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Okanagan Basin Water Board Breaks Ground with Toolkit to Help Communities Conserve Water By Okanagan Basin Water Board

KELOWNA – The Okanagan Basin Water Board is once again leading the way with today's release of their Topsoil Bylaws Toolkit, providing local governments in this valley and across B.C. with tools to ensure greater water conservation in our communities.

"Topsoil is not the first thing that comes to people's minds when we talk about water conservation but it's the soil that holds the water," explained Anna Warwick Sears, OBWB's Executive Director. "We've all seen what happens when lawns are rolled out over bare gravel or clay. Residents end up using tremendous amounts of high-quality drinking water on their lawn to keep the grass green. Good soil increases water retention and is an effective tool to manage rainwater and reduce water pollution."

The guide was a joint effort of the OBWB and the Water Sustainability Partnership, with funding from the B.C. Ministry of Community, Sport, and Cultural Development. The Partnership brought expertise in water, soil, and the experiences of local governments in the Lower Mainland. A legal expert developed the policy guidelines and examples. And the OBWB pulled it all together, writing and developing the toolkit.

"With expected population growth and as our climate becomes more variable – with more frequent, heavier storms and longer, hotter drought, wise rainwater management becomes even more important. A well-designed landscape with healthy topsoil helps communities through both wet and dry times," added Warwick Sears. "Changes are needed. This toolkit can help communities get there."

"It's the soil that makes the difference," noted Ted van der Gulik, senior engineer with the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and one of the technical advisors on the toolkit. "A lot of time and effort has gone into creating this document. It contains land-use planning and regulatory tools available to local government, sample policies and bylaws, and more. We're very excited to be getting this out into the hands of B.C.'s elected officials and local government staff, helping communities in the Okanagan and around the province adopt WaterWise principles to ensure a healthy, sustainable future."

The Topsoil Bylaws Toolkit can be found on the OBWB's website at: www.obwb.ca. The toolkit is a companion to the OBWB's Groundwater Bylaws Toolkit, released in 2009 and available at www.obwb.ca/groundwater_bylaws_toolkit. It also supplements the 2007 Green Bylaw Toolkit, created by a number of our partners and available at: www.greenbylaws.ca.