

Hon. George Heyman
BC Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy
Room 112 Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC. V8V 1X4
Sent by e-mail to ENV.Minister@gov.bc.ca

16 April 2021

Re: New measures needed for invasive mussels and invasive clams in British Columbia

Dear Minister Heyman,

I am writing on behalf of the Shuswap Watershed Council to express concern about the threat of aquatic invasive species to the Shuswap watershed, and all of British Columbia. Our province needs stronger measures to prevent an invasion of zebra and quagga mussels and to manage existing infestations of invasive freshwater clams.

The Shuswap watershed, in particular, is at high risk of a new invasion of invasive mussels (*Dreissenidae* sp.) due to tourism and boat traffic (these increase the likelihood that infested watercraft will arrive in our waters) and due to our water quality conditions (ideal calcium and temperature increase the likelihood that mussels will thrive).

We have shared our feedback with your office, and with your federal counterparts, through previous correspondence dated February 1st 2018, April 11th 2017, January 5th 2017, and April 21st 2016. Many of our concerns remain the same. We also share priorities for action as other organizations in BC, including the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) in the watershed south of us, who wrote to your office on March 4th 2021 with six recommendations¹ and the Shuswap Waterfront Owners Association who wrote to your office on March 30th 2021. In particular, we are very much in support of measures to enhance enforcement via the provincial watercraft inspection program. We are asking that it be expanded such that no entry-point to BC is vulnerable to unchecked watercraft, and that there be greater fines for non-compliant travellers. Additionally, the recent entry of zebra mussels into BC via the aquaria industry demonstrates other gaps in the prevention system that need to be addressed.

¹ OBWB identified six gaps that can be addressed by the Provincial government: 1) Restore core inspection program funding to at least 2017 levels of \$3.8 million and adjust for inflation going forward; 2) Introduce “pull-the-plug” legislation and supporting regulations for enforcement this summer; 3) Review and update the provincial Early Detection, Rapid Response plan (EDRR), to include specific long-term planning for waterbody or regional quarantines once an infestation is found in BC; 4) Provide toolkits and resources for local governments to conduct vulnerability assessments, and to implement mitigation measures like retro-fitting in-water infrastructure; 5) Introduce legislation to require all out-of-province watercraft to be inspected prior to being launched in BC waters; 6) Provide additional funding to invasive species groups in high-risk regions for monitoring, outreach, and education. (OBWB letter to Minister Heyman, March 4th 2021).



We still have the opportunity to keep invasive mussels out of BC waterways, and the threat of an invasion will never subside. We believe that should make it more of a priority for stronger prevention measures from the Provincial government. The cost of better prevention would be a small fraction of the projected cost of managing a zebra and quagga mussel infestation.

The Shuswap Watershed Council is invested in keeping invasive mussels out through funding public awareness campaigns in our region to 'Clean-Drain-Dry' and 'Don't Move a Mussel' since 2018. To date, we have spent nearly \$92,000 in local taxpayers' dollars on these campaigns; we've spent an additional \$45,000 supporting early detection monitoring in the Shuswap watershed.

Regarding invasive freshwater clams, *Corbicula fluminea*, unfortunately we no longer have the option of prevention as live populations of the clams were discovered in Shuswap Lake last fall. This discovery adds to the list of locations where the clams occur in BC. Surveys done last fall by one of our partners, the Columbia Shuswap Invasive Species Society, confirmed invasive clams at two locations, at relatively low population densities. We also have been made aware that the Province has done some further studies using a dive team. We are appreciative of these efforts to understand the extent of the clam infestation in Shuswap Lake, and we respectfully request that the results of the diver survey be shared with us. We also urge the Provincial government to consider all possible methods of eradicating the clams from Shuswap Lake, as soon as possible. We would like to be kept informed about the Province's plans for managing or eradicating the clam infestation, and we are willing to work with the BC MOE to support their efforts. For our part, we are now embarking on a public awareness campaign to Shuswap residents and visitors about preventing the spread of invasive clams around the Shuswap watershed and to other parts of BC.

In addition, we are in full support of the District of Sicamous' Resolutions 21-047 and 21-068 which were sent to your office on March 18th 2021, and we echo their request that the Province of BC use its authority to designate *Corbicula fluminea* as a Prohibited Aquatic Invasive Species under the *Controlled Alien Species Regulation* of the Wildlife Act. Doing so would enable stronger prevention measures, including enforcement.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,

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

Attachments:

District of Sicamous Certified Resolution 21-047
District of Sicamous Certified Resolution 21-068



CC:

- Shuswap area MLAs: Greg Kylo (Shuswap), Harwinder Sandhu (Vernon - Monashee), Todd Stone (Kamloops - South Thompson), Peter Milobar (Kamloops - North Thompson)
- Secwepemc Chiefs: Cliff Arnouse (Adams Lake Indian Band), Oliver Arnouse (Little Shuswap Lake Band), Judy Wilson (Neskonlith), Wayne Christian (Splatshin)
- Shuswap Local Government Chairs and Mayors: Kevin Flynn (CSRD), Ken Gillis (TNRD), Kevin Acton (RDNO, Lumby), Alan Harrison (Salmon Arm), Terry Rysz (Sicamous), Rod Crowe (Chase), Greg McCune (Enderby)
- North Okanagan - Shuswap MP, Mel Arnold
- Provincial Critic for Environment and Climate Change, Ross Ellis
- Okanagan Basin Water Board, Chair Sue McKortoff
- Invasive Species Council of British Columbia, Executive Director Gail Wallin
- Columbia Shuswap Invasive Species Society, Executive Director Robyn Hooper
- Shuswap Waterfront Owners Association, President Clyde Mitchell



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 18 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, complementing their work and carefully avoiding duplication. Its primary mandate is to enhance, protect, and advocate for water quality in the Shuswap watershed.

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Certified Resolution # 21-047

It was moved and seconded:

WHEREAS invasive Asian clams (*Corbicula fluminea*) are known to threaten the natural biodiversity of lakes by competing with native species for sustenance and space, cause biofouling to water treatments systems, alter water chemistry, and potentially reduce the quality of drinking water;

AND WHEREAS the spread of Asian clams will have significant environmental, social, and economic consequences for our waterways, wildlife and communities;

AND WHEREAS the Controlled Alien Species Regulation exists under the Wildlife Act to enforce controls for species that pose a risk to people, property, wildlife, and wildlife habitat:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that UBCM ask the Province of British Columbia to designate invasive Asian clams (*Corbicula fluminea*) as a Prohibited Aquatic Invasive Species under the Controlled Alien Species Regulation under the Wildlife Act.

Carried

Certified a true and correct copy of a resolution endorsed by the Council at its Regular Council Meeting held on January 27, 2021.

Dated this 11th day of February, 2021.



Jennifer Bruns
Corporate Officer

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Certified Resolution # 21-068

It was moved and seconded:

THAT Council submit the following resolution to the Southern Interior Local Government Association:

WHEREAS Canada is home to 20 percent of the world's fresh water, and the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS) poses irreparable environmental, social and economic threats that will cost Canadian taxpayers billions of dollars in lost tourism and economic opportunities, and other unknown costs;

AND WHEREAS the spread of AIS is largely connected to human activity, including the unsafe transport of watercraft and floatplanes between bodies of water;

AND WHEREAS current government efforts through fines for failing to stop at a B.C. Watercraft Inspection Station, there is a lack of specific provincial or federal regulation and enforcement that is directed at watercraft owners who fail to prevent the spread of AIS by cleaning, draining, and drying their watercraft before transport;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the provincial and federal governments adopt increased and stricter enforcement measures for watercraft and floatplane owners including the introduction of a significant fine for watercraft and floatplane owners that fail to Clean, Drain and Dry their watercraft or floatplane before transporting it to another body of water and an increase in the fine issued to motorists who fail to stop at a Watercraft Inspection Station.

Carried

Certified a true and correct copy of a resolution endorsed by the Council at its Regular Council Meeting held on February 10, 2021.

Dated this 18th day of February, 2021.



Jennifer Bruns
Corporate Officer