

March 15, 2012

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FLOOD OF ACTIVITIES WASHES OVER OKANAGAN FOR CANADA WATER WEEK

Kelowna, B.C. – The Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) is inviting the community to come and celebrate UN World Water Day and Canada Water Week, March 19 to 25.

“We have a number of fantastic activities planned this year, geared to all ages,” says Corinne Jackson, Communications and Research Coordinator with the OBWB. “We invite everyone to come celebrate, to learn about the challenges facing Okanagan water, and the many opportunities we have to address them.”

The week kicks off with the launch of the *Okanagan WaterWise Challenge*, a contest geared to Okanagan classrooms, inviting young people – from Kindergarten to Grade 12 – to submit a multi-media entry (video, song, posters, etc). The theme is “Be WaterWise: Save water for what matters...” There are a number of categories and prizes, with the top prize being a pizza party in the classroom, pool passes and the winning entry featured on the Okanagan WaterWise website.

Details can be found at www.okwaterwise.ca. The entry deadline is May 4 with winners announced May 16, as part of Drinking Water Week (May 13-19).

Also, again this year, the OBWB is hosting a free public forum. The event will be held March 20 at Summerhill Pyramid Winery, from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. In keeping with the UN World Water Day theme of water and food security, the forum’s topic is “Water for food in the Okanagan and beyond.”

“We all know how important water is to quality of life, but we don’t often sit down and discuss it,” noted Nelson Jatel, OBWB’s Water Stewardship Director. “This is a great opportunity for business leaders, educators, youth and other members of our community to come together and discuss the importance of water – and water for food.”

The event will focus, in part, on permaculture – a sustainable farming method that is growing in popularity, added Jatel.

The event begins with a panel discussion featuring: *Yehalem Metiku* with the B.C. interior-based non-profit Partners in the Horn of Africa – bringing an international perspective to the issue of water and food security based on his on-the-ground experiences working in Ethiopia; *Ted van der Gulik* with BC Ministry of Agriculture and vice-chair of the OBWB’s Okanagan Water Stewardship Council – providing a B.C. and Okanagan perspective on water and food security; *John Wagner*, anthropology professor at UBC Okanagan, who has done significant research on Okanagan water issues; BC Permacultural’s *Javan*

Bernakevitch and fellow permaculturalist *Michael Nickels* (from Saltspring Island), and; the OBWB's *Anna Warwick Sears*, tying all the pieces together and bringing an Okanagan Water Board perspective.

Light refreshments will be served. Seating is limited. To register go to: <http://okanaganwaterandfoodsecuritydiscussion.eventbrite.ca/>.

For those unable to attend the public forum, the panelists will also be taking turns, between March 19 and 25, appearing on AM1150's The Early Edition as part of a radio series.

Finally, the Okanagan Institute is hosting a discussion "Wild Blue Wonder: Unraveling the Water Quandary" on March 22, 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. at The Bohemian Café in Kelowna.

Join the OBWB's Nelson Jatel, Scott Alexander – former Senior Naturalist with B.C. Parks and a specialist in the endangered species and habitat of semi-arid grasslands, and award-winning ecologist and author Don Gayton. Cost is \$2 at the door. For more information and to register visit: <http://www.okaganinstitute.com/eventnews/>.

"We're really excited about Canada Water Week this year," added Jackson. "We hope that as people learn more about water in the Okanagan, and recognize that we are all connected in this valley by one water source, that everyone will be inspired to protect it."

For more information on UBC-O World Water Day events, please visit www.ubc.ca/okanagan/sustainability/getinvolved/events/2012WWD.html.

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