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## Water - we're all connected

Jon Manchester - Sep 10, 2016 / 9:07 am



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The interdependence of watersheds was emphasized at the Okanagan Basin Water Board's annual general meeting, Friday in Kelowna.

Decisions we make here not only affect the Okanagan, but other watersheds outside our boundaries as well, as we are affected by them, the board says.

"Even though a watershed is a geographic boundary useful for managing our waters, we are increasingly finding ourselves affected by things happening outside our watershed, including invasive species, changing weather patterns due to global warming, and population growth," said executive director Anna Warwick Sears.

"we can't ignore what's happening around us, and at the same time we have to be good citizens and recognize that our actions do affect surrounding watersheds, in Canada, the U.S. and the world."

Keynote speaker Dr. Amber Manfree, from the Center for Watershed Sciences at the University of California, said lessons learned from her state's five-year drought have influenced policy on drought and flooding, invasive species, species at risk and protection, including fisheries restoration. The same issues affect the Okanagan.

"California is where we get a large proportion of our food. It is also a major global economy. Their success and failure with water is going to affect our food supply and economy directly," said Sears.

Manfree said California has massively altered its water systems, which is causing a cascade of problems, along with the changing climate. The result is flooding in some areas, and not enough water in others.

"We've been avoiding looking at things, the impacts of our actions. But the longer you wait, the fewer options you have," Manfree added.

The event also marked the 10th anniversary of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council, which provides advice on sustainable water management in the Valley, and progress on understanding the local groundwater supply, the water needs of fish, milfoil control, and the board's invasive mussel campaign.

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