

https://www.kelownadailycourier.ca/news/article_2e624f5e-07e2-11ef-82d7-03d94dbdb821.html

FEATURED

British Columbia's mussel defence program gets \$1.1M boost

RON SEYMOUR

May 1, 2024



An inspection station, near Midway in the Boundary Country east of Penticton, is manned by conservation officers checking boats and boat trailers to make sure they're not carrying an invasive mussel into the province. The program has received a \$1.1 million funding boost.

Handout photo

Provincial defences against a feared invasion of aquatic mussels have been bolstered by new annual funding of \$900,000 from BC Hydro.

A further contribution of \$150,000 is also being provided by the BC Wildlife Federation, the Pacific Salmon Foundation, and the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation.

The new funding will be directed into the Invasive Mussel Defence Program, which works to keep zebra and quagga mussels out of B.C. lakes and rivers through checks at the border of vessels being towed into the province, water monitoring, and public education.

“The province has made fighting invasive mussels a priority and we will keep taking action alongside our partners and communities,” Nathan Cullen, minister of water, land, and resource stewardship, said in a Tuesday release.

The new investment of more than \$1.1 million is in addition to ongoing provincial funding for the mussel defence program.

If the sharp-edged mussels were to get established in B.C. waterways, it is said their presence could foul beaches and make them unusable, disrupt the natural aquatic environment, and cause significant damage to public infrastructure.

“Invasive mussels pose an increasing and significant risk not only to B.C.’s rivers and lakes, but also to our ability to produce electricity by plugging pipes and other critical equipment in our generating facilities,” Chris O’Riley, president and CEO of BC Hydro, said in the release.

For many months, the Okanagan Basin Water Board has been leading a campaign to get more federal funding for the mussel defence program. Of new provincial and non-profit funding, OBWB chair Blair Ireland, the mayor of Lake Country, said: “Each new partner and tool help strengthen efforts to keep B.C. waters invasive mussel-free.”

Last year, 21,000 vessels being towed into B.C. were checked for invasive mussels. As well, 86 water samples were tested, all of which came back negative for invasive mussels.

