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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WATER BOARD GRANTS AVAILABLE FOR PROJECTS THAT CONSERVE OR IMPROVE WATER

Kelowna, B.C. – The Okanagan Basin Water Board is now accepting applications to its 2012 Water Conservation and Quality Improvement (WCQI) Grant Program.

The program, in its seventh year, has \$300,000 available for projects that conserve water or improve its quality. Eligible recipients include non-profit community groups, local governments (regional districts or municipalities), and irrigation or improvement districts. Successful applicants can receive up to a maximum of \$30,000 for their project.

The focus of the program is to support projects that benefit the entire Okanagan valley. “Everyone who lives in the Okanagan, whether you live in Armstrong or in Osoyoos, is connected to each other by water – this includes the waters in our streams, lakes and in the ground. What happens to water quality in the north affects the water in the south,” explains Grants Administrator Genevieve Dunbar. “We also live in a dry climate and have less freshwater available per person in the Okanagan, yet, homeowners use more than twice the Canadian average – this affects quantity.” This program funds projects that tackle these important issues, added Dunbar.

Another important element of this program is its focus on collaboration. Several of these grants have resulted in ongoing partnerships. “Since the grant program began, we’ve seen networks of expertise form around valley-wide projects,” Dunbar noted, adding that practical approaches to water conservation and water quality improvement have also been replicated across the valley. “And, ultimately, we’ve seen water conserved and quality improved.”

For example, an OBWB grant last year helped the District of Peachland reestablish a stream flow monitoring station on Peachland Creek to gather water quantity information which will contribute to valley-wide data. Another project was a Parks Beautification Project in Okanagan Falls which included installation of an efficient irrigation system and a redesign of plant beds to native and drought tolerant varieties. This project provides Okanagan residents with examples of landscaping that are more appropriate for the region’s dry climate. An example of water quality improvement is District of West Kelowna’s completion of their Water Systems Master Plan, helping ensure safe clean water to their residents and protecting water quality valley-wide.

“Like past years, we’re looking for applications that have an innovative approach and clearly demonstrate benefits for the entire valley,” added Dunbar.

This year's application deadline is 4 p.m. Friday, February 24, 2012. Information on the application process, including the need for a board or council resolution of support, as well as the application, can be found at www.obwb.ca/wcqi

In the past six years, the WCQI Grant Program has granted over \$2 million throughout the Okanagan.

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MEDIA CONTACT: Corinne Jackson, OBWB – Communications and Research Coordinator
Office: 250-469-6271
Mobile: 250-718-7249
E-mail: Corinne.Jackson@obwb.ca