

VALLEY IN BRIEF

Premier to make prison announcement

A Liberal member of the B.C. legislature has confirmed that the government is ready to make an announcement about a new prison in the Okanagan.

Eric Foster who is the MLA for Vernon-Monashee says he can't say anything more about today's visit to the community of Oliver by Premier Christy Clark.



Clark

The provincial government says Clark will be in town in the morning to make an announcement benefiting public safety and job creation for families in the Okanagan.

Clark will be joined by Chief Clarence Louie of the Osoyoos Indian Band and Shirley Bond who is the minister of public safety, solicitor general and attorney general.

Bond has already said the province wants to build a new 360-cell jail in the region.

Oliver Mayor Ron Hovanec says he hasn't been told anything about the announcement but has been invited to lunch with the premier.

Man stabbed in Pandosy apartment

Police were looking for an attacker who stabbed a man in a Pandosy

CONSERVATION

Digging into water levels

By DON PLANT
The Daily Courier

Water experts hope to keep track of how much underground water is available by monitoring a sensitive aquifer in Joe Rich.

Crews broke ground on the firehall property at Goudie and Sun Valley roads last week and drilled 140 metres deep into an aquifer. Scientists will measure how much water is down there each year to prepare for growing demand as the population rises.

Environment officials are worried several Okanagan sources of groundwater are vulnerable to depletion.

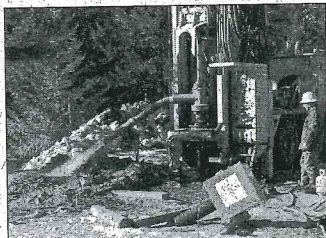
"Groundwater is one of the biggest unknowns in this Valley," said Anna Warwick Sears, who heads the Okanagan Basin Water Board.

Thousands of Valley residents depend on groundwater as their only source. Because B.C. is one of the only provinces that doesn't license its extraction, experts lack an accurate measure of how much is being drawn out.

Meanwhile, recent research suggests several Okanagan aquifers, including Joe Rich's, are vulnerable due to a limited water supply from changing rain and snowfall, and more human use.

"The water of this Valley is all connected," said Warwick Sears. "Knowing where and how much water we have will help ensure a sustainable supply."

The groundwater is supplied by the same source as surface water — snowmelt that flows



Submitted photo

Water gushes in Joe Rich Friday, after crews drilled 140 metres into an aquifer. Scientists hope to learn more about how sustainable the region's underground water supply is by monitoring the aquifer and others in the Valley.

down the mountains and trickles beneath the surface. Climate scientists fear that as global temperatures rise and more people move into the Valley, less water will be available.

Joe Rich residents are unable to run their dishwashers and washing machines at the same time. Some wonder how the community can withstand greater demand from more people.

The Joe Rich well is one of 15 Okanagan aquifers identified as sensitive. Other monitoring wells have been drilled since 2010 on Anarchist Mountain near Osoyoos, two in Oliver, two near Keremeos, and one in Spallumcheen.

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Okanagan Basin Water Board.

Others are proposed on UBC Okanagan land, in Ellison, West Kelowna, Summerland, and Penticton.

The monitoring wells will help communities manage their groundwater supplies, and help them plan for subdivisions and developments that will draw more water from adjacent aquifers.

The data gathered from the Joe Rich well will provide a better picture of how much underground water is available, said regional district director Patty Hanson.

"Drilling wells into this bedrock aquifer can be a hit-and-miss prospect for water ... (The data will) help us plan for the future so that we can ensure sustainability of this precious commodity."

The typical cost of building each monitoring well is \$38,000. Several government agencies are contributing to the Joe Rich project, including provincial ministries of environment, forests, lands and natural resources, as well as Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Environment Canada and several Okanagan local governments.