

Welcome to the interim report for the 2020 season. The Invasive Mussel Defence Program (IMDP) is a shared delivery between staff from the B.C. Conservation Office Service (COS) and the Environmental Sustainability & Strategic Policy Division (ESSPD) within the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy (ENV). The Program would like to recognize the ongoing funding provided by BC Hydro, Fortis BC, Columbia Power Corporation, and Columbia Basin Trust to support the delivery of the program. For more information about the Program please visit www.gov.bc.ca/invasivemussels. Suspected invasive mussels should be reported immediately to the Conservation Officer Services Report All Poachers and Polluters: 1-877-952-7277 (RAPP).

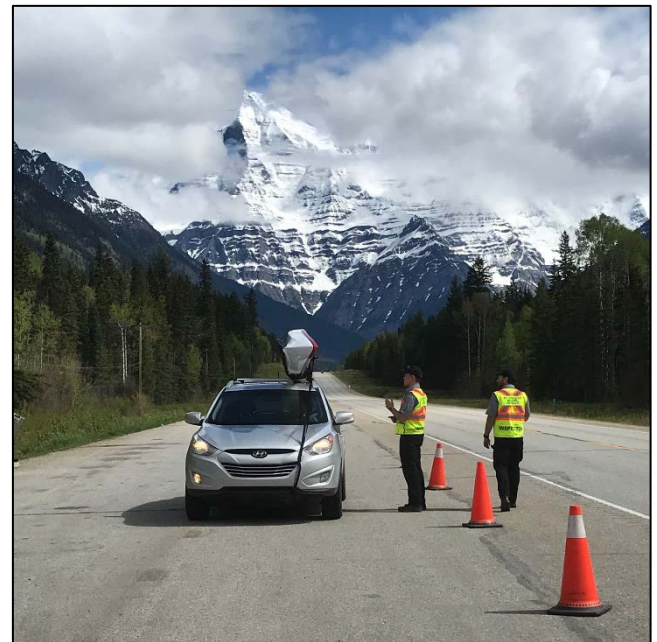
Program Operations

Watercraft Inspection Stations

Invasive mussel inspection stations were operational from May 15 to October 24, 2020. For the 2020 season approximately 29,900 inspections were performed and crews interacted with approximately 55,900 people to promote Clean, Drain, Dry.

Of the total watercraft inspected, 158 were identified as high risk, 27 Decontamination Orders were issued, and 17 watercraft were issued quarantine periods to meet the required 30-day drying time. A total of 83 decontaminations were performed by provincial inspectors.

Of the 29,900 inspections performed, 16 watercraft were confirmed to have adult invasive mussels. These watercraft came from Ontario (12), Arkansas (2), Wisconsin (1) and Manitoba (1) and were destined for the Okanagan (7), Lower Mainland (3), Vancouver Island (3), Thompson-Nicola (2), and unknown (1). The Program received advanced notification on 13 of the 16 mussel fouled boats either from another jurisdiction (e.g., AB, MT, ID, WA) or by Canada Border Services Agents (CBSA).



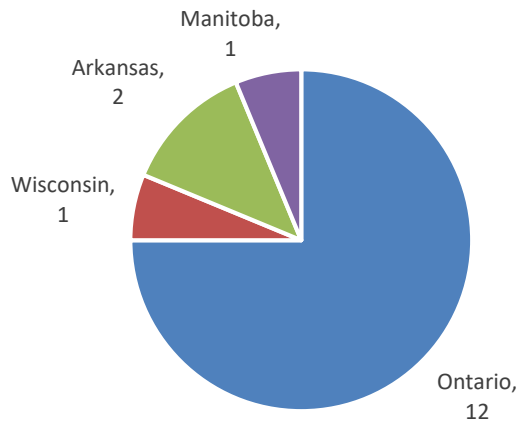
AIS inspectors at the Mt. Robson inspection station.

	2019 End of Season	2020 End of Season
Total Watercraft Inspected	52,000	29,900
People Interacted with to promote CDD	95,000	55,900
High Risk Inspections	1,290	158
Decontamination Orders Issued	86	27
Quarantine Periods Issued	79	17
Mussel fouled watercraft	22	16

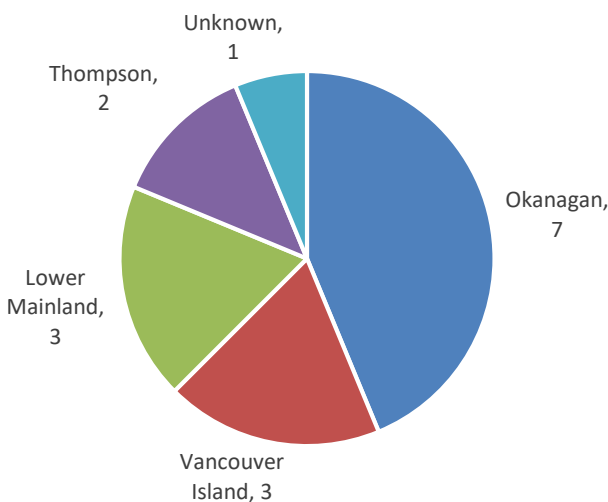
Comparison of watercraft inspection totals for the 2019 and 2020 seasons.

Lake Monitoring

For the 2020 season, sampling was carried out by both partner organizations and Ministry staff from early June to October. Grants were administered by the [Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation \(HCTF\)](#) to partner organizations to fund sampling efforts in high priority waterbodies across the province. Sampling is conducted following the provincial [lake monitoring protocol](#) and sent to a designated lab for analysis. A total of 954 water samples were collected across 89 lakes and substrate samplers were also deployed in a subset of lakes. All samples have come back negative for invasive mussels. The complete results from the 2020 sampling season will be released in the year-end report in spring 2021.



Source (top) and destination (bottom) of the 16 mussel fouled boats intercepted during the 2020 season.



Program Effectiveness

The average compliance across all inspection stations for the 2020 season was 87.7% which represents an increase from 83% in 2019. Of the watercraft that failed to stop at the inspection station, 88% were non-motorized watercraft such as canoes, kayaks, and paddleboards which pose a much lower risk than motorized watercraft. The increase in overall compliance was likely driven by the closure of the Laidlaw station for the 2020 season. Compliance at Laidlaw was on average 64% over the last three years (2017-2019) and lower than all other stations except Pacific and therefore brought the average across all stations down in past years.

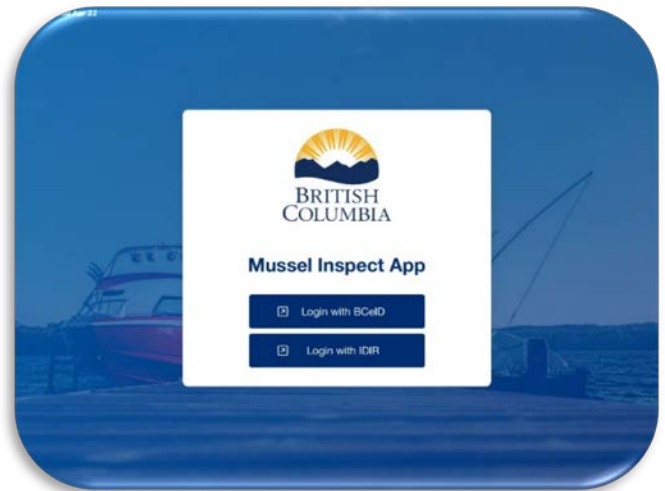
The decrease in total number of inspections for the 2020 season was likely due to reduced program operations and the closure of several inspection stations (due to either COVID 19 implications or operational efficiency decisions) and not an overall decrease in boater traffic. In 2019 the Laidlaw inspection station had over 14,000 inspections however only 0.3% were high-risk therefore the station was not opened for the 2020 season. This closure was a primary contributor to the decrease in total inspections in 2020. Some stations along the US border were closed such as the Cutts station north of Roseville as non-essential traffic was prohibited throughout the season due to COVID-19.

The stations that were operational in 2020 saw similar or slightly increased (e.g. Golden and Mt. Robson) total inspections relative to the 2019 season, indicating that boater traffic was not significantly reduced despite the U.S. border closure being in place for the entire season. However, high risk inspections were quite a bit lower in 2020 (158) relative to 2019 (1,290) suggesting that the majority of the boater traffic was local from BC and Alberta. This is consistent with the travel restrictions in place throughout most of the 2020 season.

Highlights

The Program launched a new internal watercraft inspection App at the start of the 2020 season. This new App has created enhanced remote data entry at the inspection stations. In addition, improved data security features will significantly decrease the risk of data loss while in the field. In addition, Program staff have worked closely with the developers to create a new internal dashboard that provides real time data summaries. This will create significant efficiencies and enhancements for the program's ongoing and annually reporting.

AIS Inspectors were also utilized from April 13, 2020 to June 20, 2020 to perform COVID 19 screening at various US/Canada border ports of entry as part of the Province's strategy to educate the public and ensure compliance with the Federal Quarantine Act, ensuring that travelers were completing their self-isolation compliance forms. AIS staff were instrumental assisting in this capacity and enjoyed the opportunity to work with full time Conservation Officers at the borders.



New internal watercraft Inspect App was launched for the 2020 season. It was developed under the broader Species and Ecosystems Information Systems Modernization (SEISM) Capital Project.



AIS inspector at the Olsen Inspection station on Hwy 3, a highlight of the job during what was a challenging and unique season.