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Okanagan Water Board Offers Funds for Strategic Water Projects

By Okanagan Basin Water Board

KELOWNA – The Okanagan Basin Water Board is now accepting applications to its 2015 Water Conservation and Quality Improvement (WCQI) Grant Program.

The program, in its ninth year, has \$300,000 available for projects that conserve water in the Okanagan or improve its quality. Eligible recipients include non-profit community groups, local governments (regional districts or municipalities), and irrigation or improvement districts. Successful applicants can receive up to \$30,000 for their project. The grants are distributed according to the percentage of tax each region pays into the program. This year there is \$56,850 available to the North Okanagan, \$179,310 to the Central Okanagan, and \$63,840 to the South Okanagan.

Last year, the Water Board conducted a comprehensive review of all previous grants and created a new grant database at www.obwb.ca/wcqi_project/. "The projects were organized into 18 categories from Drought Planning to Xeriscape," explained OBWB Office and Project Manager James Littlely, adding that the Board of Directors has chosen eight categories for special consideration during this grant cycle. These include: Drought Planning, Groundwater, Irrigation, Metering, Restoration, Source Protection, Water System Improvement (Quantity and Quality), and Water Flow Monitoring.

"Projects in these categories really address some of the Board's priority areas from the 2014-2019 Strategic Plan," said Littlely. "They also complement projects that OBWB staff are currently working on and close some of the gaps in the valley-wide management of water."

Still, the OBWB encourages applications in all conservation and quality improvement categories, he added, noting "the application process is straightforward, and this year all the forms are available online." On average, 20 projects are funded per year. In the past eight years, since the program began, the OBWB has awarded \$2.9 million to 179 projects worth more than \$18 million.

Earlier this fall, the three Okanagan regional districts renewed their commitment to fund this program for four more years.

This year's grant application deadline is 4 p.m. Friday, February 6, 2015. The complete program guide and application forms can be found at www.obwb.ca/wcqi.

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