

## MEDIA RELEASE

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Invasive Species Action Month is a timely reminder that boaters and watercraft users must Clean-Drain-Dry, stop for watercraft inspection

With the arrival of May and warmer weather in the Shuswap, many of us are now thinking about lake cruises, paddling, fishing, and tow sports. For two Shuswap-based organizations, May is Invasive Species Action Month and that means it's time to turn up the heat on aquatic invasive species prevention. The increased movement of boats and other watercraft into and around the Shuswap means there's an increased risk of moving invasive species from one lake or river to another.

"We unfortunately have a new invasive species discovery in the Shuswap," announces Robyn Hooper, Executive Director of the Columbia Shuswap Invasive Species Society (CSISS), referring to a discovery of invasive freshwater clams last fall in Shuswap Lake. "Invasive freshwater clams, also known as Pygmy clams, Golden clams, or Asian clams, were found in parts of Shuswap Lake in 2020. We surveyed beaches at several locations last fall, and invasive clams were found at Sunnybrae and Canoe."

The Shuswap Watershed Council and CSISS have made their concerns about the clams known to the BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy. At this time, it's not known how the invasive clams might impact Shuswap Lake.

"We need to prevent their spread to other areas of Shuswap Lake, and to other lakes in the region," says Erin Vieira, program manager for the Shuswap Watershed Council (SWC). "Watercraft users of all kinds - boats, paddleboards, canoes, kayaks, even inflatables and other water toys - they should all be cleaned, drained, and dried before moving them to another area. If you're at Canoe Beach one day and going to Scotch Creek the next day, make sure you've done clean-drain-dry," Vieira says.

Clean-drain-dry is strongly recommended for reducing the movement of invasive clams and other invasive species. It involves cleaning your watercraft of mud, plant material and other debris, draining all compartments, and ensuring your watercraft is thoroughly dried out before re-launching. It's an important step because invasive species can get moved around attached to watercraft or trapped in small amounts of standing water.

"The discovery of invasive freshwater clams should not be confused with invasive zebra and quagga mussels", Vieira explains. The invasive mussels are not present in Shuswap Lake or other BC lakes, nor our nearest neighbour, Alberta, but they do exist in Manitoba, Ontario, and several states. That's why SWC



and CSISS are also urging boaters and other watercraft users to stop at watercraft inspection stations when they travel.

“Watercraft from outside of BC could potentially be infested with invasive mussels, or other invasive species. It could take just one infested watercraft launching into the Shuswap to start a new population of invasive mussels here,” says Vieira.

Watercraft inspection stations are set up highway-side at several entry-points into BC, from spring to fall. Inspection is done by the BC Conservation Officer Service, free of charge. Travellers with watercraft are required by law to stop, and failing to do so could result in a fine for the traveller.

Watercraft inspection isn’t required for travelling 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,” says Hooper. “The more people that know about invasive species and watercraft inspection, the less vulnerable we are to an infestation.”

“In summary, there are two steps: 1) clean-drain-dry your boat or watercraft every time you move to a new waterbody, and 2) when you travel with a boat or watercraft, stop at inspection stations on your travel route,” Vieira says.

Earlier this year, invasive zebra mussels were found in aquarium ‘moss ball’ plants at several locations in BC and Washington State. Aquarium owners are asked to inspect their aquarium plants, and phone the provincial RAPP line at 1-877-952-7277 if they find mussels. If aquarium contents are improperly managed, such as dumped down drains, toilets, or released into the environment, zebra mussels could make their way from infested aquaria into the environment.

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 on zebra and quagga mussels, visit the SWC’s website at [www.shuswapwater.ca](http://www.shuswapwater.ca).

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**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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