

Oliver best in Okanagan at conserving water, says board

Staff | Posted: Friday, August 22, 2014 4:55 pm

The dry town of Oliver is No. 1 in the Valley at conserving water, says the Okanagan Basin Water Board.

Judges of a Valley-wide contest selected the South Okanagan community as the most water-conscious. They based their choice on the high proportion of Oliver residents who pledged to reduce water use during the long, hot summer.

“That’s fantastic,” said the town’s acting mayor, Maureen Doerr. “I think all of this has helped raise awareness about how much water we use and what we can do to conserve. I also think people are taking pride in using less and still having a nice yard.”

The Make Water Work initiative encourages residents to water lawns and gardens after dark and to aim their sprinklers at plants, not pavement. Politicians from Armstrong to Osoyoos challenged each other and residents to take the pledge in July.

By consenting, they agreed to let their grass grow five to eight centimetres, leave their clippings as mulch and plant drought-resistant plants and turf.

Hundreds of residents went online to take the pledge — 963 as of last week. By submitting their names, each got a chance to win \$5,000 worth of WaterWise yard upgrades.

This year’s winner, chosen at random, was Sarah Moorhouse of Vernon.

“I’ve been talking about upgrading our yard, looking to introduce WaterWise elements such as drought-tolerant turf and low-water variety plants into our garden,” said Moorhouse. “This prize will be perfect for that.”

The campaign started as a pilot in the North Okanagan three years ago and spread to other municipalities. It’s now a Valley-wide call for action, aimed at reducing the second-largest use of water in the Okanagan — our residential landscapes.

The Valley’s thirst is partly explained by its semi-arid climate. A quarter of the water used is sprayed outside, mostly on lawns and gardens, the OBWB said.

The OBWB says less water is available per person in the Valley than anywhere in Canada. While the average Canadian uses 329 litres of water a day, Okanagan residents use an average 675 daily litres over the year, and almost 1,000 litres a day in summer.

KelownaGardens.com, Bylands and ProSource Irrigation contributed to the \$5,000 prize.

“We’re serious about working with companies who do the job right,” said Corinne Jackson, who speaks for the water board.