

KELOWNA

Water world: The Okanagan shortage

by Jennifer Zielinski - Story: 72675
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Photo: Contributed

Don't be deceived by the beautiful lakes around the Okanagan, there is actually less water here per person than anywhere else in the country.

Corinne Jackson with the [Okanagan Basin Water Board](#)(OBWB) says, despite the water shortage residents in the Okanagan are using two times as much water than the average Canadian.

"The average person in the Okanagan uses 675 litres per day compared to 329 (litres of water per person per day) in Canada. Which is significant when you think of the fact that first of all we don't have as much (water) as the rest of Canada and ... our population is continuing to grow."

Jackson says Okanagan Lake is only replenished, on average, 1.5 metres a year so only 1.5 metres can be drawn from the lake.

"You can't draw down any more than that, because if you do you would end up with a situation like Lake Mead. They have been drawing down that lake, and it's at a point now where they are mining the lake and it's being drawn down faster than it can be replenished. "

However, Jackson says more people in the Okanagan are becoming aware of the issues surrounding water shortages and this week they will have the chance to learn more.

As part of Canada Water Week, individuals, organizations and governments from across Canada are encouraged to celebrate.

The event is held annually during the third week of March to coincide with the UN World Water Day on March 22. During the week, Canadians will participate in fun as well as educational events.

In Kelowna, the OBWB is inviting the community to participate in a number of activities for all ages.

The OBWB will be hosting a free public forum to discuss the topic of 'Water for food in the Okanagan and beyond', as part of the UN World Water Day theme of water and food security

The event will be held March 20 at Summerhill Pyramid Winery from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

The forum, that focuses in part on [permaculture](#) a sustainable farming method, will begin with a panel discussion.

Some of the speakers include:

- **Yehalem Metiku** with the BC interior-based non-profit Partners in the Horn of Africa – bringing an international perspective to the issue of water and food security based on his on-the-ground experiences working in Ethiopia
- **Ted van der Gulik** with BC Ministry of Agriculture and vice-chair of the OBWB's Okanagan Water Stewardship Council – providing a BC and Okanagan perspective on water and food security
- **John Wagner**, anthropology professor at UBC Okanagan, who has done significant research on Okanagan water issues
- BC Permacultural's **Javan Bernakevitch** and fellow permaculturalist **Michael Nickels** (from Saltspring Island), and; the OBWB's Anna Warwick Sears, tying all the pieces together and bringing an Okanagan Water Board perspective.

Other events include:

- UBC-O will also be hosting a keynote speaker event with Yehalem Metiku
March 21 at 7 p.m.
- The Okanagan Institute is hosting a discussion "[Wild Blue Wonder: Unraveling the Water Quandary](#)"
March 22, 5 p.m. to 7p.m. at The Bohemian Cafe
- [Okanagan WaterWise Challenge](#), a contest geared to Okanagan classrooms, inviting young people – from Kindergarten to Grade 12 – to submit a multi-media entry (video, song, posters, etc). The theme is “Be WaterWise: Save water for what matters...”
The entry deadline is May 4

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