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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WATER BOARD FISHING FOR PROJECTS THAT CONSERVE OR IMPROVE WATER

Kelowna, B.C. – The Okanagan Basin Water Board is now accepting applications to its 2013 Water Conservation and Quality Improvement (WCQI) Grant Program.

The program, in its eighth year, has \$300,000 available for projects that conserve water or improve its quality. Eligible recipients include non-profit community groups, local governments (regional districts or municipalities), and irrigation or improvement districts. Successful applicants can receive up to \$30,000 for their project. Among the program's priorities are projects that benefit the entire Okanagan and show collaboration.

"The idea of providing valley-wide benefit is based on the fact that all water in the Okanagan is connected, from Armstrong to Osoyoos," explained James Littley, Office and Projects Manager. "This includes the lake water we swim in, our tap water, the wastewater that's piped from our homes, and the stormwater that ends up back in our lakes. Improving water quality in one area, or conserving water, benefits the entire valley," he added, noting that WCQI projects also serve as a model for similar efforts elsewhere in the Okanagan.

Littley noted that collaboration has led to great results for many of the grant recipients, encouraging partnerships that last long past the end of their Water Board project grant. It has also resulted in sharing information about projects that make new ones easier and more cost-effective.

Projects funded last year include a "Make Your Own Rain Barrel Workshop" put on by the Regional District of North Okanagan, and Okanagan Science Centre's "WaterWorks" display – a world-class English/French language exhibit on display until January 31, 2013. One of the components, the "Household Water Cycle" will remain on permanent exhibit. In the Central Okanagan, City of Kelowna was awarded funds to install drought-tolerant turf in front of the H2O Fitness Centre, complementing the work of the Okanagan Xeriscape Association's UnH2O Demonstration Garden (also a past WCQI grant recipient). In the South Okanagan, Okanagan Nation Alliance received funds to assist with its Okanagan River Restoration Initiative, restoring portions of the channelized river to its original oxbow configuration to improve critical habitat for fish and species at risk. Summerland Ornamental Gardens also received funds for an irrigation audit to improve water efficiency, allowing them to continue to be an example of WaterWise gardening in the Okanagan.

"Like past years, we're looking for applications that are innovative while benefiting the entire valley," added Littley.

This year's application deadline is 4 p.m. Friday, February 22, 2013. Information on the application process, including the need for a board or council resolution of support, as well as the application, can be found at <http://www.obwb.ca/application/>.

In the past seven years, the WCQI Grant Program has granted over \$2.3 million to 140 projects throughout the Okanagan.

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