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Central Okanagan posted **July 11, 2015** by Stacy Penner

Okanagan Water Board Pleased With New Mussel Funding, But Wants Full Protection

Though the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) is commending the provincial government's [recent announcement about mussel funding](#), they still have further recommendations.

The provincial government said on Friday that the Columbia Basin Trust is helping efforts by [doubling the roving inspection stations from three to six](#). "This is generally very good news. Inspection and decontamination in the Kootenays helps protect the Okanagan," says OBWB Executive Director Anna Warwick Sears. "That being said, the OBWB would prefer the province ensure the most defensive, conservative approach possible, with a minimum of five permanent inspection stations at major highway crossings on the B.C.-Alberta border."



Zebra mussel. (Photo Credit: [Dave Britton/Ontario's Invading Species Awareness Program](#))

"When I was in the Army and we learned to take a defensive posture, we would ensure that every approach route to our position was covered," said OBWB Operations and Grants Manager James Littlely. "We also sometimes had roving

patrols, but we wouldn't watch some routes some of the time and then leave them open some of the time."

"Preventing a zebra and quagga mussel invasion is about taking a defensive posture and making sure that no watercraft gets through without an inspection. It is no different than the way we prevent drugs, weapons and criminals from coming across our borders. Only this time, we need to take this approach at the provincial border as well," he added.

On June 17th, [new federal regulations](#) meant that the Canadian Border Services has the southern border protected. With Friday's announcement, the OBWB says that province has the resources and personnel to defend all major road crossings.



Mussels on Lake Mead boat prop. (Photo Credit: "Mussel Threat"/Brynne Morrice)

"If they amend their tactical plan, from roving to permanent stations, they will have taken every step necessary to protect all B.C. waters. This isn't about action within our borders, it is about stopping invaders at our borders," said Littlely.

The OBWB has less funding than the Columbia Basin Trust for the mussel issue, and has focused on the "Don't Move a Mussel" public education initiative. "It's a difficult challenge to manage – keeping out a tiny mussel that's invisible as larvae, and can live in damp carpeting or bilge water for up to a month, and with boats being transported all over the western hemisphere," said Sears.

"We welcome the news from the Columbia Basin Trust and the Province, because we need many different approaches working simultaneously to keep them out. And the more we can coordinate with each other, and the more we can be strategic, the more effective we'll be."

On Tuesday, the directors passed a motion to amend its [statement on mussels](#) to recognize federal government efforts. The statement also calls on the provincial

government to commit to funding all treatment and containment programs for infested waters if an invasion occurred.



Quagga mussels. (Photo Credit: [Dave Britton/Ontario's Invading Species](#)

[Awareness Program](#))

A study conducted for the OBWB estimated that a mussel infestation in the Okanagan would cost more than \$43 million just to manage. These mussels spread quickly and range from the size of a grain of sand to a thumbnail. The OBWB also says mussels are known to stimulate toxic algae blooms, put sharp shells all over beaches, clog boat motors, foul water intakes, and put the fish and ecology of lakes at risk.

As of yet, officials don't have a proven method to completely eradicate mussels once they've arrived that doesn't also result in significant environmental impacts.



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