



## KELOWNA

### Board discusses milfoil and mussels

*by Deborah Pfeiffer - Story: 84248  
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The B.C. Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations staff attended this week's Okanagan Basin Water Board meeting to discuss its permitting process for milfoil control on Okanagan lakes. Following extensive discussion, the OBWB has been granted approval to winter rototill at all of its regular work sites except one at Kin Beach because live mussels of a rare species were found there.

Summer harvesting at this particular spot will still be done. Directors urged FLNRO to make milfoil control a priority and reduce the regulatory burden on the Water Board, recognizing the program's importance to ensuring a healthy water ecosystem, to tourism and public enjoyment.

In other highlights from the meeting, Lisa Scott, from the Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society, reported on public outreach efforts this past summer regarding invasive zebra and quagga mussels, and plans for 2013.

The OBWB is concerned about the potential introduction of these mussels into Okanagan waters, the impact they will have on the ecosystem of our lakes, the tremendous damage to infrastructure, and the cost to fix. Clean-up efforts are costing cities in Eastern Canada and in the U.S. millions each year. The OBWB noted it would support the society's continued outreach efforts in 2013 and do complementary outreach as well.

The Board also approved a call for applications to its Water Conservation and Quality Improvement Grant Program. The program funds projects that provide valley-wide benefit and are available to non-profit community groups, local governments, and irrigation or improvement districts. Successful applicants can receive up to \$30,000. Deadline for applications is Feb. 22, 2013 at 4 p.m. Full details are at [www.obwb.ca/wcqi/](http://www.obwb.ca/wcqi/).

The board was given an update on the BC Water Use Reporting Centre (BC WURC) - a web-tool developed by the OBWB, the Province of B.C. and Environment Canada. The tool allows water utilities to report their water use online, track their water use and use by other utilities, and will ensure the region can be more responsive to shortages.

Since its launch in March 2011, 16 major Okanagan water utilities have joined and more are expected. The tool is also being used by the Nanaimo Regional District. For more information, visit <http://www.obwb.ca/bcwaterusereporting/>.

The OBWB is in discussions with the International Joint Commission and the Town of Osoyoos about the development of a new interactive webpage to help international Osoyoos Lake residents monitor and anticipate lake level changes. The proposed project is seen as a way to improve communication with Zosel and Penticton dam operators, to reduce problems for milfoil equipment, boats, and moorage.