



Okanagan Basin

WATER BOARD

BOARD REPORT: April 7, 2017

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www.obwb.ca

Okanagan Basin Water Board Meeting Highlights

Project will help farmers address climate change & water impacts: Harmony Bjarnson with B.C. Agriculture and Climate Change Action Initiative spoke to the board about a number of projects aimed at helping producers adapt to climate change effects (e.g. drought and flooding) and build resiliency. In the Okanagan this includes an Agricultural Water Supply Status Outreach Project, being developed with producers, affected groups including the BC Fruit Growers Association, and the Okanagan Basin Water Board. The project should improve communication between the province, water purveyors and growers about water supplies so farmers can plan ahead for their crops. A pilot project is underway with City of Penticton and Greater Vernon Water.

OBWB awards \$300K in funding to valley water projects: Directors approved \$300,000 in Water Conservation and Quality Improvement grant funding to 17 projects in the valley. Projects include: a watershed improvement project By Sqilxw Apna at the head of Okanagan Lake in Vernon; a program by the Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program to work with foreshore residents and promote the importance of these ecosystems for water quality; and a Vaseux Lake project by Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen, looking at nutrient and sediment sources contributing to milfoil and algae growth. More details available soon at www.OBWB.ca.

Water Board responds to B.C. mussel announcement: The board discussed the recent provincial mussel announcement which includes: an expansion of inspection hours to “generally dusk to dawn” with the Golden station moving to 24-hours, two new inspection stations, a doubling of enforcement staff to 68 starting in June, funds for mussel monitoring, and a mussel-sniffing dog who starts July 1. It was noted the announcement includes many of the items the OBWB has been calling for, however, the board will continue to push for potential loopholes to be closed, including regulations ensuring all boats are inspected prior to launching and locked-in funding to ensure sustainability of the provincial program. The board also noted efforts to engage federal ministers at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities annual convention in Ottawa this June. Find the OBWB’s response to the province’s announcement here: <http://bit.ly/2o79UTJ>.

B.C. grant to help develop Wetland Guidebook for local governments: The Water Board was told of a \$10,000 grant from B.C. Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development to develop a guidebook for local governments and organizations to build wetlands in the Okanagan. This is part of the larger Okanagan Wetland Project, helping re-establish these valuable ecosystems. More than 85% of the valley’s wetlands & natural riparian areas are gone, and remaining areas are at risk of loss.

Don’t Move A Mussel – special public info event: The OBWB’s Okanagan WaterWise program is pleased to partner with the Okanagan & Similkameen Invasive Species Society and present “Don’t Move A Mussel,” Tues., April 25 at Okanagan College Lecture Theatre in Penticton, 6:45 – 9 p.m. Hear about Montana’s experience, where the mussels were discovered in Fall 2016. And meet Hilo, one of Alberta’s mussel-sniffing dogs, and his handler Cindy Sawchuk speaking on that province’s efforts to keep the mussels out. Register at <http://bit.ly/2oFTi7I>. A special event is also planned for local government and First Nation councils Apr. 26, 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Location TBA. Details at www.OBWB.ca/?p=10835.

OBWB Directors

Tracy Gray - Chair,
Regional District of Central
Okanagan

**Juliette Cunningham - Vice-
Chair,** Regional District of
North Okanagan

Doug Dirk, Regional District of
North Okanagan

Rick Fairbairn, Regional
District of North Okanagan

Doug Findlater, Regional
District of Central Okanagan

Cindy Fortin, Regional District
of Central Okanagan

Ron Hovanes, Regional
District of Okanagan-
Similkameen

Sue McKortoff, Regional
District of Okanagan-
Similkameen

Peter Waterman, Regional
District of Okanagan-
Similkameen

Lisa Wilson, Okanagan Nation
Alliance

Toby Pike, Water Supply
Association of B.C.

Brian Guy, Okanagan Water
Stewardship Council

**The next regular meeting of
the OBWB will be at 10 a.m.
May 2, 2017 at the Regional
District of Central Okanagan in
Kelowna.**

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