

TAKE THE POLL

The OBWB recently upgraded its water management system. Do you plan to take more steps toward water conservation in your home?

Yes  635
No  600

Total votes: 1235

Will you do more to conserve water?



by Grant Scott - Story: 59964
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"You can't manage what you can't measure"

With those words, Bruce Wilson of Spot Solutions summed up why his company teamed up with the Okanagan Basin Water Board and both the Federal and Provincial government to develop a revolutionary new software tool known as "SWURT".

The Streamlined Water Use Reporting Tool was unveiled at the Holiday Inn in West Kelowna Friday morning.

"We're extremely pleased to be launching this made in the Okanagan web based tool." says Dr. Anna Warwick Sears, Executive Director for the water board.

"SWURT will help our water utilities keep an ongoing record of how much water we are using. This is critical for managing our water supplies and preparing for the shortages that are expected with a growing population and climate change."

The Board also says their data shows that the average Okanagan resident uses 675 litres of water per day, more than twice the national average of 329 litres per day. This despite the fact that the Okanagan has the least amount of water available per capita in Canada.

With high usage rates and growing demand, water utilities across the Okanagan realized they have to work together to manage the valley's limited water resources.

SWURT will replace the current system of water utilities manually writing reports and faxing them to the province.

"It's a dynamic tool that makes financial sense," says Wilson. "It consolidates data from all water users to help protect water sources, including Okanagan Lake, and will provide more information to the province more accurately."

Kelowna-Lake Country MP Ron Cannan had praise for the OBWB initiative.

"The internet, on a constant basis, is part of our livelihood. You can't leave home without the Blackberry. I applaud the leadership and innovation of the Okanagan Basin Water Board for using technology for making this system more efficient, more effective and obviously residents of the community will be the beneficiaries."

If this pilot project is successful in the Okanagan, it will soon be used in the rest of B.C. "The staff in Victoria are certainly looking forward to seeing the results of this project," says John Slater, B.C.'s Parliamentary Secretary for Water Supply and Allocation.

Kelowna Lake Country MLA Norm Letnick says SWURT will also help compare the levels of usage for both agricultural and residential customers.

"A big part of this is to continue to provide information to everyone in the Okanagan. We're all part of the same system, so whatever we can do to continue the reduction in the use of that water, that precious resource that we need for agriculture, that we need to keep in our reservoirs to fight those fires that we have now and then, to fight the droughts, is a good thing."

"This program will help us measure water use in the Okanagan, and hopefully that will translate into each of us individually being more careful with our own water use."

SWURT was developed with support from the Canada-BC Building Canada Fund and Environment Canada at a cost of just under \$250,000.

More than 25 Okanagan water utilities were consulted on this project, along with the B.C. Ministries of Environment and Health Services as well as the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural development.