

Okanagan Basin Water Board terms extended to four years

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The Okanagan Basin Water Board has given its water stewardship council a third mandate, extending the term to four years, in line with the new four-year terms for municipal councils.

The stewardship council handles their water governance functions, acting like a technical advisory committee with experts up and down the valley converging to help ensure as much information on water, water use, and water research as possible is provided to government decision makers.

Thursday afternoon, the group approved three committees to deal with groundwater, water pricing and environmental flow needs; and they will meet to set further recommendations for projects to pursue.

The group's flagship projects—those already underway—are:

- investigating source water and working toward providing better source water protection
- working on water governance and providing the information needed as the province writes the regulations intended to enact the new Water Sustainability Act
- writing a Wetlands Strategy, compiling all data on Okanagan wetlands and setting a course for the best way to preserve these sensitive habitats

This final project proved a point of discussion.

"Wetlands are a subsection of a broader issue, so we may want to broaden the discussion to have land use and other land use issues discussed," said Nelson Jatel, OBWB water stewardship director.

Thursday's meeting touched on whether a shift from dealing solely with the wetlands to land use in general might not be prudent given the wide variety of issues land use creates, from development to agriculture to water treatment.

Water governance is one of three mandates for the water board. The OBWB also oversees Eurasian Watermilfoil removal and water quality improvement, including sewage facilities grants.

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