



c/o Fraser Basin Council
200A – 1383 McGill Road
Kamloops, BC V2C 6K7
250.314.9660
www.shuswapwater.ca



Hon. Diane Lebouthillier
Minister of Fisheries, Oceans, and the Canadian Coast Guard
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
Sent by e-mail to DFO.Minister-Ministre.MPO@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc
Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions, and Intergovernmental Affairs
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
Sent by e-mail to IGA.Minister-Ministre.AIG@pco-bcp.gc.ca

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez
Minister of Transport
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
Sent by e-mail to TC.MinisterofTransport-MinistredesTransports.TC@tc.gc.ca

28 November 2023

Re: Urgent need to prevent the spread of invasive mussels to British Columbia

Dear Ministers,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Shuswap Watershed Council (SWC) to express our extreme concern once again about the potential for invasive Zebra and Quagga Mussels (ZQM) to spread to British Columbia waters. BC does not presently have any known infestations of these invasive mussels. An introduction of them would have devastating ecological and economic impacts to the Shuswap watershed, to BC, and all of Western Canada. Our concern has heightened with the recent discovery of Quagga Mussels in the Snake River at Twin Falls, Idaho. We are calling upon your Ministries to respond with urgency and with new measures to prevent a potentially catastrophic spread of invasive mussels to the Shuswap and to BC.

First and foremost, we ask that you issue immediate direction to all Canada Border Service Agency locations in Western Canada (BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan) that all watercraft entering Canada in that region be inspected for invasive mussels following Provincial protocols.

Secondly, we request that more federal funding be allocated to British Columbia specifically for preventing the spread of invasive mussels. A new federal investment in BC could go toward the following:

- Expansion of the Provincial watercraft inspection program that's operated by the BC Conservation Officer Service to allow for the establishment of more inspection stations and longer hours and seasons of operation. We are very appreciative of the good work done by Conservation Officers and Provincial staff on watercraft inspection, however there are significant gaps in this defense and



we are very concerned that watercraft infested with invasive mussels will enter BC via an unchecked route or outside of station operating hours.

- New measures to ensure aircraft (i.e., floatplanes) aren't transporting aquatic invasive species
- Early detection monitoring programs. These are already underway in BC by regional groups and the Province of BC. Federal funding would allow these programs to expand.
- Education and outreach. Campaigns are already underway in BC, including "Clean-Drain-Dry" and "Don't Move a Mussel". Federal funding would allow these programs to expand.

Thirdly, we ask that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans take stronger action on containing mussel infestations where they exist in Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes. The *Aquatic Invasive Species Regulation* of the Federal Fisheries Act must be fully implemented, including existing prohibitions against possession, transportation, release, and introduction of aquatic invasive species. Prevention efforts in the west must be met with robust measures for containment in eastern and central Canada. Simply put, no watercraft should be able to leave lakes or rivers known to have ZQM infestations without being inspected, decontaminated, and issued a quarantine period if necessary.

Ministers, we have shared our concerns with your predecessors through previous correspondence on several occasions. Unfortunately, we feel that the federal government still has not taken sufficient action on this issue, nor has it provided equitable federal funding to British Columbia to stop the spread of ZQM. A report on Aquatic Invasive Species by the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development (April 2019) notes that Zebra mussels are "one of the most destructive invasive species ever to have invaded North American fresh waters..." and the report is consistent with our concerns about the lack of urgency and intervention by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Additionally, a report from the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans (July 2019) found that the federal government's protection of Canadian lakes and waterways against aquatic invasive species is inadequate. We urge you to review those reports and take immediate action.

Zebra and Quagga mussels would cause devastating impacts to the Shuswap watershed, an important nursery watershed for Pacific salmon. Many aspects of the lake environment will be negatively affected. The economy is also greatly at risk: the Province of BC released a report in May this year estimating an annual cost of \$64 – 129 million in BC to deal with ZQM infestations. The time to act is now. We call upon the Government of Canada to take a more active and invested role to defend BC's waters against ZQM. We would be pleased to meet with you to discuss any of the above-mentioned requests. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Jay Simpson
Chair, Shuswap Watershed Council
Director, Columbia Shuswap Regional District Area 'F' North Shuswap
250 517-9578 | 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)
- Shuswap Mayors: Alan Harrison (Salmon Arm), Colleen Anderson (Sicamous), David Lepsoe (Chase)
- Okanagan Basin Water Board Chair: Sue McKortoff
- Shuswap Waterfront Owners Association
- Columbia Shuswap Invasive Species Society
- Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association
- Shuswap Chambers of Commerce: Salmon Arm, Sicamous, South Shuswap, North Shuswap



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.