

## MEDIA RELEASE

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Prevent aquatic invasive species with these steps: Clean-Drain-Dry and stop for watercraft inspection

*Invasive Species Action Month offers timely reminder for Shuswap boaters and watercraft users*

Spring in the Shuswap has many thinking about boating, paddling, and fishing.

The month of May is designated as Invasive Species Action Month, and here in the Shuswap that means it's time to focus on aquatic invasive species prevention. The increased movement of boats and watercraft into and around the Shuswap means there's an increased risk of moving aquatic invasive species.

Two invasive species of utmost concern are Zebra and Quagga Mussels (ZQM): small freshwater mussels from Europe that, unfortunately, have invaded waters in the Great Lakes, Manitoba, and many watersheds in the US including as far west as California. Thankfully, ZQM have not invaded lakes in BC or our nearest neighbour Alberta.

Protecting the waterways in BC from invasive mussels is an ongoing effort. The Shuswap Watershed Council (SWC) and Columbia Shuswap Invasive Species Society (CSISS) are working together to educate the public about how to keep invasive mussels out of the Shuswap.

If you're unfamiliar with these invasive mussels, it's important to understand how they can impact our waterways.

"The problem with zebra and quagga mussels is that they grow and attach to anything below the water's surface like boat hulls, dock pilings, inside pipes and hydro-electric facilities, and even inside engine compartments," says Erin Vieira, program manager for the Shuswap Watershed Council. "The mussels form in colonies and removing them would be an ongoing maintenance effort which has been conservatively estimated to cost BC property owners and taxpayers \$43 million per year."

Zebra and quagga mussels can also impact water quality and disrupt aquatic food-webs through their filter-feeding and by out-competing native species for food. This puts the lake ecosystem and our drinking water at risk. When the mussels die, their small sharp shells wash up on shorelines and beaches, thus disturbing our enjoyment of water-based activities.



Once zebra or quagga mussels are established in a lake, there are no effective means of eliminating them. They reproduce prolifically, leading to massive infestations.

### **Clean-drain-dry + stop for watercraft inspection**

It's important to understand that invasive mussels can move from one lake to another by clinging to boats, personal watercraft, trailers, canoes and other watercraft. They attach directly to a surface, or collect within small compartments of water inside the watercraft.

Watercraft from outside 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. There are prevention measures that boat and watercraft owners need to follow.

"Clean, drain, and dry your watercraft every time you move it out of the water. By doing this, you're greatly eliminating the chance that you're moving invasive species," explains Jess Booth, Outreach Coordinator for CSISS. Just like it sounds, Clean, Drain, Dry involves three steps:

- After removing it from the water, clean your boat or watercraft to remove mud, plant material, small aquatic life, and other debris
- Drain all compartments onto dry land
- Ensure your watercraft is thoroughly dried before re-launching.

Zebra and quagga mussels grow to about 1 centimeter in diameter and may be attached to watercraft or inside compartments or other hard-to-spot areas. Juvenile mussels are free-swimming and microscopic – impossible to detect with the human eye.

"Additionally, It's very important that travellers with watercraft stop at watercraft inspection stations," Booth adds. Highway-side inspection stations are set up at entry-points to BC staffed by the Conservation Officer Service.

All travellers with watercraft must stop. Watercraft will be inspected and decontaminated, if needed, all free of charge. Watercraft inspection is mandatory, and failing to stop for inspection carries a heavy fine.

Watercraft inspection isn't required when travelling within BC. However, Shuswap residents can help raise awareness for the importance of inspection.

"Talk to your out-of-province family and friends that plan to travel to the Shuswap with their watercraft," says Vieira. "The more people that practice Clean-Drain-Dry and stop for watercraft inspection, the less vulnerable we are to an infestation."

Clean-Drain-Dry and watercraft inspection apply to all kinds of watercraft: sport boats, fishing boats, kayaks, canoes, paddleboards, personal watercraft, and more.

These prevention measures will also slow down the spread of existing invasive species that occur in the Shuswap, including Eurasian water milfoil and invasive freshwater clams.



It isn't only watersport enthusiasts who are asked to be on alert. Aquariums often contain a variety of species - for example, fish, plants, amphibians and molluscs - that are not native to BC. Aquarium contents should never be dumped down drains, into toilets, or released into the environment. Doing so can introduce non-native or invasive species into the environment.

Any suspected transport, possession, or sightings 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 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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**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.

Photo credit: 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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