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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

B.C. AND WASHINGTON ELECTEDS PREPARE FOR IMPORTANT OSOYOOS LAKE WATER FORUM

Kelowna, B.C. – Not since the signing of the original Operating Orders on Osoyoos Lake 25 years ago, regulating water levels on the lake between the U.S. and Canada, has there likely been so much interest in a meeting on water. Elected officials on both sides of the border of Osoyoos Lake, as well as water utility staff – who deliver our water, scientists and local citizens – are signing up to attend the Osoyoos Lake Water Science Forum, Sept. 18 to 20, 2011, in Osoyoos, B.C.

Early bird registration ends Monday, Aug. 15. Thanks to event sponsors, the forum is being offered at a discount to residents of Oliver, Osoyoos, and Oroville, with some portions being free. On-site registration will also be available at the forum. For details please visit www.obwb.ca/olwsf/.

“It’s a critical meeting,” said John Slater, Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) for Boundary Similkameen in B.C. and former chair of the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB). Slater will be providing opening remarks along with Washington State Senator Bob Morton. “Water is the one limiting resource to human settlement, industry and commercial growth. We know with population growth, agricultural growth and climate change, we’re going to have to be more careful with our water use and concerned with keeping what we have clean,” added Slater.

“Water is a big issue for us here in Central Washington,” Morton added, noting the need for increased water storage. “We’re in a state where some of our main aquifers will be out of water in 10 years.”

Morton said a siphoning project currently underway, taking water from the Columbia River to Odessa, Wa. will help, but he also sees a potential dam on the Similkameen River, helping retain water in Washington, as another solution to the state’s water concerns. “It’s obvious we need to address this issue and the sooner the better,” he said.

The forum, presented by the OBWB, the Town of Osoyoos, the International Joint Commission (IJC), and several other partners, will cover numerous water issues affecting the B.C.’s Okanagan valley and in neighbouring Okanogon County. Milfoil control, which has recently been in the news, will be discussed, including efforts to control the invasive weed in Osoyoos Lake on both sides of the border.

For more information on the Osoyoos Lake Water Science Forum visit www.obwb.ca/olwsf/



Another important topic up for discussion is the renewal of Operating Orders, controlling lake levels on Osoyoos Lake. Currently, levels are controlled by the State of Washington through the operation of Zosel Dam and overseen by the IJC's International Osoyoos Lake Board of Control. The Board of Control is made up of U.S. and Canadian representatives. The orders expire in February 2013 – 25 years after the completion of Zosel Dam. The Osoyoos water forum is an opportunity for the public to provide input on the renewal of operating orders.

“This forum is important for people living along Osoyoos Lake, who are affected by the lake’s levels. But it’s also important to everyone who is connected to that water system – all Okanagan residents, and all residents in the U.S. who depend on the waters that flow south from Osoyoos Lake,” added Slater. “This is your chance to learn more and have some say in the future.”

To register for the Osoyoos Lake Water Science Forum and for more information, please visit www.obwb.ca/olwsf/.

Event sponsors include: Environment Canada, Okanagan Basin Water Board, Town of Osoyoos, International Joint Commission, Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen, Washington State Department of Ecology, Osoyoos Indian Band Development Corporation, City of Oroville, B.C. Ministry of Forest Lands and Natural Resource Operations, Watermark Beach Resort, Destination Osoyoos, True Engineering, Osoyoos Credit Union, US Geological Survey, Prince’s Oroville, Osoyoos Lake Water Quality Society.

Event partners include many of the above, as well as Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, US Army Corps of Engineers, Okanagan Nation Alliance, Colville Confederated Tribes, B.C. Ministry of Environment, Washington State Department of Ecology, Town of Oliver, Okanogan County Public Utility District, Okanogan Conservation District, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Lake Osoyoos Association.

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