

News

Board re-visits old method of handling storm water runoff

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Black Press

way of dealing with storm water runoff, but at the same time, it's back to an earlier era. Instead of designing for water to run off as quickly and directly over hard surfaces to the nearest gutter, storm drain and body of water as possible, the idea now is to slow it down, spread it out over the landscape and sink it into the ground so there's far less

to run off into drinking water sources.

"We need to re-visit the old ways," comments Anna Warwick Sears, executive-director of the Okanagan Basin Water Board, "but based on engineering principles."

The board has just completed a homeowner's guide to dealing more sensibly with storm water runoff, called Slow It. Spread it. Sink it.

It describes a dozen ways you can use rain as a resource rather than getting rid of it from your property as quickly as possible.

"The more we can hold it on our landscapes, the more that's available for groundwater, the cleaner our water is and the more there will be in streams for fish," said Warwick Sears, adding, "and it's easy for homeowners to do."

Basically, the concept is to distribute the load of water across the landscape instead of concentrating it on hard surfaces, where it can't sink into the ground.

It's particularly timely because one of the most-urgent impacts of climate change is flooding as a result of rain-falling on snow, and of sudden downpours of heavy rain.

"We've mostly focussed here on drought impacts of climate change, but we can also expect more rain in winter and more variability," said Warwick Sears.

The trouble is, not only does runoff from storms cause erosion of the land, it also does harm to the nearest water body as soil and other materials are flushed off hillsides, parking lots and roadways and into our drinking water.

And, the more that can be held on the landscape, the more that's available to recharge groundwater reserves and the cleaner the filtered water is when it eventually leaches into a body of water like Okanagan Lake.

This 56-page guide is available online at www.obwb.ca.

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