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Hon. Josie Osborne  
BC Minister of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship  
Room 310 Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, BC. V8V 1X4  
Sent by e-mail to [LWRS.Minister@gov.bc.ca](mailto:LWRS.Minister@gov.bc.ca)

15 November 2022

**Re: New measures and more resources needed to prevent an invasion of Zebra or Quagga Mussels in British Columbia**

Dear Minister Osborne,

I am writing on behalf of the Shuswap Watershed Council as a follow up to our meeting at the UBCM Convention in September. Thank you again for taking the time to meet with me, and for listening to our concerns about the risk and consequences of invasive mussels arriving in British Columbia. I would like to re-iterate our top four calls-to-action for your Ministry to better protect the Shuswap – and all of BC – from invasive mussels.

As you know, the Shuswap watershed is at high risk of an invasion of Zebra and Quagga Mussels (ZQM, i.e., *Dreissenidae* sp.) due to boat traffic into the watershed. The primary vector for invasive mussels is watercraft. The Shuswap is a top destination for boaters, and that greatly increases the chance that infested watercraft will arrive in our waters. Fortunately, early detection monitoring has indicated that the Shuswap is still invasive-mussel free. This is due, in part, to the preventative work by the Province and regional organizations such as the Shuswap Watershed Council, and others. However, every year infested watercraft arrive at our provincial borders<sup>1</sup>. The threat of invasive mussels will never subside, and more action by the Province is needed to curb this significant threat to our water security.

We are calling for greater resourcing for the province's Invasive Mussel Defence Program (IMDP). While it could take just a single watercraft from out-of-province infested with invasive mussels launching into BC waters, it is of utmost importance that the IMDP be expanded such that all routes into BC from Alberta and the USA have a watercraft inspection and decontamination station. The IMDP is the first line of defense to protect BC's waters, but in 2022 there were only six permanent stations and two roving stations set up around the provincial border<sup>2</sup>. This presents a significant gap in the defense, as travellers with watercraft can enter BC via unchecked routes or outside of inspection station operating hours.

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<sup>1</sup> The IMDP Summer Status Report (dated August 22, 2022) reported that 10 watercraft entering BC were confirmed to have adult invasive mussels.

<sup>2</sup> Since 2020, the watercraft inspection and decontamination stations have declined significantly; in 2019 and 2020, the IMDP had a peak level of 12 inspection stations.



Secondly, we urge the Province to introduce 'pull-the-plug' legislation, which would require all watercraft to have their drain plugs removed prior to travelling on BC roads. We understand that the Province is already considering this, as part of updates to the *Wildlife Act*.

Thirdly, the Provincial ZQM Early Detection and Rapid Response Plan for British Columbia (published February 2015) should be reviewed and updated. New methods for eradicating ZQM from waterbodies should be researched and considered for use in BC. Additionally, we believe there would be great value in carrying out a mock response exercise on a BC lake, including rehearsing the process of quarantining watercraft as a key containment measure.

Lastly, we urge you to advocate for new containment measures in Manitoba and Ontario which already have ZQM infestations. The federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans needs to take strong action and fully enact the *Aquatic Invasive Species Regulation*. Our prevention efforts in the west must be met with robust containment measures in eastern and central Canada. Watercraft should not be able to leave watersheds known to have ZQM infestations without being inspected, decontaminated, and issued a quarantine period if necessary.

We have previously shared our concerns, and these calls-to-action, with the Minister of Environment's office, and with your federal counterparts, on several occasions. Furthermore, we are not alone in our concerns: several other organizations in BC including the Shuswap Waterfront Owners Association, Okanagan Basin Water Board, and regional invasive species societies share these concerns and priorities for action. Unfortunately, we have not been satisfied with the responses we have received from provincial and federal offices to-date.

Considering all that is at risk in the Shuswap, and the projected on-going costs and lost revenue associated with an infestation of Zebra or Quagga Mussels in BC – which is conservatively estimated to be \$42 million<sup>3</sup> annually to BC tax-payers in the Okanagan alone – we call upon your Ministry to provide more resources and implement new measures to protect BC waters from invasive Zebra & Quagga Mussels.

Sincerely,

Jay Simpson  
Chair, Shuswap Watershed Council  
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<sup>3</sup> Source: Limiting the Spread of Aquatic Invasive Species into the Okanagan. Larratt Aquatic Consulting. 2013. Available online [https://www.obwb.ca/fileadmin/docs/2013\\_obwb\\_ais\\_report.pdf](https://www.obwb.ca/fileadmin/docs/2013_obwb_ais_report.pdf). See Section 5.2.



CC:

- Hon. George Heyman, Minister of Environment & Climate Change Strategy
- Shuswap MLA: Greg Kylo
- North Okanagan – Shuswap MP and Associate Shadow Minister for Fisheries, Oceans and the Coast Guard: Mel Arnold
- Provincial Critic for Land, Water and Resource Stewardship: Lorne Doerkson
- Columbia Shuswap Regional District Chair: Kevin Flynn
- Regional District of North Okanagan Chair: Kevin Acton
- Shuswap Mayors: Alan Harrison (Salmon Arm), Colleen Anderson (Sicamous), David Lepsoe (Chase)
- Okanagan Basin Water Board Chair: Sue McKortoff
- 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 in 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.