REGIONAL DISTRICT

Saving water saves money

Reclamation helping plant cut costs, raise efficiency

Special to Westside Weekly

Reclaiming and reusing water at the Westside Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant is saving taxpayers water and money.

Since a water reclamation project was completed this summer, there has been a dramatic reduction in the amount of potable drinking water needed for everyday use around the Gellatly Road plant, which treats nine million litres of wastewater from homes and businesses in West Kelowna, Peachland and the Westbank First Nation every day.

Last spring, the Regional District of Central Okanagan, which maintains and operates the plant, received a $25,000 water conservation and quality improvement program grant from the Okanagan Basin Water Board.

The grant – along with just over $10,000 from the regional district – was used for a major upgrade to a small water reclamation system at the plant.

"We've always used a small amount of treated plant effluent water around the facility, but were using a vast amount of treated, potable drinking water," said regional district spokesman Bruce Smith. "With the grant, we were able to substantially upgrade our system … to use the newly filtered treated plant water in appropriate areas of the plant.

"As a result, we've significantly decreased our use of regular quality drinking water and we've seen our water bill plummet."

For example, last summer the plant used 3,212 cubic metres of potable drinking water, a drop of 67 per cent from the same period in 2012, before the reclamation project.

Now that the expanded water reclamation system is in place, over the course of a year, the plant's total water consumption is expected to drop by at least 25,000 cubic metres, saving about $12,000 a year.

Reclaimed water is used to cool pump bearings, flush mechanical seals, wash down equipment and through spray nozzles to control foam and the build-up of solids.

It's also used for outdoor irrigation.

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