

Province of British Columbia
Offices of the Premier and of the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy
Sent by e-mail to premier@gov.bc.ca and env.minister@gov.bc.ca

2 February 2018

Re: Invasive Mussel prevention in 2018

Dear Honourable Premier Horgan and Honourable Minister Heyman:

I am writing on behalf of the Shuswap Watershed Council to express our concern about the enduring threat that zebra and quagga mussels pose to the waterways in our region.

The Shuswap Watershed Council (SWC) is a collaborative partnership of the Columbia Shuswap Regional District, Thompson-Nicola Regional District, City of Salmon Arm, District of Sicamous, Secwepemc Nation, Regional District of North Okanagan, and the BC Ministries of Environment and Agriculture. Its mandate is to enhance water quality and safe recreation in the Shuswap watershed, including Shuswap and Little Shuswap Lake, Mara Lake, Mabel Lake, Adams Lake, and numerous rivers.

At a recent SWC meeting held in October 2017 in Salmon Arm, we were fortunate to hear directly from Ms. Martina Beck, Acting Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator for the Province, about the Invasive Mussel Defence Program that the Province implemented in 2017. Thank you for your efforts to-date to prevent an introduction of zebra and quagga mussels; in particular, the improvements to the program in 2017 from previous years including a greater number of watercraft inspection stations, more staffing resources including a mussel-sniffing canine, and longer hours and seasons of watercraft inspection (including 24-hour inspection at Golden BC). These operations are much needed and appreciated. Ms. Beck reported that British Columbia remains mussel-free at this time – this is no doubt due, in part, to the Province's efforts as well as education and outreach efforts of many organizations, and the cooperation of travellers into BC.

However, the risk remains and the consequences of an accidental introduction of mussels are dire. In 2017, the Conservation Officer Service intercepted 24 mussel-fouled watercraft – it may sound like a low number, but it will only take a single boat, kayak, or paddleboard contaminated with mussels to start an irreversible infestation. Therefore, we are asking the Province to once again expand upon its Invasive Mussel Defence Program:

- Improve upon the existing watercraft inspection program
 - Increase the number of stations to have one at every major entry point to BC
 - Increase the stations' hours of operation and seasonal operation
 - Add additional canine resources to the program
 - Improve the signage for mandatory inspection stations (to increase compliance of all types of watercraft, which have been at 80% for two years)

- Work with the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans and Environment and Climate Change Canada to entreat other provinces to effectively contain mussel infestations
- Provide financial support for veliger (mussel larvae) sampling in the Shuswap watershed
- Expand upon education and outreach efforts to-date
 - Maintain an up-to-date provincial website for zebra and quagga mussels
 - Provide financial support for large media and social media campaigns for the prevention of zebra and quagga mussel infestation in BC.

Prevention is key. If aquatic invasive mussels establish in one of our province's waterways, it will be irreversible and they will spread as they have been for 30 years in Canada. The ecological and economic impacts are conservatively estimated to cost \$43M annually to British Columbians – a cost we surely do not want to bear if we could have prevented it.

Thank you in advance for your ongoing efforts to keep BC waters mussel-free.

Kind regards,

Paul Demenok
Chair, Shuswap Watershed Council
Director, Columbia Shuswap Regional District, Area 'C' South Shuswap
250 517-0810
pdemenok@csrd.bc.ca

Cc: Shuswap area MLAs: Greg Kylo, Todd Stone, Eric Foster
Regional District Chairs for Columbia Shuswap, Thompson-Nicola, and North Okanagan:
Rhona Martin, John Ranta, Bob Fleming
Shuswap municipal mayors: Nancy Cooper, Terry Rysz
Secwepemc Chiefs: Paul Michel, Wayne Christian, Oliver Arnouse, Judy Wilson
MP for North Okanagan – Shuswap: Mel Arnold
Official Opposition Critic for Environment and Climate Change: Peter Milobar
Mark Zacharias, Deputy Minister of Environment
Brian Heise, Chair, Invasive Species Council of British Columbia
Gail Wallin, Executive Director, Invasive Species Council of British Columbia
Tracy Gray, Chair, Okanagan Basin Water Board
Hamish Kassa, Chair, Columbia Shuswap Invasive Species Society