

MEDIA RELEASE

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Prevent aquatic invasive species with these steps: Clean-Drain-Dry, pull your watercraft drainplug when travelling, and stop for watercraft inspection

Invasive Species Action Month offers timely reminder for Shuswap boaters and watercraft users

Spring is here, and many of us are thinking about boating, paddling, and fishing.

The month of May is designated as Invasive Species Action Month – a national campaign to raise awareness about the risks and prevention measures for invasive species. Locally, the Shuswap Watershed Council and the Columbia Shuswap Invasive Species Society are focused on preventing aquatic invasive species that could be accidentally introduced by the movement of boats and watercraft into and around the Shuswap.

“We are especially focussed on preventing the movement of invasive Zebra and Quagga Mussels (ZQM) into BC,” says Erin Vieira, program manager for the Shuswap Watershed Council (SWC). “BC remains free of ZQM, and by practicing some critical prevention measures we can keep it that way.”

Unfortunately, BC can no longer claim to be free of Whirling Disease. The disease – which impacts salmon, trout and whitefish – has been detected in Yoho National Park and in Kootenay Lake in BC, both of which are in the Columbia River watershed. Containment and prevention are critical.

“It could be devastating if Whirling Disease invaded the Shuswap and the larger Fraser River watershed,” says Vieira.

In infected waters, whirling disease may cause high mortality in fish populations. Juvenile fish are most susceptible to infection. Whirling disease is caused by a parasite that invades the nervous tissue of fish and causes damage to the spinal cord, causing the fish to swim in an erratic whirling pattern.

Clean-drain-dry, pull your watercraft drainplug to travel, and stop for watercraft inspection

Aquatic invasive species, including ZQM and the spores that cause Whirling Disease, can spread from one waterbody to another on boats and other watercraft, and equipment used for boating, fishing, and water pumping. Whirling Disease can also spread by pets or through the movement of infected fish or fish parts. Travellers with watercraft and equipment need to be especially diligent to avoid spreading aquatic invasive species.



“Clean, drain and dry your watercraft every time you move it out of the water. This reduces the chance of transporting invasive species,” explains Laura Gaster, Acting Executive Director for CSISS. Clean, Drain, Dry involves three steps:

- After removing it from the water, clean your boat or watercraft to remove mud, plant material, small aquatic life, and other debris
- Drain all compartments onto dry land
- Ensure your watercraft is thoroughly dry before re-launching.

Pulling your watercraft drainplug is one element of Clean-Drain-Dry. Travellers must pull out watercraft drain-plugs before travelling on BC roads. This is a new order enacted by the Province of BC last spring.

Additionally, it’s important that travellers with watercraft stop at watercraft inspection stations. The stations are set up highway-side around BC and staffed by the Conservation Officer Service. Travellers with all kinds of watercraft must stop: boats, kayaks, paddleboards, personal watercraft, and more. Watercraft will be inspected and decontaminated, if needed, all free of charge. Watercraft inspection is mandatory, and failing to stop for inspection carries a heavy fine.

The Province of BC has created new decontamination protocol to prevent the spread of whirling disease for watercraft, equipment and gear leaving waterbodies in the Columbia River watershed.

Shuswap residents can help raise awareness for preventing the movement of aquatic invasive species, including special protocol to contain whirling disease to the Columbia River watershed.

“Talk to your family and friends that plan to travel to the Shuswap with their watercraft, especially anyone coming from the Columbia River watershed or out-of-province” says Vieira. “The more people that practice prevention measures, the less vulnerable we are to an infestation of invasive mussels or Whirling Disease.”

Any suspected transport, possession, or sightings of zebra and quagga mussels should be reported to the Provincial RAPP line at 1-877-952-7277. For more information about bringing a boat or other watercraft into BC, visit the Provincial website <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/invasive-mussels>. For more information about whirling disease including special decontamination protocol, visit the Provincial website at <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/fish/aquatic-species/aquatic-invasives/whirling-disease>.

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Photo: IMG_Station.jpg. Travellers into British Columbia with a watercraft of any kind are required to stop for inspection and decontamination if necessary, which is provided free of charge by the BC Conservation Officer Service.

Photo credit: BC Conservation Officer Service



About: The [Shuswap Watershed Council](#) is a watershed-based partnership that works on water in the Shuswap. The [Columbia Shuswap Invasive Species Society](#) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the prevention, management, and reduction of invasive species in the Columbia Shuswap region.

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