

B.C.

Cash for ideas that make a splash

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The Okanagan Basin Water Board is now accepting applications to its 2012 Water Conservation and Quality Improvement (WCQI) Grant Program.



Photo: Grant Scott

The Okanagan Basin Water Board is looking for ideas to conserve water and improve water quality.

The program, entering its seventh year, has made \$300,000 available for projects that conserve water or improve its quality. In the past six years, the WCQI Grant Program has awarded over \$2 million throughout the Okanagan.

Everyone from non-profit community groups, local governments and irrigation or improvement districts are all eligible to apply for up to \$30,000 in grant money.

The program is looking to find projects that benefit the entire Okanagan valley.

“Everyone who lives in the Okanagan, whether you live in Armstrong or in Osoyoos, is connected to each other by water – this includes the waters in our streams, lakes and in the ground. What happens to water quality in the north affects the water in the south,” says Grants Administrator Genevieve Dunbar.

“We also live in a dry climate and have less freshwater available per person in the Okanagan, yet, homeowners use more than twice the Canadian average – this affects quantity.”

Another important element of this program is its focus on collaboration.

The OBWB points to the grant given to the District of Peachland last year to re-establish a stream flow monitoring station on Peachland Creek as an example. The station will gather water quantity information which will be added to a valley-wide data base.

Another project was a Parks Beautification Project in Okanagan Falls which included installation of an efficient irrigation system and a redesign of plant beds to native and drought tolerant varieties.

“Since the grant program began, we’ve seen networks of expertise form around valley-wide projects and, ultimately, we’ve seen water conserved and quality improved,” says Dunbar.

“Like past years, we’re looking for applications that have an innovative approach and clearly demonstrate benefits for the entire valley.”

Information on the application process, including the need for a board or council resolution of support, as well as the application, can be found at the [OBWB website](#). This year’s application deadline is 4 p.m. Friday, February 24, 2012.