



SIGNING OFF

HANNAH SCHRAEDER plans to take a break from editing Capital News after the Kelly Scott rink along with the pending birth of her third child.

A22

SENIORS

COLUMNIST Sharen Marteny offers advice on why seniors should plan their funeral arrangements in advance.

A26

NEW HOME

SONOMA PINES is a growing West Kelowna neighbourhood that offers an ideal blend of location, size, home design flexibility and proximity to many amenities.

A36

OPINION

SWEET performance gives life to the Kelowna Actors Studio women's lib-themed song-and-dance production.



A15

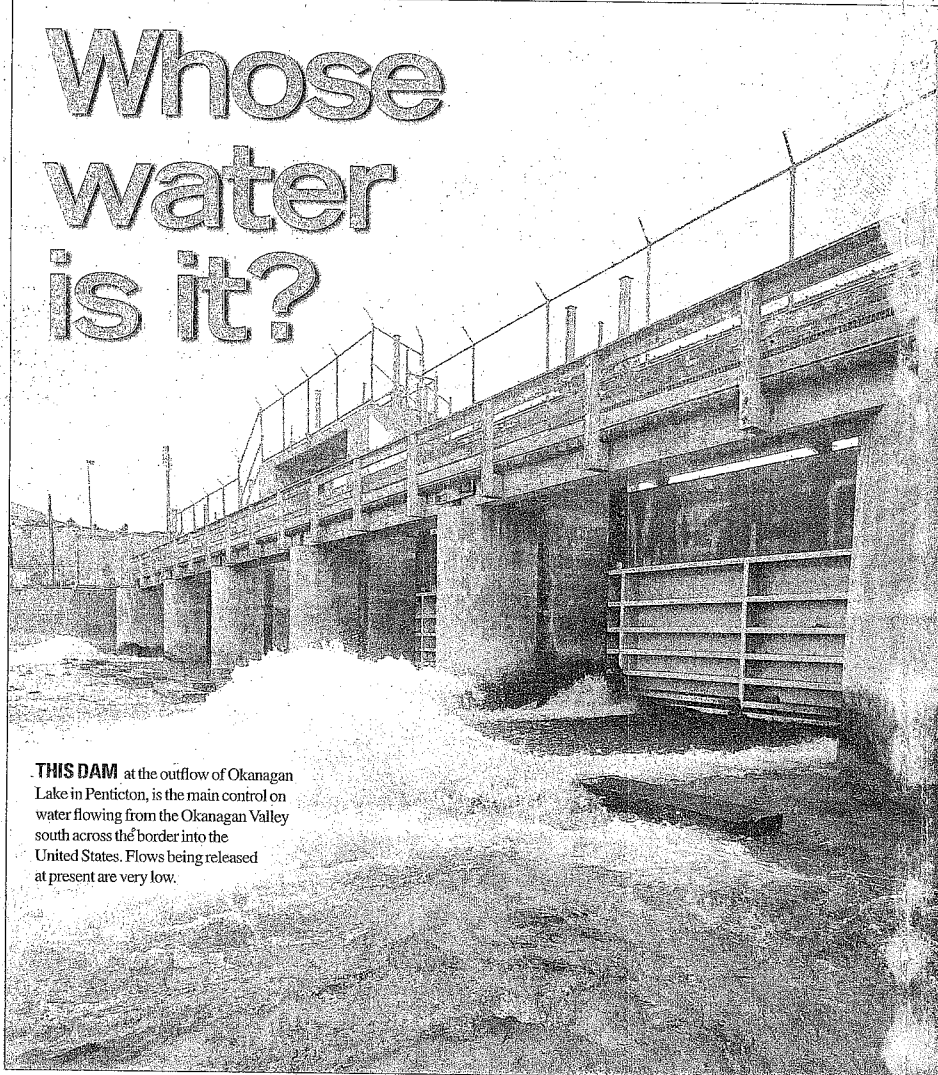
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C A P I T A L news



Whose water is it?



THIS DAM at the outflow of Okanagan Lake in Penticton, is the main control on water flowing from the Okanagan Valley south across the border into the United States. Flows being released at present are very low.

It may not be Osoyoos Lake or the Columbia River you see when you look out your window or drive between Kelowna and West Kelowna, but it's the same water that flows south across the international border and ultimately into the Pacific Ocean at Portland, Oregon.

Decisions about how much must flow south are made by an international commission and it's gathering information now to make a decision about renewing those orders in 2013.

Some are concerned new orders might impact how much water is available to Canadians in the Okanagan, and everyone involved says you should keep informed, particularly as international water week draws to a close.

Capital News reporter Judie Steeves asked some questions of the experts and provides a primer for the information that's still to come.

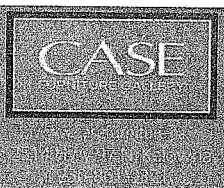
See story on A3

SEAN CONNOR/CAPITAL NEWS



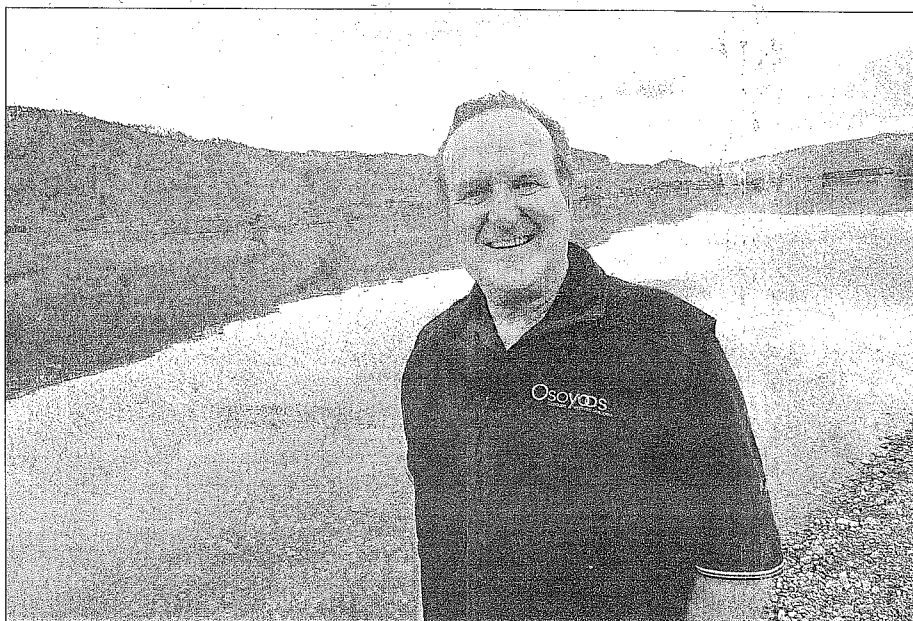
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CLOSE-UP

Our water supply faces impact from international decisions



SEAN CONNOR/CAPITAL NEWS

OKANAGAN BASIN WATER BOARD chairman Stu Wells, mayor of Osoyoos, invites everyone to attend the Osoyoos Lake Water Science Forum in Osoyoos Sept. 18 to 20 to discuss the sharing of water in this watershed.

JUDIE STEEVES
STAFF REPORTER

While the shorelines are dotted with beaches and resorts for those who love the recreational opportunities, to others, the Okanagan's lakes are less things of beauty than conduits providing life-giving water to hundreds of thousands of people and millions of other living things—in two countries.

We're at the top end of what is an enormous watershed, all feeding the Columbia River through Washington and Oregon in the U.S., before it dumps into the Pacific Ocean at Portland.

And, in a couple of years, the orders governing water levels in the cross-border Osoyoos Lake in the southern part of the valley, must be renewed by the International Joint Commission.

That decision will im-

pact everyone in the Okanagan Basin.

If the current orders requiring that the lake levels remain between elevations of 911.5 feet and 909 feet are kept, there could be little change in how the new orders impact Central Okanagan residents.

There are provisions in the current orders for both natural drought and flood conditions, when the lake's level may go up

to 913 feet or above.

The trans-boundary lake's level is controlled by the Zosel Dam in Washington State, and that state's Department of Ecology manages it.

However, if changes are made to consider not only lake level but the flows, there could be water losses to upstream users, particularly during drought years, which are predicted to be more likely as climate change

impacts natural flows of water.

And, that's an issue that concerns the Okanagan Basin Water Board, which wrote to both the IJC boards in Canada and the U.S. and to Okanagan-Cochihalla MP Stockwell Day requesting that no such change be made in the orders.

The board was responding to a report by Washington State University researchers recom-

mending a shift in water management policy from lake levels to flow requirements.

"We believe this is a substantial shift from the status quo, and, despite our ongoing studies, there is still insufficient science to inform such a change—especially considering the high level of uncertainty about water availability in any given year," wrote board chair Stu Wells.

Ralph Pentland, former director of water management for the federal government and now chairman of the Canadian Water Issues Council, says there is a trend now toward consideration of flows for environmental reasons whenever trans-boundary water issues are discussed, particularly in the west.

He admitted when such changes are made in a water management re-

gime, there must be trade-offs, so upstream users should insist on an understanding of what trade-offs would be needed upstream if such a change is made.

Climate change impacts are not normally taken into account by the IJC in making decisions on orders for trans-boundary waters, he said.

People should be informed about the possible upstream impacts of changes in orders for the watershed's trans-border waters, he added.

There are 17 boards of control across the country, to which the IJC issues orders regarding requirements for such waters, with the International Osoyoos Board of Control carrying out the orders governing the Okanagan watershed.

SEE WATER A4



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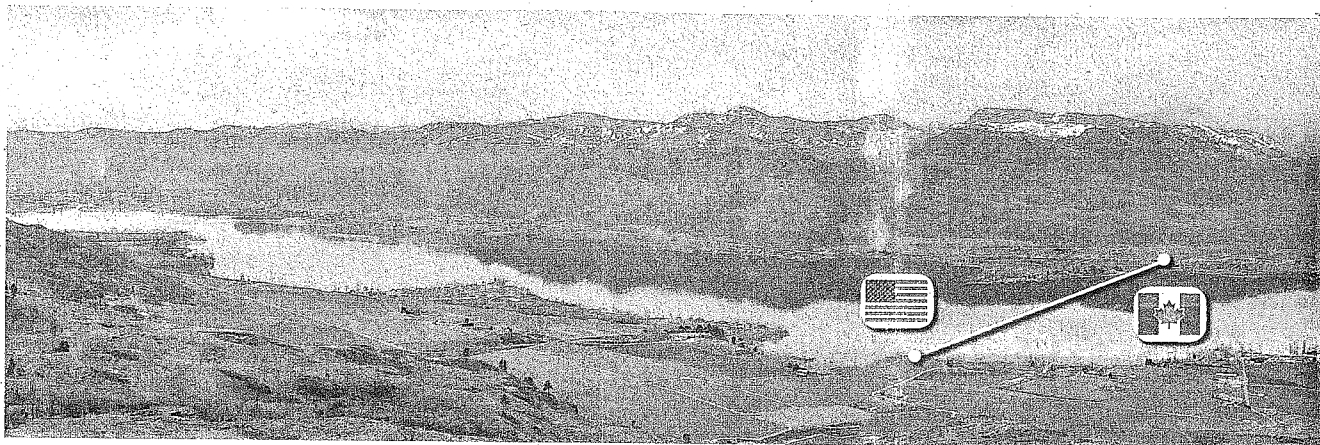
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CLOSE UP



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AIR, WATER AND WILDLIFE pay no attention to political boundaries such as that between Canada and the U.S. Our watershed naturally drains south of that border, just as the Zosel Dam, on the far left in this photo, backs water north of the border in Osoyoos Lake, for storage. International decisions about management of Osoyoos Lake's level affect everyone in the watershed, from Salmon Arm south.

▼ WHOSE WATER IS IT?

Conflicted interests overshadow Canada-U.S. water agreement

WATER FROM A3

Brian Symonds, director of water stewardship for the province, sits on that board. He says Canada's position is that we don't want to see trans-boundary flows included in the orders.

In progressive drought years, the inclusion of flow requirements could make a difference in the amount of water available to upstream users.

"However, even in drought years, we have to maintain flows in the ecosystem," he noted.

There's good communication among operators on both sides of the border, so controllers of the main dams on the Okanagan system, at the outflow of Okanagan Lake in Penticton, as well as the dams on Skaha Lake at Okanagan Falls, at McIntyre Dam south of Vaseux Lake, and Zosel

Dam in the U.S., talk to each other about any changes in operating levels.

Symonds acknowledges it's necessary for upstream users to be concerned about conserving water, simply because little water falls in this valley.

But he said population increases in the valley haven't yet had a significant impact on downstream volumes or on

management of lake levels.

"New development should be conscious of the footprint that will have on water supplies," he noted. "We'll never get away from that. We're not living in a place where we can take water for granted."

In drought situations, "we should try and man-

SEE WATER A5

REGIONAL DISTRICT NEWS



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REGIONAL BOARD HIGHLIGHTS – MARCH 2011

WESTBANK FIRST NATION – VOTING RIGHTS

The Regional Board has authorized staff to initiate discussions with the Provincial Government and Westbank First Nation (WFN) to determine the process that would allow full voting membership on the Regional Board. Since 2007, the WFN Council has appointed a non-voting representative to the Regional Board.

OKANAGAN INDIAN BAND RESERVE EXPANSION

The Regional Board has received a presentation from the Okanagan Indian Band regarding a proposed expansion of its Reserve #1. The Board has authorized Regional District Development Services staff to meet with the band staff regarding the reserve expansion request and to prepare an updated report for Board consideration.

FEBRUARY BUILDING STATISTICS

During February, nine building permits were approved for projects worth \$1,057,000 in the Central Okanagan East and Central Okanagan West Electoral Areas. That compares with nine permits issued in February 2010 for projects worth \$991,000.

NEXT REGIONAL BOARD MEETINGS

- Thursday, April 7th following Governance and Services Committee meeting at 8:30 am.
- Monday, April 18th – 7:00 pm

GOVERNANCE AND SERVICES MEETING

- Thursday, April 7th at 8:30 am - Woodhaven Board Room. Residents are welcome to attend.

OPEN HOUSES – OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLANS

The Regional District of Central Okanagan is hosting community consultation Open Houses as it drafts the first Official Community Plans for the Brent Road/Trepanier area of the Central Okanagan West Electoral Area and South Slopes area of the Central Okanagan East Electoral Area.

Brent Road-Trepanier area Open House

Monday, April 4th

5:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Peachland Community Centre, 4450-6th Street

Summary presentations at 5:30 and 7:00 pm

South Slopes area Open House

Tuesday, April 5th

4:00 pm - 7:30 pm

RDCO office, 1450 KLO Road

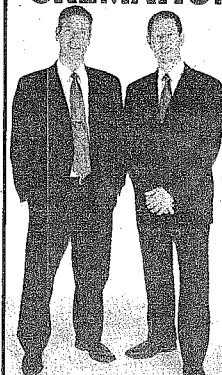
Summary presentations at 4:30 and 6:00 pm

Staff from the Development Services Department and HB Lanarc Consultants will be on hand during the interactive sessions to provide preliminary information received from recent surveys, receive feedback and to answer any questions.

Information on the Official Community Plans may be viewed on the Regional District website regionaldistrict.com/OCPP or at the Development Services Department, second floor at 1450 KLO Road.

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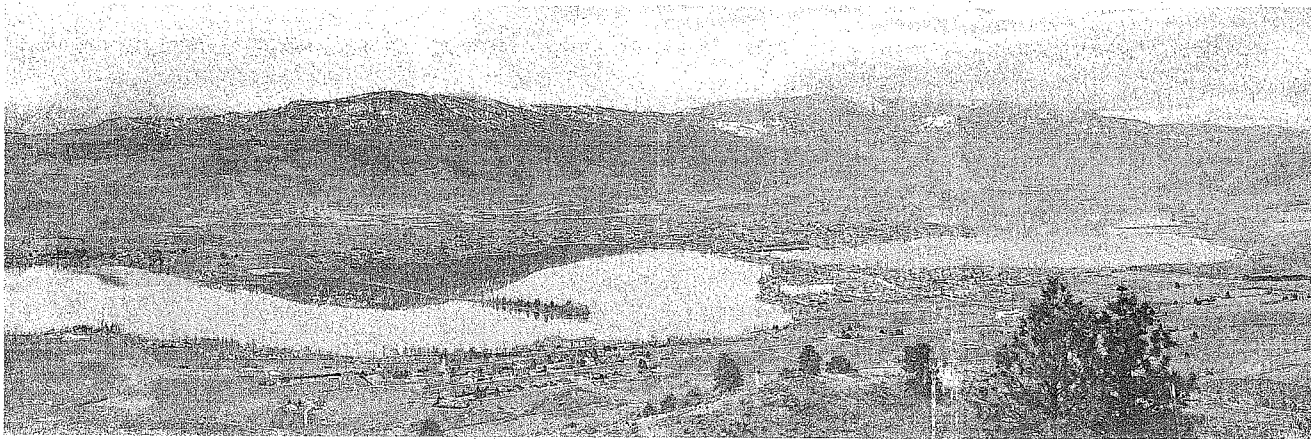
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CLOSE UP



WATER FROM A4

age it cooperatively and collectively," he added.

The OBWB slogan One Watershed, One Water, is important for people to remember, he said.

"People just need to realize they're part of a bigger picture. Instead of thinking that what you do is so small that it doesn't matter. You have to remember that it all adds up," he warned.

From Armstrong, through Vernon, Kelowna and south through the Okanagan—and even the Similkameen because the Similkameen River is a tributary to the Okanagan River, which flows into the Columbia River—the entire watershed is connected, he noted.

Daniel Millar, secretary for the Canadian Section of the board of control, says it's a delicate balancing act to maintain the level of Osoyoos Lake as dictated by the orders.

The largest factor influencing water levels are flows in the Okanagan River, which is generally based on a fish

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PEOPLE JUST
NEED TO REALIZE
THEY'RE PART OF A
BIGGER PICTURE.

Brian Symonds,
B.C. Ministry of
Environment.

water model that takes into account when sockeye migrate into the system, and when the young emerge—to ensure flows are adequate—as well as by keeping water levels at the optimum for the spawning and emergence of kokanee in Okanagan and Skaha Lakes and tributary streams.

Other factors influencing water level are evaporation and irrigation. He noted the Similkameen River enters the system two miles below the Zosel Dam and sometimes it piles water up and actually flows upstream, even back into Osoyoos Lake.

"Man has no control

over that," Millar commented. However, it occurs very seldom, he noted.

Although Millar said he's never seen the water level down near the lowest level permitted by the orders, it is possible in a drought year that those minimum water levels couldn't be maintained.

Currently, in preparation for the commission to decide on renewal of the orders governing Osoyoos Lake, a series of studies are being done to inform board members about issues surrounding the decision.

Although hearings haven't yet been scheduled, likely there will be public hearings next year and all the studies will be available online.

Anyone can write to the IJC at any time with concerns about the renewal decision, just as the OBWB has.

While the level of Osoyoos Lake may not seem like a pressing matter to the rest of the valley's residents, he feels it

should be.

"It's important for everyone to be informed about all water use, especially in water short areas," Millar said.

The OBWB, IJC, federal government and City of Osoyoos have joined forces to put on the 2011 Osoyoos Lake Water Science Forum, taking place Sept. 18 to 20 in Osoyoos.

The theme will be Shared Water, Shared Fu-

ture: Bridges to Sustain-

bility for Osoyoos Lake.

The idea is to provide an opportunity for residents of the Okanagan watershed on both sides of the border to come together to ask questions and share information.

Wells said everyone is invited to attend and comment on studies leading up to renewal of the orders for the lake.

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