

Water board proves resourceful

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

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A total of \$675,000 was received from senior governments in the past year for local water projects, one indication of how successful the unique model of the Okanagan Basin Water Board is at getting things done.

Executive director Anna Warwick Sears was reporting at the annual general meeting of the OBWB Friday, reviewing programs from the past year and looking forward.

“We’re well-structured to pool money from local government and to draw funding from senior government,” she commented.

The board is made up of representatives from the three regional districts in the basin, the Okanagan Nation Alliance, Water Supply Association of B.C. and Water Stewardship Council, a technical advisory committee to the board.

Instituted in 1968, the board provides leadership in a time of change, Warwick Sears told those attending the AGM; collaborative governance, which is ideal during change.

“The Okanagan is recognized as a unique ecosystem in Canada which could face serious water shortages,” explained Warwick Sears.

Services are provided through its water management program, which includes an annual grant program to encourage improved quality and water conservation, the sewage facilities assistance grant program and Eurasian Watermilfoil control program.

In collaboration with Natural Resources Canada and the provincial environment ministry, the board is working on a major hydrologic connectivity study to help evaluate how water use by one community affects downstream water availability.

Groundwater monitoring wells throughout the valley are also being constructed to fill gaps in data about the ‘hidden’ water stored beneath the ground.

It's a partnership involving four senior government ministries and local governments as well.

Stormwater management has been a focus for the board this past year, with a two-day workshop called From Rain to Resource which showcased speakers describing innovative new ways to manage stormwater more sustainably.

A homeowner's guide to best management of stormwater is also being put together by the board.

The water board is very involved in World Water Week activities every year and this year held an online contest to involve kids in learning more about Okanagan water.

In addition to the five regular office staff, the board brought in a student this summer who put together a number of videos on the board's work, which can now be viewed on the website.

In the coming year, Warwick Sears said the OBWB is working with Environment Canada on a lake evaporation study to determine how much water is lost from the lake's surface each year, as well as expanding streamflow monitoring.

Drought plans throughout the basin are also being put together, in order to reduce the chance of conflicts when water is in short supply.

The next big event is the Osoyoos Lake Water Science Forum Sept. 18 to 20, where scientists from both sides of the border will discuss with the public studies which will become part of the decision made in the next couple of years by the International Joint Commission on control of the basin's water at the border.

That's being co-sponsored with the IJC, governments on both side of the border and the Osoyoos Indian Band Development Corporation.

For details, go to the website: www.obwb.ca

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