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Software to help monitor groundwater use on farms

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Farmers throughout B.C. will soon have a tool to report their water use.

The Okanagan Basin Water Board has secured a \$50,000 grant to beef up computer software it has developed for municipal water utilities to register the amount of water they are drawing with the BC Water Use Reporting Centre.

Updating the software for the agricultural sector, so farmers with large licences can use the tool as well, means anyone with a large water licence will be able to meet the new water regulations expected next year as a result of the 2014 Water Sustainability Act.

"When groundwater licensing comes in next year, anyone who is using groundwater for agriculture is going to have to report their water use as part of their licensing," explained Anna Warwick Sears, executive director of the Okanagan Basin Water Board.

The tool is being developed to meet local needs, but will be made available provincewide.

The new system applies some of the technology developed for the Agricultural Water Demand Model, a project dovetailed with the OBWB and B.C. Ministry of Agriculture's crop mapping initiative, to help farmers hone in on their exact usage.

"A lot of farmers have multiple water sources or they don't have meters or they have to do some kind of calculation they might be using based on their electricity that's running through their pump," Warwick Sears explained.

This system will eliminate the guessing and much of the hassle.

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