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OLIVER TAKES “MAKE WATER WORK CHAMPION” TITLE WHILE VERNON WOMAN WINS \$5,000 WATERWISE YARD UPGRADE

Kelowna, BC - The Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) and its Okanagan WaterWise program are pleased to announce two winners for this year’s 2014 Make Water Work contest – Sarah Moorhouse from Vernon, B.C. and the Town of Oliver.

Moorhouse has won up to \$5,000 in WaterWise yard upgrades while the Town of Oliver has been named “Make Water Work Champion 2014.”

The contest, which began in July, encouraged Okanagan residents – from Armstrong to Osoyoos – to reduce their outdoor water use by pledging to do one or more of the following: Water their yard between dusk and dawn; Water plants, not pavement; Leave grass 2-3 inches tall; Leave grass clippings as mulch; Aerate lawn and top dress with compost; and Change out some lawn with drought-tolerant turf and/or native or low water variety plants. By pledging online at www.MakeWaterWork.ca people were then entered to win an audit of their landscape for water efficiencies, plus irrigation and/or plant materials, and install service to make their yard WaterWise.

“I’ve been talking about upgrading our yard, looking to introduce WaterWise elements such as drought-tolerant turf and low water variety plants into our garden,” said an excited Moorhouse. “This prize will be perfect for that.”

The Make Water Work campaign began as a pilot in the North Okanagan in 2011, developed in partnership with local governments throughout the valley. Since then it has grown to become a valley-wide call for action, aimed at reducing the 2nd largest use of all water in the Okanagan - our residential outdoor landscapes. In all, 24% of Okanagan water is used in our yards, mostly on lawns.* New this year, mayors and city councillors from around the region challenged each other and their communities to take the pledge for a chance to win the champion title, and of course save water. There was great participation from Okanagan communities including Kelowna, Penticton and West Kelowna, but looking at the number of people who took the pledge on a per capita basis, Oliver came in first, followed by Osoyoos, Summerland, Armstrong, and Penticton.

“That’s fantastic,” said Oliver’s Acting Mayor Maureen Doerr on receiving the news. Make Water Work is just one of the efforts the town has adopted to raise awareness around water issues, she noted, listing off the introduction of water meters, presentations by Communities in Bloom, and more. “I think all of this has helped raise awareness about how much water we use and what we can do to conserve. I also think people are taking pride in using less and still having a nice yard,” she added.

Looking at this year’s results, Corinne Jackson, OBWB Communications Director and in charge of the Okanagan WaterWise program, said she’s very pleased. “Make Water Work is an effort by local governments and water utilities throughout the valley to call attention to water issues in the Okanagan, showing that small changes in our behaviours can have huge impacts.

“Each year we have seen the campaign grow with greater participation from elected officials, residents, and the business community. In 2012 we had 237 people take the pledge. This year, we are at 963 and counting.”

Special thanks to KelownaGardens.com, Bylands and ProSource Irrigation which have joined together in providing the \$5,000 prize. All three businesses were approached to join the campaign based on their commitment to water conservation. Both KelownaGardens and ProSource staff are Irrigation Industry Association of BC-certified, while Bylands has won international accolades for its environmental stewardship.

Although the contest may be over for another year, we still have a few weeks of warm weather ahead, noted Jackson, adding that people are still encouraged to conserve, ensuring enough water for crops, fish returning to our streams and even firefighting.

To learn more and find outdoor water saving tips visit www.MakeWaterWork.ca.

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* For more information, visit: <http://www.obwb.ca/wsd/key-findings/water-use>