

KELOWNA

"One Valley, One Water"

by Tiejia MacLaughlin - Story: 104624
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Photo: Castanet Staff

On average, Okanagan residents use 675 litres of water per person per day - twice that of the Canadian average.

The Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) is now accepting applications for the 2014 Water Conservation and Quality Improvement (WCQI) Grant Program.

The program, in its ninth year, provides \$300,000 in funding for projects that conserve water or improve water quality. Successful applicants can receive between \$3,000 - \$30,000 towards their project.

The WCQI Grant Program promotes collaborative water management, uniform standards, and best practices for the valley. The funding is provided to local governments, irrigation districts, and non-profit organizations for projects focusing on sustainability.

On average, Okanagan residents use 675 litres of water per person per day, more than double the usage of the average Canadian. That figure rises to 1,000 litres of water per person per day in the summer. Yet, the Okanagan has the lowest per person water availability in Canada. We use the most water and have the least to use.

"Over the last 40 years the Okanagan has become a leader at addressing water issues but we still see areas for improvement," said Anna Warwick Sears, Executive Director of the Water Board.

"Our annual inflow of water to Lake Okanagan is hugely variable. Both flood and drought conditions can come with a host of quality problems, which is why supporting community-based projects is important for managing the quality and quantity of our water."

Since its inception, the WCQI Grant Program has granted over \$2.6 million to 160 projects throughout the Okanagan.

The 2011-funded Silvopasture Project received a Premier's Innovation and Excellence Award. The Central Okanagan based project brought together government, industry and private groups to focus on protecting water quality, while providing range land for cattle and timber for forestry.

This year the Board is calling for projects addressing OBWB's 2014-2019 strategic goals. Eligible projects must demonstrate water savings or improvements to water quality, be supported by local government through a board or council resolution, and be consistent with water management planning objectives in their respective jurisdictions.

Preference will be given to projects that focus on: source water protection, promoting/enhancing science-based planning, promoting/enhancing inter-jurisdictional collaboration, and long-term adequate supply addressing changing conditions in climate, economy and population growth.

Deadline for grant applications is Friday February 21, 2014 at 4 p.m. For more information visit: www.obwb.ca/wcqi.