

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

Shuswap organizations urge boaters to be diligent about Clean-Drain-Dry, watercraft inspection

Boating season is here! With the arrival of warm weather in the Shuswap, many of us are now thinking about lake cruises, paddling, fishing, and tow sports.

For two Shuswap-based organizations, boating season means it's time to turn up the heat on invasive Zebra and Quagga mussel prevention. The increased movement of boats and other watercraft into the Shuswap means there's an increased risk of an accidental introduction of the invasive mussels.

Zebra and Quagga mussels – two species of small, freshwater mussels that originate in Europe – have incredible destructive potential. The mussels occur in parts of eastern and central Canada, but fortunately they have not invaded British Columbia or our nearest neighbour, Alberta. The Shuswap Watershed Council and the Columbia Shuswap Invasive Species Society are working together to keep invasive mussels out of BC.

“Zebra and quagga mussels create enormous problems in lakes because they cling to and form colonies on objects under water: boats, dock pilings, water supply and irrigation systems – anything. This imposes costly, nuisance maintenance. It's impossible to get rid of them for good,” says Robyn Hooper, Executive Director of the Columbia Shuswap Invasive Species Society (CSISS).

That's not all. “The mussels will litter beaches with their razor sharp shells. They produce foul odours, and they pollute water quality which puts the lake ecosystem and drinking water at risk,” adds Erin Vieira, program manager for the Shuswap Watershed Council (SWC).

“Boat and watercraft owners have an important part to play in preventing the spread of invasive mussels,” Vieira says. This is because the primary way invasive mussels invade new waterbodies is by ‘hitch hiking’ on boats, fishing gear, and other watercraft including canoes and paddleboards. Adult mussels are small, about 1 centimeter in diameter, and may be attached to watercraft inside compartments or other hard-to-spot areas. Juvenile mussels are free-swimming and microscopic – impossible to detect with the human eye.



“At this time, we don’t really know what the tourism season might look like in the Shuswap, in terms of the number of people travelling here with a watercraft,” says Vieira. “Even so, we are treating this very seriously. Watercraft from outside of BC could potentially be infested with invasive mussels. It could take just one infested watercraft launching into the Shuswap to start a new population of invasive mussels here.”

There are two prevention measures that boat and watercraft owners need to follow, Hooper explains. “The first measure is to clean, drain, and dry your watercraft every time you move it out of a lake or waterbody. By doing this, you’re greatly eliminating the chance that you’re moving invasive species.”

“The second prevention measure is to stop at watercraft inspection stations in your travels,” Hooper adds. There are several highway-side inspection stations set up at entry-points to BC staffed by the Conservation Officer service. “All travellers with watercraft are must stop. Watercraft will be inspected and decontaminated, if necessary, free of charge.”

Watercraft inspection isn’t required for travellers within BC. However, Shuswap residents can help raise awareness for the importance of inspection. “We encourage residents to talk to their out-of-province family and friends that plan to travel to the Shuswap with their watercraft,” adds Vieira. “The more people that know about invasive mussels and watercraft inspection, the less vulnerable we are to an infestation.”

Any suspected transport or possession 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 into BC, visit the provincial website <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/invasive-mussels>. For more information on zebra and quagga mussels, visit the SWC’s website at www.shuswapwater.ca.

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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.

About: The Shuswap Watershed Council is a watershed-based partnership that works on water quality and safe recreation 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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