required to pull the plug before moving a boat or any equipment between water bodies."

Boaters must now pull their drain plug once their boats are taken out of the water and drain out all the water on dry land. This includes all internal compartments, such as ballasts, bilges and live wells.

To help ensure any invasive mussels or whirling disease stays where they are, the province is encouraging boaters to clean, drain and dry all watercraft, trailers and equipment on dry land, away from storm water drains, ditches and waterways. All mud, sand and plant materials should be removed from boats before leaving the shore as well.

The first case of whirling disease in B.C. was confirmed in Yoho National Park in December 2023. While the province says there are no health concerns for humans swimming in or drinking water contaminated with whirling disease, it can decimate freshwater fish populations.

Meanwhile invasive mussels have been a major concern across B.C.'s Interior for years. Quagga mussels were found in Idaho's Snake River this past September, just an 11-hour drive from the Canadian border. This is now the closest infestation from B.C. that's been discovered.

"We're very happy to see the province answer our call for pull-the-plug regulations," said Blair Ireland, chair of the Okanagan Basin Water Board.

"One litre of water can carry 9,000 invasive mussel larvae. So, this is an important step forward, while the Okanagan Basin Water Board continues to push for additional action, especially federal funding. In the meantime, this is a tangible way boaters can help protect the waterways they love to visit and play in."

B.C.'s invasive mussel defence program inspection stations are open from April until October to prevent zebra and quagga mussels from hitching a ride in to B.C. on watercraft. Inspectors will now also be checking watercraft for compliance with the new pull-the-plug order.