

Water evaporation study underway



Environment Canada staff prepare to place one of three computerized buoys in Okanagan Lake which will be used to measure water evaporation levels in different weather conditions over the next three years.

Contributed

By [Barry Gerding - Kelowna Capital News](#)

Published: **August 02, 2011 5:00 AM**

A groundbreaking three-year study on how much Okanagan Lake water is lost due to evaporation was initiated last week.

The \$3-million project, a partnership between the Okanagan Basin Water Board and Environment Canada, is intended to answer a puzzle to which little research has been done in the past—how much water is lost off Okanagan Lake through evaporation?

Anna Warwick Sears, executive director of the OBWB, said initial estimates put lake evaporation at one metre per year.

But the Okanagan is known to be a region with water supply challenges so estimates aren't good enough when making decision to effectively manage water resources.

Warwick Sears said by determining the rate of the lake's evaporation water loss, the water board is in a better position to deal with weather and environmental challenges such as drought.

"This is a big science project with a big capital S," she said.

“We are looking at things through this project such as relative humidity over the lake surface, intensity of the sunshine, how evaporation of the lake is affected by those elements as well as different temperatures and wind levels.”

Collecting the data will be three large yellow buoys equipped with special computer monitoring software.

The buoys are three metres (10 feet) tall and 1.8m (six feet) wide, which will be attached to navigation buoys.

They will be located in the lake, one near Carrs Landing, one off West Kelowna and another closer to Summerland.

Warwick Sears said the three buoy monitoring stations have previously been in use by Environment Canada in the Great Lakes chain and on lakes in the prairies.

She said it’s hoped the data collected on Okanagan Lake can be adapted for other lakes in Canada as well.

“There is hope this will be a test case for other lakes in dry environments elsewhere in Canada,” she said. “This is a very, very good thing for us to be able to get done.”

bgerding@kelownacapnews.com