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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WATER BOARD FISHING FOR PROJECTS THAT CONSERVE OR IMPROVE OKANAGAN WATER

Kelowna, B.C. – A total of \$300,000 is up for grabs as the Okanagan Basin Water Board opens its call for applications to its 2011 Water Conservation and Quality Improvement (WCQI) Grant Program.

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 purpose of the grant program is to enhance water quality and conserve water quantity throughout the Okanagan Valley, noted Anna Warwick Sears, Executive Director for the Water Board (OBWB).

“This program exemplifies our slogan of ‘One Valley. One Water.’” she explained. “Everyone who lives in the Okanagan, whether you live in Armstrong or in Osoyoos, is interconnected through our one water supply. What happens to the water in the north affects the water quality in the south. We also live in a dry climate and have less freshwater available per person. Yet, homeowners use more than twice the Canadian average – this affects quantity.” This program funds projects that tackle these important issues, added Warwick Sears.

Another important element of this program is its focus on collaboration. Over the years, several of these grants have resulted in ongoing partnerships. “We’ve seen networks of expertise built. And, we’ve seen practical approaches to water conservation and water quality improvement created that can be applied valley-wide,” she continued.

For example, City of Penticton’s environmental audit pilot project this past year helped business owners reduce water and energy consumption – a project that could be repeated in other communities. Another example is Okanagan Xeriscape Association’s demonstration garden, providing examples of gardens that require less water and are more appropriate for the region’s dry climate. Greater Vernon Water and Regional District of North Okanagan studied bacterial contamination sources on Kalamalka Lake, helping water managers reduce future contamination and providing benefit to the valley.

“Like past years, we’re looking for applications that think outside the box and clearly demonstrate benefits for the entire Okanagan region,” added Warwick Sears.

The deadline for applications is 4 p.m. on Friday, February 21, 2011. All grant applicants must submit a council or board resolution from local government, endorsing their application. The application and further information can be found at www.obwb.ca.

In the past five years, the WCQI Grant Program has granted over \$1.7 million to 96 projects.

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