



c/o Fraser Basin Council  
200A – 1383 McGill Road  
Kamloops, BC V2C 6K7  
250.314.9660  
[www.shuswapwater.ca](http://www.shuswapwater.ca)



Hon. Diane Lebouthillier  
Minister of Fisheries, Oceans, and the Canadian Coast Guard  
Ottawa, ON  
Sent by e-mail to [DFO.Minister-Ministre.MPO@dfo-mpo.gc.ca](mailto:DFO.Minister-Ministre.MPO@dfo-mpo.gc.ca)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc  
Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions, and Intergovernmental Affairs  
Ottawa, ON  
Sent by e-mail to [IGA.Minister-Ministre.AIG@pco-bcp.gc.ca](mailto:IGA.Minister-Ministre.AIG@pco-bcp.gc.ca)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez  
Minister of Transport  
Ottawa, ON  
Sent by e-mail to [TC.MinisterofTransport-MinistredesTransports.TC@tc.gc.ca](mailto:TC.MinisterofTransport-MinistredesTransports.TC@tc.gc.ca)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault  
Minister of Environment and Climate Change  
Ottawa, ON  
Sent by e-mail to [ministre-minister@ec.gc.ca](mailto:ministre-minister@ec.gc.ca)

22 February 2024

**Re: Renewed call for immediate action to prevent invasive mussel introduction to British Columbia**

Dear Ministers,

We are writing to renew our calls to action conveyed to you in our [November 28<sup>th</sup> 2023 letter](#) and to express support for a similar letter sent to you by the [Okanagan Basin Water Board on January 18<sup>th</sup> 2024](#) regarding urgent, immediate action needed by the Federal Government to prevent the spread of invasive Zebra and Quagga mussels into British Columbia. We have not yet received a reply to our letter. On February 14<sup>th</sup> 2024, the [Government of Canada announced investments](#) for the prevention of invasive Zebra and Quagga mussels in the West. While these are welcome announcements – including \$540,000 for the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation over 2023-2025 and \$90,000 for two new decontamination trailers for the Province of BC – we remain deeply concerned that there are still significant gaps in the British Columbia Invasive Mussel Defence Program (IMDP).

Invasive mussels are touted as one of the most destructive invasive species ever to have invaded North American fresh waters<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, a new report from the Province of BC<sup>2</sup> estimates an annual cost

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<sup>1</sup> 2019 Spring Reports of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development to the Parliament of Canada.

<sup>2</sup> Potential Economic Impact of Zebra and Quagga Mussels in BC. May 2023. Available online: [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/plants-animals-and-ecosystems/invasive-species/invasive-mussels/zqm\\_economic\\_report\\_2023\\_05\\_26\\_final.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/plants-animals-and-ecosystems/invasive-species/invasive-mussels/zqm_economic_report_2023_05_26_final.pdf).



of \$64 – 129 million in BC to deal with invasive mussel infestations. The ecological and economic impacts will be staggering for British Columbia. Greater priority must be given to prevention.

The BC IMDP includes the operation of watercraft inspection stations which are absolutely critical to prevent the spread of invasive mussels to BC because watercraft are the primary vector. More funding specifically allocated to watercraft inspection stations will better protect BC from invasive mussels.

Early detection monitoring has indicated that BC waters remain free of invasive mussels. However, that could change in a matter of a day or two if a traveller with infested watercraft or gear were to arrive in BC without having been inspected and launch into a lake, thus starting a new, irreversible infestation of mussels. This scenario is entirely plausible since watercraft inspection stations are not open 365 days a year, nor are they located on all entry-points to BC, and invasive mussels are known to survive out-of-water for up to 30 days. An infested watercraft could depart Manitoba, Ontario, Idaho or another infested jurisdiction today and be in BC, unchecked, tomorrow.

Ministers, we are calling for immediate, long-term federal funding assistance for the Province of BC to support invasive mussel prevention. We are urging you to work with the BC Ministry of Water, Land & Resource Stewardship and the BC Ministry of Environment & Climate Change Strategy to provide federal funding for the BC Invasive Mussel Defence Program such that permanent watercraft inspection stations can be established at all entry-points into BC and be open 24 hours/day and 365 days/year. This will address significant gaps in the program and prevent the entry of an unchecked watercraft into BC.

We are also re-iterating our call-to-action in our November 28<sup>th</sup> letter asking that you issue immediate direction to all Canada Border Service Agency locations in Western Canada that all watercraft entering Canada in that region be inspected for invasive mussels following Provincial protocols.

Ministers, given the proximity of invasive mussels to BC, the devastating and costly impacts of a new infestation, and a lack of sufficient prevention measures, the time to act is now. Your departments have the mandate to protect fresh water, prevent invasive species, and manage sustainable fisheries. We are urging the Government of Canada to make greater investments in watercraft inspection to defend BC's waters against invasive mussels. If nothing is done, it is only a matter of time until we face an irreversible, ecologically disruptive and economically crippling invasion.

Sincerely,

Jay Simpson  
Chair, Shuswap Watershed Council  
Director, Columbia Shuswap Regional District Area 'F' North Shuswap  
250 517-9578 | [jsimpson@csrd.bc.ca](mailto:jsimpson@csrd.bc.ca)



CC:

- Shuswap / Okanagan / Thompson / Kootenay / Columbia MPs: Mel Arnold, Dan Albas, Frank Caputo, Tracy Gray, Rob Morrison, Richard Cannings
- Shuswap MLA: Greg Kylo
- Columbia Shuswap Regional District Chair: Kevin Flynn
- Thompson-Nicola Regional District Chair: Barbara Roden
- Regional District of North Okanagan Chair: Kevin Acton
- Secwepemc Kukpi7s: Lynn Kenoras-Duck Chief (Adams Lake Indian Band), James Tomma (Skwlax te Secwepemculecw), Irvine Wai (Neskonlith), and Megan Nicholas, Executive Secretary (Splatsin te Secwepemc)
- Shuswap Mayors: Alan Harrison (Salmon Arm), Colleen Anderson (Sicamous), David Lepsoe (Chase)
- Okanagan Basin Water Board Chair: Blair Ireland
- Columbia Shuswap Invasive Species Society
- Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association
- Shuswap Chambers of Commerce: Salmon Arm, Sicamous, South Shuswap, North Shuswap
- Shuswap Waterfront Owners Association.



## About the Shuswap Watershed Council

The Shuswap Watershed Council (SWC) was established in 2014 as a watershed-based partnership of several organizations with an interest or responsibility for protecting water quality. There are up to 22 members that represent three regional districts, two municipalities, the Secwepemc Nation, three Provincial government agencies, and Shuswap communities. The SWC is a collaborative, non-regulatory group that focuses on strategic initiatives to protect, maintain, and enhance water quality and promote safe recreation in the Shuswap. The SWC works alongside organizations that have regulatory roles in managing the Shuswap watershed, complementing their work and carefully avoiding duplication.