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## NEWS RELEASE

# CELEBRATING COLLECTIVE IMPACT – 10 YEARS OF WATER FUNDING IN THE OKANAGAN

**Kelowna, B.C.** – Big plans are underway as the Okanagan Basin Water Board and partners prepare to celebrate 10 years of funding through the board’s Water Conservation and Quality Improvement Grant Program. The Water Board, in partnership with the Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program (OCCP) and the South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program (SOSCP), are hosting a one day event “Celebrating Collective Impact” on Nov. 26, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Westbank Lions Community Centre, 2466 Main St., West Kelowna.

Since the grant program began in 2006, more than \$3.2 million has been awarded to 197 projects in the Okanagan, from drought planning to water metering, from wetland restoration to foreshore mapping, xeriscape demonstration gardens and much more. The event will showcase these projects and others, which have helped protect and conserve the waters of the Okanagan, and recognize the achievements of collaborative projects by OCCP and SOSCP partners.

“While individual projects have been recognized over the years, the collective impact of these efforts has had even greater results,” noted James Littley, OBWB’s Operations and Grants Manager. “After 10 years, it’s time to step back, look at the accomplishments, celebrate them and begin to look forward.”

SOSCP’s Program Manager Bryn White agrees, adding “The Water Board’s WCQI Program has been a valuable resource for communities and organizations to move the needle on water sustainability in this region.” A region that is known to have less water available than anywhere in Canada but where water use is one of the highest in the country, and where there are the greatest number of endangered, threatened and rare species in the province.

“Now is a great time to reflect on the collective impact of this funding and map the steps we need to take for the future,” added White.

Past grant recipients are encouraged to attend, and organizers are also hoping to see some new faces. The event is open to the public, and will be of interest to educators, non-profits, local governments, First Nations, irrigation districts, and other grassroots organizations focussed on water-related projects and protecting the natural environment in the region.

“We’re hoping to attract groups that haven’t applied in the past, but who have a project idea that benefits water in the Okanagan and who may be eligible to apply for funding,” said Littley.

Another key element of the event is to bring in additional water and environmental funders into the Okanagan. “We see this as a great opportunity for funders to see the work that has been done and explore possible new partnerships,” he added.

For Carol Luttmmer, OCCP Coordinator, she also sees this as an opportunity to inspire and continue to build on the important work that has been done. “There are so many people working on significant projects in their own back yards or jurisdictions. In showing that these individual efforts are part of something even bigger, we hope it’s a motivation to continue pushing forward to protect our water and ecosystems here in the Okanagan,” she said.

In addition to hearing about past and ongoing projects, and from potential new funders, the OBWB will announce the call for applications to its 2016 WCQI grant program, and of course, there will be a 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary cake-cutting.

For more information on this FREE event and to register, please visit <http://CelebratingCollectiveImpact.eventbrite.ca>.

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**MEDIA CONTACT:** Corinne Jackson, OBWB – Communications Director  
Office: 250-469-6271 Mobile: 250-718-7249  
E-mail: [corinne.jackson@obwb.ca](mailto:corinne.jackson@obwb.ca)