

## 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 – a timely reminder for boaters and watercraft users to be vigilant and take steps to prevent the movement of aquatic invasive species into or around the Shuswap.

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

“Zebra and quagga mussels 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 require ongoing maintenance now estimated at a cost of up to \$129 million per year for BC residents.”

Vieira highlights that the \$129 million is a new annual cost estimate described in an economic impact report that the [Province of BC released in 2023](#). The cost has tripled from a 2013 estimate of approximately \$43 million to deal with an invasion of invasive mussels in BC.

Other negative impacts by zebra and quagga mussels include spoiling water quality and 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, ruining our enjoyment of water-based activities.

Once zebra or quagga mussels are established in a lake, there are no effective means of eliminating them – only ongoing maintenance to manage the colonies. They reproduce prolifically, leading to massive infestations.



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

Invasive mussels move from one lake to another via watercraft: they attach directly to a surface or get trapped in small compartments of water within the watercraft.

A 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.

Jess Booth, outreach coordinator for the Columbia Shuswap Invasive Species Society, says it's important to practice Clean-Drain-Dry, a three-step process to help eliminate invasive species from a watercraft:

- 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 near entry-points to BC and are staffed by the BC 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.

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.”

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 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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