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Money for UBCO chair



John Janmaat has been nominated for the new B. C. regional innovation chair in water resources and ecosystem management at UBCO.

*Sean Connor/
Capital News*

By [Judie Steeves - Kelowna Capital News](#)

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For a change, the Okanagan Basin Water Board announced Friday it was giving funding rather than receiving it.

In making the announcement, OBWB chairman Stu Wells noted all three regional districts that make up the board unanimously approved the expenditure which will amount to \$500,000 over the next five years toward endowment for a chair in water resources and ecosystem

management at UBCO. It will cost an estimated 50 cents per household throughout the valley.

And, it will also leverage total funding of five times that amount, including \$1.25 million from the province's Leading Edge Endowment Fund for the regional innovation chairs.

Bernie Bauer, associate provost at UBCO and chairman of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council, said he's been involved since 2004 in attempting to get this research chair funded and occupied, with a mandate to develop research on water resources.

The committee has nominated John Janmaat, associate professor of economics at the university, for the chair, after interviewing four candidates for the position.

Janmaat is interested in research to improve water use in the valley, and is now working on research into how Okanagan irrigators manage the drought risk. Data from that survey hasn't yet been analyzed, he said.

Janmaat is also currently heading up a survey into household water use in Kelowna, to better understand the factors that influence water use.

He explained he is looking at whether users in different water supply areas are influenced differently in their water use habits with the idea of discovering whether such things as metering and then charging based on the volume of use is effective at reducing use.

Janmaat's interests are in the areas of water pricing and valuation; the issues around figuring out how to get various levels of government to work together to manage water; and how to get a better understanding of First Nations issues regarding access to water.

He said an advisory committee of stakeholders will help guide research by the new chair.

The announcement was made at the second public annual general meeting of the OBWB, but which also celebrated the 40th anniversary of creation of the valley-wide board.

In opening the meeting, Wells commented there is a very effective board in place right now that understands the importance of a regional approach to water issues.

"They're take the 'big picture' stance, despite some controversy about source protection," he commented.

"We pinched a few toes, but the board took a stand on that issue," he said.

Many of the valley's mayors attended the meeting, along with Kelowna-Lake Country MP Ron

Cannan, who commented the OBWB has been successful because of its partnerships, not only amongst local governments, but also with senior government, various departments and ministries and community groups such as the Okanagan Xeriscape Association. A crucial partner is the Okanagan Nation Alliance, he added.

Executive-director Anna Warwick Sears said the board's work has expanded from its first project of controlling the invasive alien aquatic weed, Eurasian milfoil, to today's grants program for water conservation and quality improvement, sewage facilities grants, water science and research such as resulted in a water supply and demand study completed this year for the valley, and research work into endocrine disruptors in our water supply.

In addition, the board now has a technical advisory committee, the Okanagan Water Stewardship Committee which makes recommendations on a variety of issues to the political OBWB.

Most recently, the OBWB launched a website called Okanagan WaterWise to get valley residents involved in water conservation and protection efforts.

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