

Protecting B.C. waters from aquatic invasive species

Dossier de la rédaction de H2o
December 2012

The B.C. government has amended the controlled alien species regulation to protect our environment, with tough fines for those who introduce invasive species into local ecosystems.

The B.C. government has strengthened the regulation, acting on a previous commitment to ban the snakehead fish. All public comments received on the government's policy paper supported strong action on this issue. Main measures include: Prohibiting the possession, breeding, release or transportation of high-risk aquatic species such as the snakehead. Releasing a live snakehead into local waters could result in a fine of up to \$250,000; Requiring that no invasive zebra or quagga mussel, alive or dead, be present on boats or related equipment. Failure to clean mussels off boats or equipment could result in a fine of up to \$100,000.

Until now, the controlled alien species regulation has been used to control the possession, breeding, shipping and releasing of animals that are not native to B.C., such as tigers, that pose a serious risk to the health or safety of people. For example, currently it is a direct violation of the regulation under the Wildlife Act to possess a prohibited species without a permit. Given the threats to B.C.'s fish, wildlife and habitat, the new rules target specific aquatic invasive species to prevent these live species from coming into contact with waters. Many neighbouring Canadian and U.S. jurisdictions have similar restrictions on aquatic invasive species as those announced.

Other new measures include: Adding definitions for "accredited zoo or aquarium", "certified educational institution" and "certified research institution" to create clarity on standards, and allow exemptions to apply for strict educational or scientific purposes; Clarifying which species of monitor lizard are prohibited, typically those that grow over two metres in length or that otherwise create a significant threat to public safety.

Environnement Colombie-Britannique - 20-12-2012