Association of
SUMMER VILLAGES
OF ALBERTA

ASVA Resolution – 2014 – 01

Dreissenid Mussel Invasion
Sponsor: Summer Village of Rochon Sands

WHEREAS Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development estimates that a dreissenid mussel (quagga and zebra mussels) invasion into Alberta water bodies could have a detrimental $75 million annual impact on the Alberta economy;

WHEREAS a zebra or quagga mussel infestation could devastate the pristine nature of Alberta's lakes and streams, rendering them unusable for recreation;

WHEREAS the economic impact targets many other aspects of the economy including but not limited to drinking water systems, water diversion intakes, water management structures and power generation;

WHEREAS the annual cost of preventing the invasion of this species is much less than the annual cost of mitigating the damages after an invasion;

WHEREAS these mussels are listed as prohibited species in Alberta's Fisheries Act but current provincial measures are not sufficient to ensure the species does not invade provincial water bodies; and

WHEREAS zebra mussels are migrating closer to Alberta and have been found as close as Lake Winnipeg, increasing the urgency to address this situation.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Summer Village Association urge the provincial government to enact/amend legislation and/or regulations to encompass zero tolerance, mandatory inspections and the necessary enforcement authority for dreissenid mussels to ensure the species does not invade Alberta.

AND FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Summer Village Association urge the provincial government to take preventative measures including the establishment, funding and staffing of mussel inspection stations at strategic entrances into Alberta and the funding of a comprehensive awareness campaign on the risk of the species entering the province and the preventative measures boaters must take to eliminate the risk.

Background

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Dreissenid mussels include both zebra mussels and quagga mussels. These non-native species are native to Eastern Europe and it is thought that they were introduced into North America on ocean ships through the St. Lawrence Seaway. They are spreading throughout the parts of the United States and eastern Canada with zebra mussels found in Lake Winnipeg in October 2013.

These mussels filter organisms out of water altering the food chain in turn threatening existing native species. They also cling on to any solid object accumulating to the point that they clog up municipalities' water intake pipes and irrigation infrastructure. A serious enough infestation would cover our beaches with sharp shells, rendering them unusable, and cause our water bodies to become devoid of fish, causing a major impact to the value of these pristine areas and to tourism for the entire Province.

If introduced into Alberta it is estimated that the financial impact to mitigate damages will be $75 million annually including $20,839,921 to drinking water systems.

These mussels are listed as prohibited species in the Alberta Fisheries Act but diligence in enforcement is lacking. When inspection stations have been set up, the requirement for the inspections is voluntary with many Canadians opting not to have their boats inspected. On the other hand, Americans at Alberta inspection stops are more likely to agree to the inspections as they are mandatory in some states. In fact, inspections in the United States in 2013 alerted the Province that seven boats contaminated with the mussels were headed for lakes in Alberta.

Alberta tested for the mussels in some water bodies in 2013 and has carried out pilot boat inspections at certain border locations. They continued with this program in 2014. This is not enough, however, as inspections are voluntary as noted earlier. A more diligent approach backed by strong legislation is required along with funding for inspection stations. Funding education campaigns is also important in preventing these mussels from entering Alberta. Boaters need to be aware of the risks that these mussels pose and the steps that they can take to ensure they are not contaminating our lakes.

Spending money on these precautionary methods is much less expensive on an annual basis than having to enter the mitigation phase and with these mussels already in Manitoba it is now that the Province must act.

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ASVA Resolution – 2014 – 02

Minimizing the Spread of Didymo
Sponsor: Summer Village of Rochon Sands

WHEREAS Didymo (*Didymosphenia geminata*), also known as "rock snot", is a microscopic diatomic algae that can threaten aquatic habitat, biodiversity and recreational activity. It grows on the bottom of both flowing and still waters, making rocks slimy and slippery, reducing the feedstock of fish, and hampering them from spawning;

WHEREAS the primary way for didymo to be spread is by anglers, kayakers, canoeists, tubers, boaters and others engaging in water-based recreation. The microscopic algae clings to waders, boots, boats, clothing, lures, hooks, fishing line and other equipment and remain viable for several weeks under even in seemingly dry conditions.

WHEREAS Didymo has already been identified in several rivers and streams in Alberta such as the Red Deer, Bow and Old Man Rivers, and threatens to spread throughout the entire province in aggressive actions or not taken to prevent its spread;

WHEREAS knowledge of this harmful pest and how to prevent its spread is not well- understood by the recreational public;

WHEREAS felt soled footwear is particularly hard to clean, disinfect and dry to prevent the spread of didymo and are commonly used in fly fishing streams;

WHEREAS there are currently no known methods for controlling or eradicating didymo once it infests a water body;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Alberta Summer Village Association urge the Provincial Government to active steps to prevent the spread of didymo, including banning the sale and use of felt soled boots or waders, and also introducing a more proactive and prominent prevention campaign, and conducting random watercraft inspections.

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ASVA Resolution – 2014 – 03

Management of Municipal Property-Waterfront
Sponsor: Summer Village of Seba Beach

WHEREAS Alberta's lakes are a valuable natural resource for all Albertans that must be used in a sustainable manner to ensure the long term benefits are preserved for future generations; and

WHEREAS the wide variety of recreational uses on these lakes creates environmental challenges and results in potentially conflicting uses that need to be managed; and

WHEREAS an increasing number of Albertans wish to access municipal property-waterfront; and

WHEREAS it is becoming increasingly more difficult for municipalities to establish and enforce by-laws or regulations to assist in maintaining control of their property waterfront; and

WHEREAS summer villages wish to provide good government management with respect to placement and storage of piers, docks, boatlifts, and other structures as well as the movement of watercraft in front of and / or on municipal reserves, parks and any other municipal property under the direction of a summer village council; and

WHEREAS The Navigable Waters Protection Act has changed, which eliminates all Federal regulation or control of privately owned piers, docks, boatlifts and other structures in Alberta lakes.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Summer Villages of Alberta (ASVA) urge the provincial government to support municipalities in their effort to effectively manage municipal property-waterfront by providing them the authority to regulate the placement of piers, docks, and boatlifts including the authority to direct their removal, as deemed necessary to administer and enforce their relevant policies.

ASVA Resolution – 2014 – 04

Improve the process of issuing health advisories for Alberta's lakes
Sponsor: Summer Village of Grandview

WHEREAS many recreational lakes in Alberta have natural occurrences of Cyanobacteria (Blue Green Algae), and

WHEREAS Alberta Health Services routinely tests recreational lakes for the presence of Cyanobacteria (Blue Green Algae) and issues a health advisory for the entire lake when localized occurrences of bacteria/algae are found, and

WHEREAS for many of our lakes, the consequence of this process has been a significant reduction in recreational use, beaches which were once crowded are now near empty as tourism has decreased, local businesses are suffering and property values are dropping.", and

WHEREAS methodology of issuing these advisories could be improved to mitigate these unintended consequences,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Summer Villages of Alberta support the initiative of the Summer Village of Grandview in working with Alberta Health Services to improve the process of issuing health advisories for Alberta's lakes.

Background

Cyanobacteria (blue green algae) is a naturally occurring substance found in many lakes within Canada. Unfortunately, many land use practices in watersheds have upset the natural balance in the lakes' ecosystems, causing the occurrence of significant algae blooms in some lakes. It has been found that cyanobacteria (blue green algae) can produce toxins which may be damaging to human health.

Alberta Health Services has recently been charged with the task of monitoring recreational lakes for water quality concerns including cyanobacteria. Whenever visual evidence of cyanobacteria (blue green algae) is found, or when specified guidelines for cell count or toxin concentration are exceeded in a lake, a health advisory is issued. In most cases, this advisory remains in place for the remainder of the open water season even though the lake may have predominant areas of clear water.

When an advisory is issued for a lake, signs are posted giving warning of the presence of cyanobacteria (blue green algae) and of the dangers of being in contact with the water. The sign also includes the

international symbol for no swimming. Although the lake is not "closed", the signs clearly dissuade people from entering the water. In addition, the press sensationalizes the matter when an advisory is issued by using file photographs depicting the worst situation in recent years rather than the current situation.

For many of our lakes, the consequence of this process has been a significant reduction in recreational use. Beaches which were once crowded are now near empty, local businesses are suffering and property values are dropping.

Lake monitoring and posting of a lake advisory needs to be an exercise of proportional response where the degree of action is in line with the risk involved. While safety is always of paramount concern, the monitoring program has shown that toxins rarely exceed Alberta's health guidelines. Blue green algae have always been present in prairie lakes as evidenced by paleolimnology studies, and yet no one has ever died from it in Alberta from entering and enjoying the water. At present, there are 30 lakes with health advisories posted and it is the expectation that people will not enter these lakes from the time of the advisory for the remainder of the year. Since these same lakes are likely to receive advisories in all coming years, the foreseeable future looks bleak.

Prior to the change in monitoring procedures, Albertans recognized the concerns of swimming in waters with algae blooms. If the bloom was significant, they avoided that section of the lake. If it was minor or absent, they would enjoy the water and rinse off when finished. There is no reason why this approach may no longer be followed if people are properly informed. The current practice of overstating the dangers may actually serve to put people at greater risk by undermining the public's confidence in the veracity of AHS's information, a sort of "crying wolf" effect.

The Summer Village of Grandview has expressed concerns to Alberta Health Services over the reaction of the press in sensationalizing and misrepresenting the Health Advisory. We are working with AHS in finding a more effective method of lake monitoring which would integrate sound science with an appropriate balance of education, judgement and precaution.

Alberta's lakes are meant to be enjoyed rather than feared. With improvements in lake monitoring processes, we can achieve this goal for the benefit of all Albertans without compromising safety.