

Valley mayors push for early start to water conservation

By John McDonald

[Google+](#) [Twitter](#) [Facebook](#)



Kelowna acting mayor Tracy Gray takes the Make Water Work pledge at Bylands Nursery in West Kelowna.

(JOHN MCDONALD /InfoTel Multimedia)

May 07, 2015 - 1:10 PM

OKANAGAN - Mindful of the dry winter the Okanagan has just experienced, valley mayors and councillors joined the Okanagan Basin Water Board for an early launch of the Make Water Work conservation campaign today.

Mayor Doug Findlater, who chairs the water board, used his own community of West Kelowna as an example of why the program is starting earlier than normal and why residents need to take conservation efforts seriously.

"We're already in a dry area and this year we're facing some challenges with low snow packs," Findlater says.

West Kelowna is reporting snowpack levels in its watershed areas as being 48 per cent of normal, Findlater says, and the district has already enacted stage one water restrictions, mainly affecting outdoor irrigation and lawn sprinkling.

"This year we are moving to active enforcement, which we haven't seen before, which will be stepped up in the coming weeks," he says. The district has hired summer staff whose focus will be people watering lawns and gardens outside the stage one times and days.

Looking further out, Findlater says the district is looking at increasing storage capacity on its two water sources, Powers Creek and Lambly Creek, but adds it will take time to put a plan together.

Since its inception in 2011, the Make Water Work campaign has focused on reducing the 25 per cent of water that ends up on lawns and gardens. This year, the focus is changing toward educating homeowners about the range of drought tolerant plants available at local greenhouses and garden centres, brought together as the Make Water Work plant collection.

Mike Byland, sales manager of Bylands Garden Centre, says the specially labelled collection will help take the guesswork out of plant selection for home owners interested in lowering their consumption.

"People who walk into garden centres generally don't have a lot of knowledge of these issues," he says. "With the plant collection, garden centres can help consumers make water wise decisions in their yards."

The collection was developed by Bylands in conjunction with the Okanagan Xeriscape Association and the water board.

As part of the kick-off mayors from up and down the valley took the Make Water Work pledge, vowing to incorporate the collection into their own yards and communities.

While increased enforcement is the stick, the carrot is prizes that can be won by those [who sign up online and take the Make Water Work pledge](#). The grand prize is a Water Wise upgrade of the winner's yard valued at \$6,000.

To contact the reporter for this story, email John McDonald at jmcdonald@infonews.ca or call 250-808-0143. To contact the editor, email mjones@infonews.ca or call 250-718-2724.

News from © InfoTel News Ltd, 2015

