



KELOWNA

Water board gets federal boost

*by Castanet Staff - Story: 64437
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The Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) held its Annual General Meeting last Friday at the Laurel Packinghouse in Kelowna. The meeting touched on the accomplishments of the past year in protecting Okanagan water, and looked ahead at the work to come.

“It’s been a fantastic year,” says Anna Warwick Sears, Executive Director for the OBWB.

She noted the work done to bring diverse groups of people and organizations together for a common purpose, to help ensure a clean, sustainable water supply for all Okanagan residents, now and in the future.

Last fall’s Rain to Resource workshop was one example of this collaboration. It brought together elected officials, local government planners and engineers, policy-makers and others, from across B.C., to learn about new and innovative ways to address stormwater.

Warwick-Sears says the OBWB is also in the process of producing a homeowner’s guide to managing stormwater, encouraging residents to become involved in water protection.

“This type of collaboration will become even more important as the Okanagan, like most regions, faces the added pressures on their water supply from climate change and population growth.”

The OBWB also received a financial boost Friday when Ruta Fluxgold, Manager of the Ecosystem Coordination Office for Environment Canada’s Pacific region, announced funding of nearly \$77,000 to the Water Board.

Around \$20,000 of this federal funding will go towards supporting the Osoyoos Lake Water Science Forum September 18 to 20 in Osoyoos.

\$15,479 will support water utility staff get trained in the use of the OBWB’s Streamlined Water Use Reporting Tool. Another \$15,480 will assist the OBWB with its hydrometric monitoring program, reintroducing monitors to track water supplies, and \$26,000 will be provided to the Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program to help develop a biodiversity strategy for the Okanagan.

Another OBWB partner, Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA), gave a presentation at the meeting on the amazing recovery of the Okanagan sockeye fishery. Howie Wright is Project Manager with ONA’s Fisheries Department. As a result of a number of changes to the natural habitat of the fish in the Okanagan, Wright explained, the salmon experienced a serious decline in numbers. Now, as a result of significant restoration work, ONA is seeing fantastic returns.

“Since 2008, we’ve been able to increase the amount of fish Okanagan Nation members have been able to harvest for food. In 2010 we were even able to open a recreational fishery and even a small Okanagan Nation commercial fishery,” says Wright.

“It’s taken awhile, but through collaborative efforts and multiple projects we’re seeing the benefits.”

For more information on the Okanagan Basin Water Board, or to view a copy of the Water Board’s 2011 Annual Report, “Providing Leadership in Changing Times,” please visit their [website](#).