

Welcome to the first status report for the 2023 season of the British Columbia (B.C.) Invasive Mussel Defense Program (IMDP) for the period of April 1 to August 14, 2023. The goal of the IMDP is to mitigate the risk of introducing zebra and quagga mussels into British Columbia.

Piloted in 2015, the program consists of three main components: watercraft inspections, lake monitoring, and public outreach and education. The program is delivered through the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy's Conservation Officer Service (COS).

The IMDP would like to recognize the ongoing funding provided by BC Hydro, the Columbia Power Corporation, Fortis BC, Columbia Basin Trust and Fisheries and Oceans Canada that makes this program possible. For more information about the IMDP, please visit [www.gov.bc.ca/invasivemussels](http://www.gov.bc.ca/invasivemussels). Suspected invasive mussels should be reported to the COS Report All Poachers and Polluters (RAPP) hotline at 1-877-952-7277.

## Program Operations

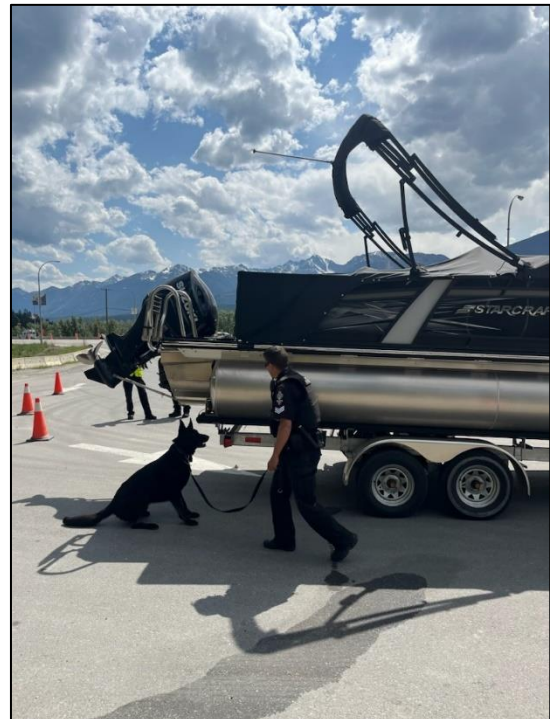
For the 2023 season, 43 inspectors are operating six watercraft inspection stations and two roving inspection crews. The watercraft inspection stations are located at key border crossings along the Alberta and U.S. border, and include: Dawson Creek, Mt. Robson, Golden, Olsen, Yahk and Osoyoos.

The program continued to implement roving crews in the Lower Mainland and Penticton this season. The roving inspection crews support the program's capacity to respond to the high-risk watercraft notifications coming from other inspection stations in B.C. and other jurisdictions. New for this season the Lower Mainland roving crew had dedicated inspectors setup at the Sumas and Pacific border crossings in partnership with Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA).

The initial COS Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) inspector training took place mid-March 2023 and a second round of training took place mid-May.

Several of the southern inspection stations opened on April 1, with additional inspection stations opening in mid-May. Most stations will be operational until late October.

The program is supported by three field Sergeant's who supervise the AIS inspectors, operate the AIS K9 Unit and provide valuable enforcement capacity to address blow by's at the inspection stations. Enforcement capacity is also augmented by full time Conservation Officers located throughout the province.



**K9 Kilo and his handler Sgt. Dan Bartol conducting an inspection at the Golden inspection station on Highway 1.**

## Staffing and Recruitment



*Top and bottom: Aquatic Invasive Species inspectors participating in the May program training at the Pacific Region Training Centre in Chilliwack.*



Recruitment and retention of AIS inspectors continues to be a challenge for the 2023 season. Therefore the level of operations at individual inspection stations may fluctuate throughout the season based on staffing levels. Accommodation continues to be a challenge in Valemount (Mt. Robson station) due to the ongoing pipeline construction. To mitigate this, the COS secured a trailer to provide accommodation for staff in Valemount. Despite this, the COS has not been able to fill any of the positions in Valemount for the 2023 season. In order to provide coverage at the Mt. Robson station AIS inspectors from other locations travelled to Valemount and worked four day shifts on weekends to cover the peak traffic periods in July and August. The program continues to explore options to help recruit staff to these locations. However, the current competitive job market and limited accommodation makes it an ongoing challenge.

## Watercraft Inspection Stations

As of August 14, 2023, crews completed 16,500 inspections and interacted with about 31,200 people to promote Clean, Drain, Dry practices – a preventative step all boaters should take when moving between lakes in B.C.

During the inspections, 124 watercraft were identified as high risk, 51 decontamination orders were issued, and 28 watercraft were given quarantine periods to meet the required drying time. To date, 62 decontaminations were performed.

Of the 16,500 inspections, 10 watercraft were confirmed to have adult invasive mussels. These watercraft came from: Ontario (7), Michigan (1), Nevada (1) and South Carolina (1). The watercraft were destined for: the Okanagan (6), Lower Mainland (2), Thompson-Nicola (1) and unconfirmed location (1). The IMDP received advanced notification on 6 of the 10 mussel-fouled boats, either from another jurisdiction or by the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA).

## Lake Monitoring

The Province continues to partner with the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation (HCTF) to administer grants to community organizations to support invasive mussel lake monitoring sample collection. The grants are funded by the Province and Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Grant applications for the 2023 season closed early February and successful applicants were notified in the spring.

Lake monitoring is a critical step for early detection of invasive mussels. Sampling for invasive mussels is conducted following the [British Columbia Dreissenid Mussel Lake Monitoring Field Protocol](#). All samples are analyzed for the presence of invasive mussel larvae at a designated lab.

Sampling started in June for the 2023 season, and to date over 350 samples have been collected from 79 priority waterbodies across the province. All samples have tested negative for the presence of invasive mussels and there have been no reported introductions of live zebra or quagga mussels in B.C. waterways.

<b>TOTAL WATERCRAFT INSPECTED</b>	<b>16,500</b>
<b>NUMBER OF PEOPLE INTERACTED WITH TO PROMOTE CLEAN, DRAIN, DRY</b>	<b>31,200</b>
<b>HIGH-RISK WATERCRAFT IDENTIFIED</b>	<b>124</b>
<b>DECONTAMINATION ORDERS ISSUED</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>QUARANTINE PERIODS ISSUED</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>MUSSEL-FOULED WATERCRAFT</b>	<b>10</b>

*\*Statistics accurate as of August 14, 2023*

## Safety

Program operations for the watercraft inspection stations and lake monitoring sampling will be adapted as necessary in response to the ongoing wildfire and drought conditions. The safety of Ministry staff, the public and our partners remains the top priority.