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Climate change workshop

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Extreme weather patterns, including more frequent flooding, is one of the projected outcomes of climate change. Managing stormwater effectively will be a critical adaptation tool.

“We’ve seen the incredible damage that extreme storm events and flooding can cause,” said Anna Warwick Sears, executive director of the Okanagan Basin Water Board, pointing to the recent devastation on B.C.’s west coast.

“We’ve seen people displaced, roads washed out, and damage to infrastructure.

“Here in the Okanagan, severe storms like these are expected with climate change.

“A lot of work has been done in recent years to develop effective practices and tools to address heavy rainfall, but the Okanagan—and many B.C. communities—have not kept up.”

The Okanagan Basin Water Board and the B.C. Water & Waste Association (BCWWA) are hoping this will change.

The two agencies are organizing a workshop, From Rain to Resource: Managing Stormwater in a Changing Climate, Oct. 28 and 29 at the Best Western Inn in Kelowna.

The event is geared to those whose work touches on stormwater management, including planners, engineers, and landscape architects.

But it will also appeal to those who develop and adopt stormwater policy, such as senior municipal staff and elected officials.

“We have spent a lot of time in the province, talking about and preparing for increased

droughts as a result of climate change. But we also have to prepare for bigger storms," noted Warwick Sears.

This includes discussion about appropriate hillside development, the importance of wetlands in preventing flooding, and ensuring effective infrastructure.

"Stormwater management is both a quantity and quality issue," added Daisy Foster, CEO of the BCWWA.

"We are concerned with the amount of run-off, but also pollutants in stormwater that enter the receiving waters, and the negative impacts they can create."

The Rain to Resource workshop will look at innovative developments in rainwater management and how barriers to change have been overcome in communities in B.C. and beyond.

A tradeshow will also be held and highlight companies who are at the forefront in developing innovative rainwater management technologies.

Day 1 of the workshop will feature technical presentations that focus on best practices and tools for rainwater management, illustrated through case studies.

Day 2 will open with MLA John Slater, parliamentary secretary for Water Supply and Allocation, speaking on how we can integrate rainwater management practices and tools to adapt to climate change, and the policies that support them.

Day 2 will also feature keynote speaker, Brock Dolman, director of the California-based WATER Institute.

Dolman has been featured on many radio programs and in award-winning films, including The 11th Hour by Leonardo DiCaprio.

Early registration rates are available until the end of this week.

For more information and to register, check out the website bcwwa.org/seminars/RtoR.htm.

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