

# Your Actions Can Save Our Water.

Don't let invasive mussels into the Okanagan.

## What are invasive mussels, and why are they such an enormous threat?

Zebra and quagga mussels originate from freshwater lakes in Russia and Ukraine. Outside their natural habitat, and with few predators, they outcompete native species, encrust and corrode hard surfaces and cause serious harm to waters where they become established.

A huge reason we all love the Okanagan is because of the lakes that connect us. They're a destination for recreation, tourism and industry alike. They are also a source of drinking water for Okanagan residents and support a fragile ecosystem. We risk losing it all if we don't stay vigilant.

As far as we know, the Okanagan remains free of invasive mussels. It's up to all of us to keep it that way.

## One mussel is too many.

It wouldn't take much for mussels to get established in the Okanagan. A single female zebra or quagga mussel can produce 1 million eggs a year! In warmer waters, like Lake Mead, Nevada, there have been six to eight reproductive cycles a year.

The Okanagan's calcium-rich, warm waters contribute to its beautiful color and make it a popular spot for recreation, but this combination also puts the region at high risk.

## How do they spread?

Invasive mussels use their byssal threads to swim and attach to things like boats, kayaks, paddleboards, hip waders, tackle boxes, life jackets — any hard surface that has spent time in infested waters. They're stealthy, too! They can live 30 days out of water in a damp space. At their smallest, they are the size of a grain of sand. At their largest, they are around the size of your thumbnail (1.5 to 2 cm).



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# Here's how you can help...

## Check off The Responsible Recreation Checklist

If you or anyone you know is coming into the Okanagan with ANY watercraft - including non-motorized vessels, such as kayaks, canoes and paddleboards, ensure to check all the boxes on the Responsible Recreation Checklist.



### Plan Ahead.

Make sure your route passes by a provincial watercraft inspection station.



### Stop For Inspections.

It's the law to stop at ALL mussel inspection stations along your route – and it helps protect our waters.



### Clean. Drain. Dry. Every Time.

This applies to boats, paddleboards, fishing gear, water toys, and life jackets.



### Pull The Plug.

Drain all bilges, livewells, and water-holding compartments on land – it's the law in B.C.



### Coming From An Infested Region?

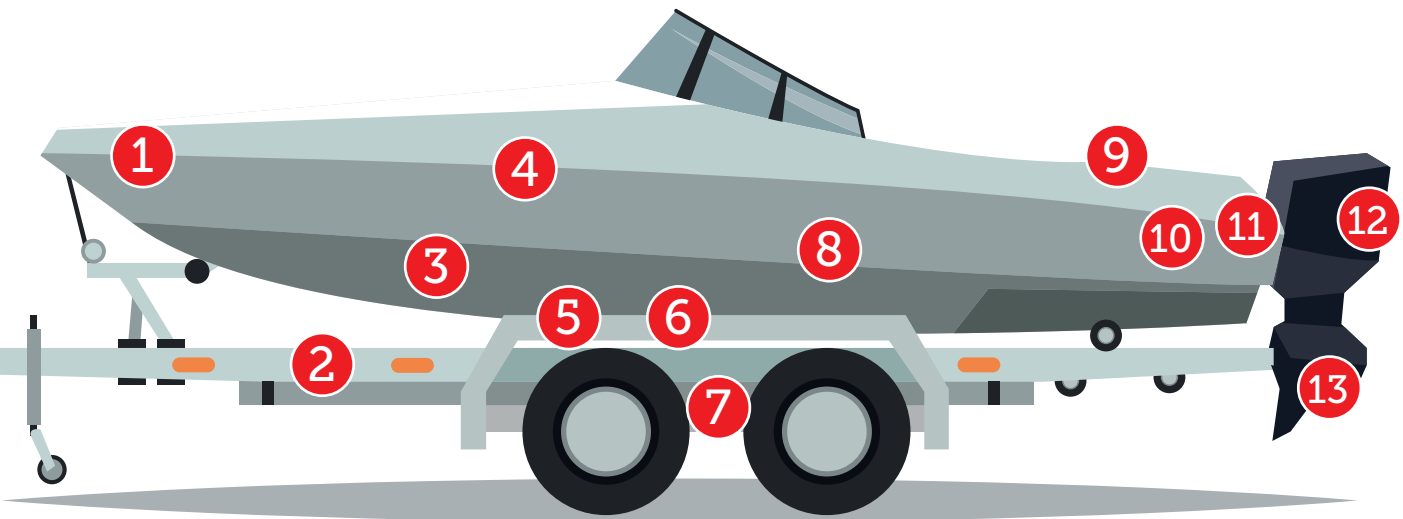
Consider renting watercraft or gear at your destination to avoid spreading mussels.

Failing to stop for inspection can result in a \$690 fine.

**IMPORTANT:** Do not launch watercraft into any B.C. waters until you have received instruction from a Provincial Aquatic Invasive Species Inspector.



## Boat Inspection CHECKLIST



Invasive mussels are sneaky, use this checklist to go over some common hiding spots for invasive species:

- ☐ 1 **Anchor**
- ☐ 2 **Trailer**
- ☐ 3 **Hull**
- ☐ 4 **Dock Lines**
- ☐ 5 **Rollers**

- ☐ 6 **Bunks**
- ☐ 7 **Axle**
- ☐ 8 **Ballast**
- ☐ 9 **Bait Bucket**
- ☐ 10 **Live Wells**

- ☐ 11 **Bilge**
- ☐ 12 **Motor**
- ☐ 13 **Prop**

### Clean.

Clean off all plants, animals and mud from your watercraft and equipment (boots, waders, fishing gear, even beach toys). If a power washing station is available for your watercraft, use it!

### Drain.

Drain (on dry land) any item that can hold water (buckets, wells, bilge and ballast).

### Dry.

Dry all items completely before launching into another body of water.



# What is at risk?

From declining property values to the loss of jobs and the destruction of our fragile ecology, the implications of zebra and quagga mussels in our valley are huge.

**Here is where they would hit us hardest:**

- **DRINKING WATER INTAKES** and other in-lake infrastructure, including docks, marinas, bridges, would be corroded and weighed down, requiring ongoing maintenance.
- The **SAFETY OF OUR DRINKING WATER** by creating conditions that promote the growth of toxic algae.
- The **NATURAL ECOLOGY OF THE LAKES** threatening native species and the local fishery.
- Enjoyment of our **BEACHES** because of razorsharp shells, and the smell of decaying mussels.
- Motorized and non-motorized **WATERCRAFT** and water recreation equipment (including boats, seadoos, kayaks, paddleboards, fishing gear, float planes, etc.), encrusted with mussels.
- **REAL ESTATE VALUES**, especially waterfront property, would be affected.
- **TOURISM INDUSTRY**, with fewer visitors because of fouled beaches and harm to the local fishery.
- Our **ECONOMY**, with the loss of tourism jobs and increased taxes to help manage the impact of mussels on local government infrastructure.

**Learn more and help spread the message, not the mussel.**



*Learn more about keeping invasive mussels out of our lakes.*



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