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# Water sustainability crucial



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As the demand for water quantity and quality increases, the way we plan for water sustainability will matter.

The Polis Project on Ecological Governance at the University of Victoria suggests that solutions for sustainable water supply will require the broader social and cultural contexts that shape attitude and behaviors – not just focusing on the supply but the people that use it. So, instead of assuming there is an endless water supply or dreaming about new technologies to harness water, the solution is to manage demands, increase efficiencies and instill conservation ethics.

In the Greater Vernon area we rely on two primary surface sources, Duteau Creek which is the largest water licence and Kalamalka Lake. Other sources such as King Edward Lake (Deer Creek), Goose Lake and groundwater supplies supplement the system especially during the summer peak demand. There are small licenses on Okanagan Lake that supply specific areas.

Understanding the on-going changes in supply and demand due to increasing population, agricultural needs and climate change is especially critical in lean snow years. Greater Vernon Water installed three new hydrometric stations in 2008 to record the flow of creeks to upland storage reservoirs plus two new snow courses to measure the probable available water to be captured during spring melt or freshet. A Drought Management Plan was completed in 2007

and the responses to the plan are being implemented at this time.

Managing water demands is often linked to the price of water. Pricing water too low can encourage wasteful use. The installation of water meters has given the ability to provide a user pay rate. In the past a flat rate was applied to users and therefore there was no incentive to conserve water. Further to pricing there are a number of ways a community can work towards sustainability; Ensure regulatory policies such as irrigation restrictions and building and landscape standards or bylaws mandate more efficient water use; Encourage the installation of efficient fixtures and appliances (toilets, showers, washers) in your home, and water efficient landscaping to reduce consumption; Check and fix leaks; Implement outreach and education programs to engage and inspire citizens to permanently change behavior.

To ensure water sustainability we encourage residents to become informed and involved. March 22 to 27th is World Water Week. There are many activities planned by UBC Okanagan and the Okanagan Basin Water Board.

On Monday, a public water panel forum is being held at Manteo, 3762 Lakeshore Rd, Kelowna from 10:30 a.m. to noon. Robert Sandford, the chair of the United Nations International Decade "Water for Life," will be presenting at the Penticton Trade and Convention Centre, Salon B — 273 Power Street, Penticton as the keynote speaker for UBC Okanagan's World Water Day 2010.

On Tuesday, Robert Sandford will be speaking on "Water Ethics" at UBC Okanagan's lecture ballroom from 11 a.m. to noon. This will be part of the World Water Week events at the University.

On Thursday, a drought response planning workshop is being held by the Ministry of Environment and Friday, the Okanagan Basin Water Board will be launching phase two of the supply and demand study of the Okanagan watershed.

Renee Clark is a water quality technologist with the North Okanagan Regional District.

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