



Irrigation Management Committee 2018 Final Report

Bruce Naka



Introduction



It is becoming increasingly evident that a legal battle may be brewing over water rights for all stakeholders in the Okanagan Valley.

Introduction

- Struggles over water use appear imminent with population growth, climate change & importance of food security in B.C.
- Irrigation represents 85% of total outdoor water use in the valley, 70% agriculture & 15% landscape.
- Agricultural Irrigation has no apparent mechanism to prevent water purveyors from changing present water use to other municipal water requirements.



Introduction

- Water allocations for landscape irrigation municipally, commercially & residential are important for tourism, economy & environmentally to prevent our semi-arid location from becoming desolate.
- A list of tasks have been developed to improve irrigation management & efficiencies for all irrigation systems agriculture & landscape. This task list has been forwarded for inclusion into the updated OBWB Sustainability Strategy manual.
- The report has been broken into 5 major tasks.



Irrigation Management Committee Tasks

- 1. Development of a standard landscape bylaw to be promoted across the Okanagan Basin.**
- 2. Encourage adoption of the IIABC certification programs to all contractors, city parks departments and ground maintenance people.**
- 3. Create a Standard Soil Bylaw, For Landscape**
- 4. Transfer of Technical Information**
- 5. Securing water for the Agricultural Sector**

Objectives Irrigation Management

- **Develop an irrigation strategy for the OBWB that will improve management and efficiencies of both landscape and agriculture irrigation systems. The strategy should include climate change, population growth and the increased importance of food security in British Columbia.**

1. Landscape Bylaws

1. Consider using the City of Kelowna's landscape bylaws as a standard for the entire Okanagan
2. Incorporate IIABC Irrigation Standards into bylaw standard
3. Investigate the use of the IIABC High Efficiency Irrigation Standard (HEIS)
4. Provide training on landscape materials to irrigation contractors

STANDARDS
FOR
LANDSCAPE IRRIGATION SYSTEMS



JANUARY 2008 EDITION



2. Improving Irrigation Efficiency and Management through Certification

1. Encourage the adoption of the IIABC irrigation certification programs.
2. Encourage water purveyors and local governments to require the use of Certified Technicians and Certified Designers on new and upgraded irrigation systems.
3. Make it a requirement for water purveyors providing agriculture water to request certified irrigation plans
4. Strive for an informed public by developing a website that provides useful information to the public on irrigation and water management.



High Efficiency Irrigation Standard



- Current standards, while good, do not achieve the highest efficiency possible.
- Integrate landscape and irrigation professionals with irrigation system specifiers.
- Aid in the development of the most effective water saving practices.

3. Standard Soil Amendment Bylaw

Use the “Slow it Sink it Spread it” guide to develop consistent soil amendment bylaws.

Work with communities to make it a valley wide bylaw 3. Work with groups such as IIABC, Western Turfgrass Assoc., CLNA, to promote a united front on requirements of soil amendments.

Encourage development of Raingarden & other LID principals to be used in conjunction with soil amendment bylaws.

Promote the use of Water Balance Model methodology. The Water Balance Model and Water Balance Model Express are available at www.waterbucket.ca

Encourage the use of manure, and other composted materials to be used as a soil amendment in the development industry.



Organic Soil Amendments



Compost



Shredded tree bark



Sphagnum peat moss



Manure (cow/sheep/horse/rabbit)



Leaf mold



Wood ash

4. Transfer of Technical Information

Provide technical assistance to agricultural producers to provide guidance on improving irrigation efficiency.

Provide information to producers on water use, water allocation and methods to improve water use.

Recognize the importance of climate data obtained from weather stations throughout the Okanagan. Strive to inform water managers and city councillors by developing a website that provides useful information on irrigation and water management.

Preparation of material that can be used by the press to promote irrigation management initiatives. Partnering with other organizations such as BCFGa to help promote better irrigation management.

Educate the public as a well-informed public would be adhere to the necessity of improved irrigation management in our semi- arid climate.

Some crops such as grapes future of irrigation efficiencies lie more in irrigating to actual requirements of plant & fruit verses replacement of ET.



5. Securing Water for the Agriculture Sector

Develop a system that can be used valley wide that provides producers with their water allocation.

Encourage universal metering valley wide.

Water Purveyors develop a water use plan that identifies the agriculture land base, water allocated to agriculture, sources and supply.

Water plan should include water pricing objectives.

The Water Sustainability Act has a new provision that allows for the reservation of water for agricultural purposes. The plan would need to be developed taking into context all other uses in the watershed including environmental flow needs.

Provide technical support for the agriculture community by coordinating activities with the Ministry of Agriculture, producer organizations and water purveyors.



Water licenced for Agricultural purposes remain with agriculture and not be transferred to other uses. Growers are also concerned about the price of water for agriculture in the future.

Next Steps

The 2008 Okanagan Sustainable Water Strategy contains many of the items in the current plan.

Many items cannot be led by OBWB alone.

Improving irrigation efficiency and management is not a short term task and should continually be included in strategic planning in the Okanagan.

Items that OBWB can provide influence on should be identified and prioritized.

Continue an expanded irrigation management committee to interact with other disciplines and agencies

