

University establishes water sustainability position Okanagan Valley

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Published: **September 14, 2012 01:00 AM**

Updated: **September 13, 2012 03:93 PM**

The University of B.C. Okanagan has revealed a new position designed to bring the community, politicians, researchers and industry together to examine water resource management.

Economics professor John Janmaat will now serve in a position called the B.C. regional innovation chair in water resources and ecosystem sustainability.

"People want water for a whole lot of things. The big challenge is figuring out how we're going to share it," said Janmaat.

"This is a very dry valley and we have a limited amount of water that we have to figure out how to share among the various different interests for which we see water as being important, ranging from protecting the environment to agriculture to urban industrial growth."

Sponsored by the provincial government's Leading Edge Endowment Fund to the tune of \$1.25 million, the \$2.5 million position brings together funds from industry, government and academia.

The industry partner, the Real Estate Foundation of B.C., provided \$250,000 while local government leaders on the Okanagan Basin Water Board provided another \$500,000 to the pot and the Columbia Basin Trust some \$150,000.

The money is already going toward a string of research projects like Janmaat's ongoing effort to monitor residential water use in Kelowna and a new doctoral student's work developing a hydrologic and economic model of the Columbia River basin.

The model should flush out important issues before the Columbia River Treaty governing cross-boarder water use in B.C., Washington and Oregon is renegotiated. The basin houses four dams for flood control and to generate hydro electricity.

"The more we examined the need for water and ecosystem management, the more apparent it became that this region can learn a great deal from its own experiences," said Cynthia Mathieson, dean of UBCO's Irving K. Barber School of Arts and Sciences.

One project in the North Okanagan partners with Agri-Food Canada and the University of Alberta to monitor drought response.

And finally, a master's student is looking at the impact of community size on community sustainability policies.

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