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Water grant deadline approaches

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Interested applicants have one month to submit their application to the Okanagan Basin Water Board's 2011 Water Conservation and Quality Improvement (WCQI) Grant Program.

Eligible recipients include non-profit community groups, local governments (regional districts or municipalities), and irrigation or improvement districts.

Successful applicants can receive up to \$30,000 for their project, with a total of \$300,000 available.

The purpose of the grant program is to enhance water quality and conserve water quantity throughout the Okanagan Valley, noted Anna Warwick Sears, executive director for the OBWB.

"This program exemplifies our reality of 'One Valley, One Water,'" she explained.

"Everyone who lives in the Okanagan, whether you live in Armstrong or in Osoyoos, is critically

interconnected by one water—the Okanagan Basin.

“What happens to the water in the north affects the water quality in the south.

“We also live in a semi-arid climate and have less freshwater available per person in the Okanagan, yet, homeowners use more than twice the Canadian average—this affects quantity.”

This program funds projects that tackle these important issues, added Warwick Sears.

Another important element of this program is its focus on collaboration. Several of these grants have resulted in partnerships that last well into the future. “We’ve seen networks of expertise built. We’ve seen practical approaches to water conservation and water quality improvement created that can be applied valley-wide. And, we’ve seen water conserved and quality improved,” she continued.

For example, City of Penticton’s environmental audit pilot project this past year helped business owners reduce water and energy consumption—a project that could be implemented in other communities.

Another project was Okanagan Xeriscape Association’s demonstration garden, providing Okanagan homeowners with examples of gardens that require less water and are more appropriate for the region’s dry climate.

An example of water quality improvement that benefits the valley is a project by Greater Vernon Water and Regional District of North Okanagan which identified sources of bacterial

contamination on Kalamalka Lake that will reduce future contamination.

“Like past years, we’re looking for applications that think outside the box and clearly demonstrate benefits for the entire valley,” added Warwick Sears.

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