

NEWS

▼ WATER

Okanagan Basin Water Board reduces its annual budget

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STAFF REPORTER

While budgets for operation of many public bodies are increasing, the Okanagan Basin Water Board this week approved a budget for the coming year that is a reduction of 7.3 per cent from the previous year.

Executive-director Anna Warwick Sears said the drop in the \$3.449 million budget is due to a greatly improved management system for the sewage facilities grants program.

She said the board did an exhaustive review

of each individual grant this year, so they can be budgeted with great precision both now and into the future. There's also improved financial software being used.

As a result of this, "We will also be able to increase earned interest because we can establish short-term, high-yield investments to hold the requisitions before the grants become due," she explained.

The OBWB's financial services are handled by the Central Okanagan Regional District, where the board offices are located, including administra-

tion of the sewage facilities infrastructure grants program, accounts payable and employee payroll and benefits.

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Other overhead costs, including building and

Information Technology systems and support, phones and photocopiers have not increased.

For property-owners, the tax requisition will be 5.7 cents per \$1,000 of assessed values, down from six cents last year.

In addition to sewage facility grants, the board also is responsible for control of Eurasian Water Milfoil in the basin's main valley lakes and water management services such as the WaterWise education and outreach program; a new program for stream flow monitoring; expanding the groundwater monitor-

ing network; developing new water quality projects with UBCO researchers; training water utility staff on use of the new water use reporting program; and developing a process for valley-wide drought management.

The OBWB is made up of board members from the three regional

districts in the Okanagan Valley.

At this week's monthly meeting the board also asked staff to draft a letter to the B.C. government encouraging protection of Rose Valley Reservoir.

Board members said they were concerned lands around reservoirs should remain in public hands to

ensure ongoing protection of drinking water.

A current proposal would see lands around the northern end of the reservoir swapped with the Westbank First Nation for land where the new intersection is being built on Highway 97 at West-side Road.

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