

SOUTH OKANAGAN

Funds trickle in to help Osoyoos Lake

*by Grant Scott - Story: 76568
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An international effort to improve the water quality of Osoyoos Lake is getting financial help thanks to last fall's Osoyoos Lake Water Science Forum.

Two groups, one in Canada and the other from the United States, will receive equal grant funding to improve the lake's water.



File photo: Grant Scott

Dr. Anna Warwick Sears, Executive Director of the OBWB.

“The committee was very pleased to be able to direct the funds this way,” says Anna Warwick-Sears, Executive Director of the OBWB.

Last September an international forum was held to discuss the future of the lake, which straddles the Canada/U.S. border.

The discussion brought together scientists, townspeople, agencies and politicians from the U.S. and Canada.

On Wednesday, the forum steering committee, including representatives from the International Joint Commission (IJC), Environment Canada, the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB), Washington State's Okanagan Conservation District, the Town of Osoyoos, and the Oroville-based Lake Osoyoos Association, voted to direct the proceeds of the conference, \$25,000, to water quality improvement projects for the lake.

The Town of Osoyoos will receive \$12,500 to provide grants for projects on the Canadian side, and the Lake Osoyoos Association (a registered charity) will manage \$12,500 for projects on the U.S. side. This is a one-time funding opportunity.

"Osoyoos Lake spans both sides of the border, so any actions that are taken on the lake affect the people, the animals, and the natural areas of the lake as a whole. It was a unanimous decision that the funds be shared to improve lake quality on both sides of the border, recognizing that all will benefit from the work," says Warwick-Sears.

Interest in cross-border collaboration is especially high this summer, as both countries enter into public consultation for the renewal of the Osoyoos Lake Operating Orders, under the Boundary Waters Treaty which expire in February 2013.

The Orders spell out rules of operation for lake levels in summer and winter, and how these change in drought years.

A report with recommendations from the International Osoyoos Lake Board of Control will be posted on the IJC website within the coming month, and public meetings are scheduled for July 24 and 25 in Oroville and Osoyoos, respectively.

The report is expected to address drought and flood control issues, climate change concerns, and the need to protect the health of the sockeye salmon run.

A full 80 per-cent of the sockeye returning to the Columbia River Basin are born in the Okanagan system.

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