

Central Okanagan NEWS

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Water conservation challenge

by Wayne Moore | Story: 118784 - Jul 9, 2014 / 8:49 pm

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Photo: Wayne Moore - Castanet

Mayors and councillors from around the valley made a pledge to conserve water this summer as part of a program designed by the Okanagan Basin Water Board

Mayors and councillors from up and down the Okanagan Valley have challenged their citizens to conserve water.

According to the latest figures from 2010, Okanagan residents use an average of 675 litres of water per day per year. That's more than double the Canadian average of 329 litres.

In the summer, the Okanagan average climbs to nearly 1,000 litres per day.

It means there is less water available per person in the valley than anywhere else in Canada.

[Make Water Work](#) is an initiative from the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) and supported by member communities in the Okanagan.

Residents from each community from Osoyoos to Armstrong are invited to visit the Make Water Work website and sign up for one or all six pledges.

These include:

- Water my lawn only dusk to dawn
- Water plants, not pavement
- Leave my grass 2 to 3 inches tall
- Leave grass clippings as mulch
- Aerate my lawn and use compost
- Use low-water variety plants

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Corinne Jackson with the OBWB says the campaign is more for awareness and education rather than seeking a certain consumption reduction.

"At this point there is still a lot of low hanging fruit. You still see people watering pavement, you still see people watering in the middle of the day in the heat of the sun," says Jackson.

"There are simple things we can do right now that would make a huge difference to the amount of water we use. At this point we are trying to get people to think about how they use their water and when they use their water."

Jackson says the area of concern remains the 24 per cent of outdoor residential use - water used for plants, gardens, lawns and washing of cars.

"Domestic outdoor use is the second highest use of all water...that's mostly lawns and gardens but mostly lawns and most of the lawns are cosmetic," says Jackson.

As for golf courses and agriculture, often pointed to as the worst offenders, Jackson says it's simply not so.

Golf courses, says Jackson, use just five per cent of all consumed water.

"And, while agriculture is a big use (55%), at the same time we call it working water, water for food. Those using water for agriculture are doing a really good job of reducing the amount of water they use."

Along with challenging their residents, mayors and councillors also made their own personal pledges.

Armstrong Councillor Shirley Fowler, a confessed 'water hog,' says she made a personal choice to find ways to use water efficiently without giving up her vegetable garden or replacing gardens with rocks.

"I made small changes such as picking priority areas of my yard that needed to have the water and moving hanging baskets to areas that were shady to avoid the hot afternoon sun," says Fowler.

"And, I turned off the automatic part of my automatic irrigation and I only manually turn it on when my lawn really needs it."

She says those 'insignificant' changes cut her water consumption by 25 per cent.

Kelowna Councillor Luke Stack personally pledged to water his plants and not his pavement while he and his wife also pledged to reduce consumption on new developments by 20 per cent by replacing high-irrigation landscaping with low-irrigation areas of xeriscape gardens.

Penticton Councillor Wes Hopkin went one step further challenging each community to see who could have the lowest per capita peak day water consumption.

Hopkin says Penticton has lowered its peak day water consumption from 54 million litres in 2003 to 36 million a year ago.

As an incentive, anyone who signs up for the [Make Water Work Challenge](#) will be eligible to win \$5,000 in WaterWise yard upgrades from [KelownaGardens.com](#), Bylands and ProSource Irrigation.

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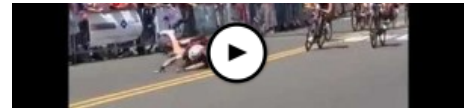
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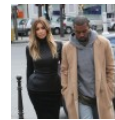




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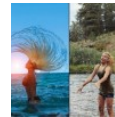
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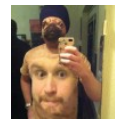
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