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## Partners jump into water projects with both feet

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The Okanagan Basin Water Board tries to bring together as many partners as possible through its annual water conservation and quality improvement grants.

The \$176,400 in nine grants to the Central Okanagan are a perfect example. The Okanagan Xeriscape Association will work with Valley nurseries to ensure drought-tolerant plants are available and enhance educational efforts with its \$30,000 grant.

A section of Joe Rich Creek will be restored at a cost of \$17,000 to enhance water quality through a partnership of landowners, the farmland riparian interface stewardship program and environmental farm plan.

West Kelowna will lay crushed limestone in a man-made canal as a trial to try to improve water quality in reservoirs. A number of water purveyors have expressed interest in the technique.

All the data on foreshore mapping and an aquatic habitat in Okanagan Lake will be compiled to help direct development to less sensitive foreshore areas.

Kelowna will develop a \$25,000 drinking water source protection plan which could be used by other communities with large lake intakes.

Irrigation systems in city parks will be assessed for condition and efficiency for \$17,500, and a \$17,500 study conducted on grey-water recycling.

The Okanagan goose management program will receive \$10,000 for a public outreach and educational program.

In the South Okanagan (\$65,100 in seven grants), City of Penticton and Okanagan-Similkameen Regional District staff will work with Fortis and Terasen to conduct a \$15,000 environmental audit.

The pilot project will involve the city expanding its water audit for commercial, industrial and institutional customers to reduce water consumption. At the same time, the city will conduct an energy audit for the same customers with the aim of implementing conservation measures.

A \$7,000 grant for the Osoyoos Lake Water Quality Society and \$7,000 to the Lake Country Environmental Society will create a watershed report card to assess overall watershed health.

The results of these first projects of their kind in the Okanagan can be used as a template for watersheds throughout the Valley.

The Okanagan Nation Alliance will receive \$8,300 for improvements to the Okanagan River to enhance fish passage and habitat. West Bench Irrigation District will use \$4,800 to produce a xeriscape manual for large lots and Okanagan

Falls Irrigation District will create a \$15,000 plan to protect drinking water sources.

In the North Okanagan, Armstrong will develop a \$25,000 water source assessment and protection plan. Greater Vernon Water will track bacterial sources in Kalamalka Lake for \$18,000 and two sections of Coldstream Creek will be restored for \$15,500.

For the fifth consecutive year, the Okanagan Basin Water Board was flooded with applications. With \$300,000 available, there were 37 submissions with requests totalling almost \$754,000.

“The interest in this program is phenomenal. It just grows each year,” said grants administrator Genevieve Dunbar.

“There’s a real thirst for projects that address water protection today and into the future. It’s so gratifying to be able to support fantastic – and important – projects in this Valley that may otherwise have sat idle or taken longer to complete.”

Funding is split between the three Okanagan regional districts based on their contributions to the program.