A Bin Of Support

CORY BIALECKI/MORNING STAR

Sue Beaudry (right), with the Vernon Jubilee Hospital Foundation, accepts a $86,000 donation from the Armstrong/Spallumcheen Health Care Auxiliary at the Bargain Bin in Armstrong. The money will go towards medical equipment for the new patient care tower at Vernon Jubilee Hospital.

New program tracks water

JUDIE STEEVES
Morning Star Staff

It may seem like it comes from many different sources, but in fact we share one interconnected water in this near-desert valley, so every move toward sharing and cooperating means management of it can be more efficient and effective.

That reminder came from Kelowna-Lake Country MP Ron Cannan at the launch of a new web-based tool to keep an ongoing record of what's being used by the valley's largest utilities.

"There used to be a lot more parochialism in the valley, but it's getting better," he said.

The Streamlined Water Use Reporting Tool, or SWURT, was launched recently with a training session for staff from water utilities who will begin using it immediately.

Monthly online reporting of water use will replace the annual, paper report of water use that utilities have submitted to the province up to now.

It is information that will also be available for water managers to see at a glance what their usage is in comparison to other utilities, in comparison to last year's use, and along with data on environmental conditions, evapo-transpiration rates and snowpack measurements as well.

It begins with the 25 largest utilities in the Okanagan as a pilot, but the tool will eventually include all 100 utilities in the valley, said Anna Warwick Sears, executive director of the Okanagan Basin Water Board.

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nitiative allows valley to share resource

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OBWB worked with the province and utilities to get the project up and running.

She said groundwater information will also be included, which is a first in the province, since those using wells in B.C. are not required to report on water use.

SWURT will help users to share water from the watershed better, by keeping track of what's being used by everyone drawing from the same source, on a monthly basis.

"It will provide a global picture of the valley's water use," explained Sears.

She said it's expected the pilot would be expanded across the province once it's up and running in the Okanagan.

It's particularly important in this dry climate where there's even less water available per person, she noted.