

KELOWNA

Water council flush with pride over award

by Wayne Moore - Story: 89245
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Photo: Contributed - Corinne Jackson

In recognition of World Water Day and Canada Water Week, the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council was presented with the first-ever Excellence in Water Stewardship Award for British Columbia.

The presentation was made Friday afternoon.

"The Okanagan Water Stewardship Council exemplifies the World Water Day theme of 'water co-operation' perfectly," says Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations Steve Thomson who presented the award on behalf of Minister of Environment Terry Lake.

"The council's membership is made up of more than two-dozen volunteer representatives from a wide range of interests who come together to work as a team to find effective solutions to benefit everyone in the Okanagan."

The Excellence in Water Stewardship Award was established by the Council of the Federation - a collaboration of Canada's provincial and territorial premiers - to recognize outstanding achievement, innovative practice and leadership in the area of water stewardship.

The award is presented to organizations, partnerships, businesses, institutions and community groups in each province and territory across Canada, including British Columbia.

"Fresh water is one of the most precious natural resources we have," says Lake.

"While the BC government continues to act on 'Living Water Smart' - which is our vision and plan for keeping our water healthy and secure for the future - what the Province does is only part of the solution. Local and regional groups like the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council are stepping up and demonstrating leadership throughout the province."

The council, which is a technical advisory body of the Okanagan Basin Water Board, was chosen from 16 BC nominations.

Nominees were evaluated based on the contribution of their project toward the Council of the Federation Water Charter objectives, including leadership, innovation, collaboration, water conservation and the achievement of measurable results.

The Okanagan Water Stewardship Council exemplifies these objectives by bringing about demonstrable change through leading-edge research, decision-making tools and plan development.

All of this is done in a highly collaborative environment with a broad spectrum of interests who don't always see eye-to-eye.

"Stewardship in the Okanagan is a balancing act among various, often competing, interests," says Okanagan Basin Water Board water stewardship director Nelson Jatel who is responsible for the council.

"It is essential to build bridges across the different interests in the water sector - including farmers and urban planners, fishers and developers, First Nations, and local and senior governments."

Thomson presented the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council with a glass trophy, a certificate signed by Premier Christy Clark and a \$1,000 honorarium provided by the Council of the Federation.