

MEDIA RELEASE

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Shuswap Watershed Council pens joint letter to federal Fisheries Minister about aquatic invasive mussels

The Shuswap Watershed Council (SWC), Shuswap Waterfront Owners Association (SWOA), and Columbia Shuswap Invasive Species Society (CSISS) sent a letter recently to Honourable Joyce Murray, Minister for Fisheries, Oceans, and the Canadian Coast Guard.

The letter describes how an infestation of Zebra and Quagga Mussels would have costly and devastating impacts to water quality, beaches, fish populations and habitat, water utilities, hydro-electric facilities, and property values. The letter requests more funding, resources and leadership from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans on the matter.

“As regional organizations based here in the Shuswap, we have been working on keeping Zebra and Quagga Mussels out of the Shuswap,” explains Erin Vieira, the SWC’s Program Manager.

“We have early-detection monitoring programs for the mussels, and we’re educating people about how to prevent spreading them,” adds Robyn Hooper, Executive Director for CSISS.

Zebra and Quagga Mussels’ primary way of moving about and invading new waterbodies is via watercraft: either attached to boats, watercraft, and gear or by being trapped in small amounts of standing water inside watercrafts’ compartments. Watercraft users should always Clean, Drain, and Dry their boats and other watercraft every time they move them from one waterbody to another. Another very important step is for travellers with watercraft to stop at watercraft inspection stations.

“We recognize watersheds are under a lot of stress by various factors,” says Vieira. “Our request to the Fisheries Minister is a matter of prevention. We don’t currently have any Zebra and Quagga Mussels in BC’s waters, but we are concerned that without stronger prevention measures in place we are too vulnerable to a new invasion.”

The letter describes four ways a federal investment could support protection measures in BC, in addition to calling for better containment of invasive mussels in infested waterbodies (e.g., in Manitoba and Ontario).



“The economic costs of a Zebra or Quagga Mussel infestation in our waters would be enormous, and the environmental impacts would be devastating,” states Paul Demenok, SWC Chair. “This affects everyone, and we all need to do our part to prevent an invasion and we need much more financial support from Ottawa to improve our preventative efforts.”

The SWC encourages others to send similar letters of their own to the Minister, to help bring more attention and priority to the issue.

The SWC’s joint letter, dated November 26th 2021, can be viewed on their website, www.shuswapwater.ca.

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Contact: For more information, please contact Erin Vieira or Mike Simpson c/o the Fraser Basin Council in Kamloops at 250 314-9660 and visit www.shuswapwater.ca.