

November 29, 2023

The Honourable Nathan Cullen
Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
PO Box 9012 Prov Stn Govt
Victoria, BC
V8W 9L6

Dear Minister Cullen:

RE: Prevention of Invasive Mussel Introduction to B.C.

At the November 16, 2023, Board meeting of the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen, the Board of Directors resolved to support the Okanagan Basin Water Board's Calls to Action on invasive mussel prevention.

The Board of Directors shares OBWB's concern over the threat of invasive mussels and the damage to infrastructure and the ecosystem that follows. Immediate action is required. I respectfully request the provincial government implement the actions requested by OBWB in the October 18, 2023 letter to your office. I have included a copy for your reference.

Sincerely,



Mark Pendergraft
Board Chair

November 29, 2023

The Honourable George Heyman
Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy
PO Box 9047 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC
V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Heyman:

RE: Prevention of Invasive Mussel Introduction to B.C.

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Sincerely,



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Board Chair

Honourable Nathan Cullen
Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
PO Box 9012 Stn Prov. Govt.
Victoria, BC V8M 9L6
WLRs.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Oct 18, 2023

Honourable George Heyman
Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy
PO Box 9047 Stn Prov Gov
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2
ENV.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Re: CALL FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION TO PREVENT INVASIVE MUSSEL INTRODUCTION TO B.C.

Dear Ministers,

We are writing to again express our extreme concern over the threats posed by invasive mussels to B.C. waters, recognizing the September 18th announcement that invasive quagga mussels have been found in Idaho in the Snake River. On September 25th, following meetings with Minister Cullen at UBCM, we provided a memorandum with specific recommendations and details to mitigate, prepare for, and respond to this threat (attached). The calls to action here are a summary of that memorandum.

We are writing to ask for the following actions to be taken immediately by the province of B.C.

1. Introduce a temporary moratorium on out of province watercraft entering B.C. until the full status of the infestation in the Columbia basin is assessed, and until the effectiveness of the chemical and biocontrol treatments in Idaho is known.
2. Introduce “pull-the-plug” legislation to be in effect prior to the 2024 boating season, and before the moratorium is lifted, requiring all watercraft owners to remove the drain plug prior to vessels being transported on public roads.
3. Ask Canada’s Minister for Public Safety to issue direction for all watercraft entering Canada at all border crossing from Saskatchewan to B.C. to be inspected prior to allowing entry.
4. Commit funding to the Invasive Mussel Defence Program of no less than \$4 million per year (all sources), indexed to inflation for at least 10 years.

Following these immediate actions, we ask you to fill the following gaps in the current inspection and prevention system, and in planning for response and long-term mitigation:

5. Enhance funding to recruit and retain B.C. Conservation Officers, Auxiliary Conservation Officers, and other IMDP staff as needed to 2019 levels (64 inspectors).
6. Update the provincial Early Detection, Rapid Response plan (EDRR), including a round of consultation with partner organizations prior to finalization.

7. Lead a planning process to create long-term response, containment, and control plans in regions at high risk of introduction and vulnerable to infestation, including the Okanagan, Shuswap, and Kootenay Regions.
8. Promote vulnerability assessments by utilities, local jurisdictions, and private entities.

Finally, we ask you to reconsider our previous call to action to require inspection for all watercraft entering B.C., both at federal and provincial borders. Again, the attached memorandum provides details for how this can be accomplished.

In response to the mussel detection in Idaho, state officials released more than 116,000 litres – almost four large tanker-trucks - of a copper-based pesticide into a 26 km stretch of the Snake River, killing invertebrates, algae, plants, and fish, including 2-meter-long sturgeon. This will be followed up with another chemical treatment and a biocontrol treatment. This was considered a better option than allowing the mussels to take hold, but there is still no guarantee that it will have the desired affect. It is possible that mussels have already escaped the containment area, and if so, they will spread throughout the Columbia Basin over the next several years.

Chemical treatments in most large lakes in B.C. are unlikely to have the desired effect, and the Province must take strong immediate action to close the obvious gaps in inspections and legislation to prevent invasive mussels in the first place.

We will also be writing to federal ministers to call for their support in your efforts, especially enhanced inspections at federal border crossings. We will also continue our own efforts in public awareness and education, providing a vulnerability assessment guide to prepare infrastructure, and working with local governments and First Nations to promote these calls to action, and the Clean, Drain, Dry message for boat owners.

The critical time to act is now.

Yours truly,



Anna Warwick Sears, Ph.D. — Executive Director
Okanagan Basin Water Board
1450 KLO Road, Kelowna, B.C. V1W 3Z4
Email : anna.warwick.sears@obwb.ca
Office: 250.469.6251



CC:

- Okanagan MLAs: Harwinder Sandhu, Norm Letnick, Renee Merrifield, Ben Stewart, Dan Ashton, Roly Russell
- Okanagan Nation Alliance, Chiefs Executive Council
- Okanagan Local Government Chairs and Mayors
- Okanagan MPs: Mel Arnold, Tracy Gray, Dan Albas, Richard Cannings
- Pacific NorthWest Economic Region: Matt Morrison, Chief Executive Officer
- Invasive Species Council of B.C.: Gail Wallin, Executive Director
- Okanagan Chambers of Commerce
- Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association
- Union of BC Municipalities
- Shuswap Watershed Council
- Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society

November 29, 2023

The Honourable Diane Lebouthillier
Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard
200 Kent St Station 15N100
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0E6

Dear Minister Lebouthillier:

RE: Prevention of Invasive Mussel Introduction to B.C.

At the November 16, 2023, Board meeting of the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen, the Board of Directors resolved to support the Okanagan Basin Water Board's Calls to Action on invasive mussel prevention.

The Board of Directors shares OBWB's concern over the threat of invasive mussels and the damage to infrastructure and the ecosystem that follows. Immediate action is required. I respectfully request the federal government implement the actions requested by OBWB in the October 18, 2023 letter to your office. I have included a copy for your reference.

Sincerely,



Mark Pendergraft
Board Chair

November 29, 2023

The Honourable Dominic LeBlanc
Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs
269 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0P8

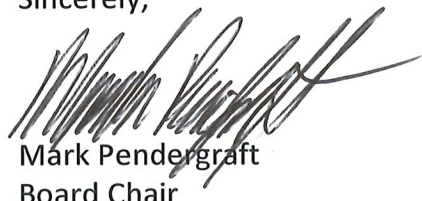
Dear Minister LeBlanc:

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ps.ministerofpublicsafety-ministredelasecuritepublique.sp@ps-sp.gc.ca

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200 Kent St Station 15N100
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0E6
DFO.Minister-Ministre.MPO@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

Re: CALL FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION TO PREVENT INVASIVE MUSSEL INTRODUCTION TO B.C.

Dear Ministers,

We are again writing to express our extreme concern over the threats posed by invasive mussels to B.C. waters, recognizing the September 18th announcement that invasive quagga mussels were found in Idaho in the Snake River, a tributary to the Columbia River. A May 2023 report by the Province of B.C., *Potential Economic Impact of Zebra and Quagga Mussels in B.C.*, shows that both the Fraser River and Columbia River watersheds are at moderate to high risk of a mussel infestation based on water chemistry. In order to protect Pacific salmon habitat in both of these major river systems, and protect the economy of the west, the Government of Canada must act now.

1. We ask that you issue immediate direction to all Canada Border Service Agency locations between Saskatchewan and the Pacific that all watercraft entering Canada in that region be inspected for invasive mussels following provincial protocols.
2. We have asked the Government of B.C. to issue a temporary moratorium on out-of-province boats until the full extent of the infestation is known, and until the success of chemical treatments in Idaho is determined. We ask you to use your authority to support any such temporary moratorium.

In response to the mussel detection in Idaho, state officials released more than 116,000 litres – almost four large tanker-trucks - of a copper-based pesticide into a 26 km stretch of the Snake River, killing invertebrates, algae, plants, and fish, including 2-meter-long hatchery sturgeon. This will be followed up with another chemical treatment and a biocontrol treatment. This was considered a better option than allowing the mussels to take hold, but there is still no guarantee that it will have the desired affect. It is possible that mussels have already escaped the containment area, and if so, they will spread throughout the Columbia Basin over the next several years.

Chemical treatments in most large lakes in B.C. are unlikely to be effective. Instead, we need senior governments to take strong immediate action to close the obvious gaps in inspections and legislation to prevent invasive mussels in the first place.



The Okanagan Basin Water Board will continue our own efforts in public awareness and education, providing a vulnerability assessment guide to prepare infrastructure, and working with local governments and First Nations to promote these calls to action, and the Clean, Drain, Dry message for boat owners.

The critical time to act is now.

Yours truly,

Anna Warwick Sears, Ph.D. — Executive Director
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