

OBWB marks 40 years

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The Okanagan Basin Water Board has come a long way since its beginnings 40 years ago.

The organization held a ceremony Friday to mark its anniversary.

"It was 1970 when the three Okanagan regional districts joined together to establish the Okanagan Basin Water Board," said Anna Warwick Sears, executive director.

"They saw the need for a valley-wide approach to a variety of serious water issues."

Among its first action, OBWB launched a grant program to improve waste water treatment and clean up the waters of the Okanagan.

It also introduced a program to control non-native, invasive aquatic weeds, such as milfoil.

After significant changes in the valley and a renewed concern for water issues, OBWB began a water management program in 2006.

"A number of very positive initiatives have been created as a result," said Warwick Sears, pointing to the water conservation and quality improvement grant program and the creation of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council.

There is also a water science component to the program and communications and outreach projects.

"Because of the water management program, this year has been a time of Growing Partnerships: Bringing Home Results," said Warwick Sears referring to the title of this year's annual report.

"We have seen important projects completed, such as phase two of the Okanagan water supply and demand study. This was the result of an unprecedented partnership between federal and provincial ministries, water suppliers, universities, and many others."

With assistance from the three regional districts, OBWB is providing \$500,000 over five years to the University of B.C.'s Okanagan campus.

The money will help establish a regional innovation chair in water resources and ecosystem management at the campus.

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