

## Partnerships help OBWB innovate



By Kelowna Capital News

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Because the Okanagan is such a dry valley it is forced to innovate when it comes to water use, commented Anna Warwick Sears, executive-director of the Okanagan Basin Water Board.

She was speaking at the board's annual general meeting in Kelowna Friday, and noted that sustainability is a choice but one that the Okanagan is working toward by working together; forming partnerships between civic government and non-government organizations; senior governments and local governments.

Such partnerships have allowed the OBWB to achieve much in the past few years, and there's more on the agenda for the coming years, she said.

A focus will be to work with the province in the coming year to get a new Water Sustainability Act on the books, she said.

Within the valley, universal water metering and valley-wide water planning are on the agenda, along with floodplain mapping.

Irrigation proficiency remains a concern with limited supplies of water and the percentage of it that is used on maintaining green lawns.

Source protection to maintain water quality, and communication and education to inform the public is also a top priority, she said.

The Okanagan faces increasing challenges to its water supply with aging infrastructure and heavier rainstorms, a growing population, so increasing demand for water; as well as more uncertainty because of climate change.

Drought and the potential for invasive species, such as the threatening zebra and quagga mussels, are also issues which make it essential that the valley make good use of partnerships to overcome, she said.

She pointed to last year's award from Canada's premiers for the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council, a technical advisory

committee to the OBWB, as an example of the regard with which the board's 'partnerships' are viewed.

It is made up of 26 agencies concerned with water, ranging from ranchers and farmers to First Nations and academics.

"Partnerships are key in everything we do," she said.

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