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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LOCAL BUSINESSES, HOMEOWNERS AND GOVERNMENTS JOIN FORCES TO MAKE WATER WORK

Penticton, B.C. – The newly xeriscaped yard of Pat and Doug Maxwell was the setting for a garden party today organized by the Okanagan Basin Water Board and its outreach program Okanagan WaterWise, recognizing efforts by local residents of the Okanagan, businesses and municipalities to conserve water and energy.

“What a wonderful setting to hold this event,” noted OBWB Chair Stu Wells. “The Maxwell’s are a great example of what people can do in their own yards to make a difference, not just lowering their own water and energy bills, but helping to keep a sustainable supply of these resources for everyone in the valley.”

The Maxwells were one of at least 1,500 South Okanagan-Similkameen residents who picked up a Tap by Tap water and energy saving kit this spring, containing an energy efficient showerhead, faucet aerator and shower timer. The kits were distributed in partnership between City Green Solutions, FortisBC, Environment Canada, Okanagan WaterWise and local governments in the South Okanagan. As part of the kit, residents were also invited to take the Make Water Work pledge and be entered to win WaterWise yard improvements. The Maxwells entered and won!

The pledge contest was a unique partnership, created with several local businesses known for promoting WaterWise practices including: WaterKind Consulting and Emerald Irrigation & Landscape Construction (both Irrigation Industry Association of BC-certified), Waterwise Landscape and Design, Andrew Sheret Ltd., as well as Grasslands Nursery and Sagebrush Nursery who specialize in native and drought-tolerant plants and xeriscape materials. Chair Wells acknowledged all the partners that made this program a success.

The bridging of the Tap by Tap initiative with OkWaterWise’s Make Water Work outdoor water conservation campaign was a natural fit, added Wells. On average, each Okanagan resident uses 675 litres of water per day compared to 329 in Canada, yet we have less freshwater available than almost anywhere in Canada. And, of all the water we use in the Okanagan, 24% is used by residents outdoors – mostly on our lawns. That is the 2nd highest use, right after agriculture.

“We need to ask ourselves,” added Wells, “are we going to continue to pour drinking water on our lawns – water that has gone through costly treatment to meet drinking quality standards, or are we going to make some changes in our homes and to our landscaping.

“This contest in the South Okanagan was part of a much larger valley-wide Make Water Work campaign aimed at offering simple solutions to Okanagan residents to help save water. We’re not saying you can’t have lawns or you can’t water. We’re saying make water work – make it work more efficiently and more effectively! A lot of our water is just wasted. It’s important that residents of this valley recognize we aren’t the only ones who need water. We also need water for food crops, for the salmon that are returning to spawn, and for firefighting.”

Penticton Mayor and Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen Chair Dan Ashton agreed. “There is great cost in treating water and delivering it to people’s homes. And it’s the same with the delivery of energy,” added Ashton. “By taking steps like this to reduce your use, and to use only what you need, people will see a decrease in their power and water bills, but we all benefit as a community and as a region. We are part of One Valley, and share just one water supply.

“We congratulate the Maxwells and all RDOS residents who picked up their kit, installed the water-saving devices, who took the pledge and are now making changes to Make Water Work,” Ashton said. “At the same time, the City of Penticton and RDOS are pleased to be partners in the Make Water Work campaign, recognizing that having a message echoed throughout the valley helps reinforce everyone’s conservation efforts.”

“FortisBC is committed to helping our customers conserve energy and lower energy costs. As such, we’re pleased to have partnered with local municipal governments, City Green and the Okanagan WaterWise’s Make Water Work campaign to help reduce the strain on local water treatment facilities and extend the community’s natural water supply,” said Melissa Manley, FortisBC’s PowerSense Program Manager.

“We’re also pleased to announce that Tap by Tap is extending into the Central Okanagan next week. Our next distribution event is happening at the Kelowna’s Farmers Market on Wed. Sept. 26th – again in partnership with City Green and Okanagan WaterWise,” said Manley.

Wells applauded the news. “There are solutions to address our water challenges, but it requires all of us – residents, local government leaders, businesses, everyone – to work together.”

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