



Kelowna city councillor Tracy Gray has been re-elected chair of the Okanagan Basin Water Board. Capital News files

Kelowna city councillor re-elected water board chair

Tracy Gray to remain as Okanagan Basin Water Board chair

BARRY GERDING / Feb. 7, 2018 6:00 a.m. / NEWS



Kelowna city councillor Tracy Gray will serve a second term as chair of the Okanagan Basin Water Board.

Gray was lone candidate for the position, as was vice-chair nominee Juliette Cunningham, a Vernon city councillor.

Gray, who has served as Kelowna council rep on the board for the last three years, said two key issues facing the water board in 2018 will be the invasive mussel awareness and prevention campaign along with the impact of climate change on our water system.

“Floodplain imagery mapping is going to be an important part of what we do going forward to reduce the impact of flooding,” Gray said.

“Last year was not a one-in-a-hundred year event, it is the new norm that we all have to adjust to. It’s not a political issue, the changes are happening before us and we have to address it.”

Gray said flooding concerns are growing, as evidenced by the widespread interest in flood risk management funding allocated this year by the Union of B.C. Municipalities.

Many communities within the OBWB area have applied for the funding, and both Armstrong and Lumby have already embarked on their own community flood assessment studies.

Gray said she is encouraged that other communities across the Okanagan securing grant funding are willing to pool their resources, working with the water board to develop a more comprehensive mapping strategy.

At a meeting hosted by the Regional District of Central Okanagan on Jan. 17, staff representing local governments, Okanagan Nation Alliance, Westbank First Nation and the provincial government agreed to move forward with a collaborative effort to carry out LiDAR imagery for detailed topography mapping.

The technology recently generated headlines by discovering a Mayan village buried underground in a Guatemalan jungle.

The goal for the Okanagan is to do a LiDAR flyover of flood-prone valley areas during low-water, leaves-off and snow-free conditions in March, or if funding is not in place at that point to then do the flights in October, the second best low-water snow-free month.

“Our hope is the image will allow us to prioritize what parts of the Okanagan are most susceptible to potential flooding damage,” said Gray.

Related: [Ottawa asked to commit to mussel prevention](#)

As for the mussel campaign, Gray said the board will continue to aggressively push for funding at the provincial and federal government levels to mitigate against the zebra and quagga mussels from reaching B.C. waters.

That was reflected in a call last week by the water board on the federal government to allocate more funding for mussel prevention and inspection resources, eight months after meeting environment ministry officials in Ottawa and hearing no followup response.

“We will keep the pressure on with regards to everything we can do to protect the watershed,” Gray said.

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