

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson
Minister of Fisheries, Oceans, and the Canadian Coast Guard
Justice Building, Suite 09
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6
Sent by e-mail to jonathan.wilkinson@parl.gc.ca

25 September 2018

Re: Funding to prevent an Invasive Mussels invasion in British Columbia

Dear Minister Wilkinson,

I am writing on behalf of the Shuswap Watershed Council to express concern about the threat of a zebra and quagga mussel invasion in the Shuswap watershed, and all of British Columbia. Our province needs more support and funding from the federal government to prevent such an invasion, and consequential devastating, costly impacts to water quality, fish habitat, infrastructure, water utilities, beaches, and property values.

The announcement on August 6th regarding funding from the federal government for zebra and quagga mussel research, education and outreach is a start but we think it falls short of what is needed to adequately protect BC from invasive mussels. We know little about the funding at this time, except that "... \$400,000 over three years will be invested for education and outreach purposes... within the Okanagan basin." We feel strongly that this needs to be a much bigger investment and should be spent in all regions of British Columbia.

The Shuswap watershed, in particular, is especially high risk due to boat traffic (this increases the likelihood that infested watercraft will arrive in our waters) and water quality (ideal calcium and temperature conditions increase the likelihood that mussels will thrive). The Shuswap is also especially high consequence because our watershed provides critical migration, spawning, and juvenile rearing habitat for four Pacific salmon species¹.

We share many of the concerns and priorities for action as other water groups in BC, including the Okanagan Basin Water Board in the watershed south of us. A federal investment in our province could go toward several invasive mussel prevention activities, such as:

- Expansion of the provincial watercraft inspection program that's run by the BC Conservation Officer service, including the establishment of additional inspection stations and longer hours and seasons of operation
- New measures to ensure aircraft (i.e., floatplanes) aren't transporting aquatic invasive species
- Expansion of early detection monitoring programs

Canada's Policy for Conservation of Wild Pacific Salmon (2005) is guided by the highest-priority principle of conserving wild salmon and their habitats, and an objective of maintaining habitat and ecosystem integrity.

- Expansion of education and outreach, complimenting the efforts that are already underway in BC including the “Clean Drain Dry” and “Don’t Move A Mussel” campaigns.

Furthermore, the Government of Canada needs to take stronger action on containing mussel infestations and fully enact the Aquatic Invasive Species Regulation of the *Federal Fisheries Act*. Prevention efforts in the west must be met with robust measures for containment in eastern and central Canada.

We still have the opportunity to keep invasive mussels out of British Columbia; we believe that should make it more of a priority for funding support and action from the federal government. The cost of adequate prevention would be a small fraction of the projected cost of managing a zebra and quagga mussel infestation.

The Shuswap Watershed Council would be pleased to work with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to ensure that British Columbia, and our watershed especially, is protected from zebra and quagga mussels.

Sincerely,

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

About the Shuswap Watershed Council

The Shuswap Watershed Council (SWC) was established in 2014 as a watershed-based partnership that enhances water quality and safe recreation in the Shuswap. There are 17 SWC members that represent three regional districts, two municipalities, the Secwepemc Nation, two provincial government agencies, and Shuswap communities. The SWC is a collaborative, non-regulatory group. It works alongside organizations that have regulatory roles in managing the Shuswap watershed, complimenting their work and carefully avoiding duplication. Its primary mandate is to enhance, protect, and advocate for water quality in the Shuswap watershed.