



Okanagan Basin

WATER BOARD

BOARD REPORT: May 8, 2014

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OBWB Directors

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North Okanagan

Bob Fleming, Regional District
of North Okanagan

Keith Fielding, Regional
District of Central Okanagan

Gerry Zimmermann, Regional
District of Central Okanagan

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Allan Patton, Regional District
of Okanagan-Similkameen

Stu Wells, Regional District of
Okanagan-Similkameen

James Pepper, Okanagan
Nation Alliance

Toby Pike, Water Supply
Association of B.C.

Don Dobson, Okanagan Water
Stewardship Council

**The next meeting of the OBWB
will be a joint Board-Council
session at 10 a.m., June 3,
2014 at Penticton Lakeside
Resort in Penticton.**

Okanagan Basin Water Board Meeting Highlights

Water Board responds to citizen concerns on invasive mussels: In response to concerns from residents, local governments and water utilities, the board asked staff to develop a tool for citizens to engage with senior government elected officials on the zebra and quagga mussel issue. Soon, visitors to www.DontMoveAMussel.ca will be able to send letters from the site to register concern and request urgent action to prevent the spread of invasive mussels to the Okanagan. The board noted a warning from Manitoba's Minister of Water Stewardship to the Province of B.C. last week. Zebra mussels were found in Lake Winnipeg last fall and Manitoba is now attempting chemical treatment and banning boats from a portion of the lake. The OBWB has called on the B.C. government to set up inspection stations and for the federal government to pass regulations requiring Canada Border Services agents to inspect watercraft for invasive species before allowing them to enter Canada.

OBWB considers options for mussel decontamination unit in Okanagan: Directors have asked staff to investigate options to have a mussel decontamination unit in the Okanagan. Currently, there are few available in B.C. The province has two units in Kamloops and one in Nelson. The need for more decontamination units became clear after a close-call on March 12 at the Osoyoos border when a quagga mussel-infested boat was found headed for Okanagan Lake. In that case, a private decontamination unit was used. The OBWB's milfoil crew will begin implementing "Clean. Drain. Dry" protocols with its harvesting and rototilling equipment this summer, ensuring the agency is doing its part to protect Okanagan lakes.

Board recommends province take on Water Use Reporting web-tool: The OBWB is recommending the B.C. government take ownership of an online tool (the BC Water Use Reporting Centre developed by the OBWB in partnership with B.C. government ministries) to help ensure water sustainability in B.C. The tool, launched in the Okanagan and now used by the Nanaimo Regional District, helps utilities track water use and meet provincial requirements to report this use. It is being further developed to allow the reporting of other large surface and groundwater extractions, including industrial agricultural use. The OBWB is recommending that BC WURC be taken on by a new commission or within the B.C. Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, allowing the province to collect water license fees through the tool. The board is also recommending that license fees be used to fund the new water plans and services outlined in the new Water Sustainability Act.

Directors echoes UDI concerns on water reporting: In reviewing a request from the Urban Development Institute, the board agreed to send a letter to Interior Health echoing UDI's concerns with a new water information initiative that would make it appear that many systems are unsafe – based only on the treatment system in place and not their actual water quality. UDI warns that taking this approach will impede the ability to finance water system improvements and cause undue alarm.

For more information, please visit: www.OBWB.ca