

West Kelowna NEWS

The future of water

Jennifer Zielinski - Nov 26, 2015 / 7:56 pm



In the last 10 years the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) has awarded \$3.2 million to 197 projects through its Water Conservation and Quality Improvement (WCQI) Grant Program.

The groups behind these efforts, in turn, delivered projects worth more than \$20 million to our valley – projects that have helped conserve and protect water in Canada’s most water-stressed region.

OBWB Chair Doug Findlater said the grant program started in 2006 as a way to build collaborative approaches to address water issues in our region and develop best practices.

"Looking at the results of these efforts on display today, you can see the valley-wide benefits of this program," he said.

Projects include stream restoration work for fish, flood mitigation, and improved ecosystems, xeriscape demonstration gardens, water metering, foreshore inventory mapping, drinking water protection efforts like cattle-fencing, and much more.

Zoe Eyjolfson with the Okanagan Nation Alliance says the OBWB has assisted the non-profit with many projects including the restoration of the Okanagan River in Oliver.

"It is a project that focuses on habitat restoration and returning the creek back to where it was originally, bringing back a lot of the habitat for the fish and providing habitat for fish and wildlife to spawn and migrate."

The restoration started in 2009, with two major phases, supported by approximately \$50,000 from the OBWB for the \$5-million project.

Another initiative funded by the OBWB is the Okanagan Xeriscape Association. Executive director Gwen Steele says funds from the OBWB have helped build a [website](#) for the association, with a searchable plant data base as well as xeriscape demonstration gardens outside the H2O centre in Kelowna.

At an event held Thursday in West Kelowna, funders such as the Real Estate Foundation of BC, RBC Blue Water Project and the National Wetland Conservation Fund were on hand to discuss possible partnerships - bringing additional project dollars into the valley. The event also served as an opportunity for the Water Board to announce the call for WCQI applications for 2016.

Other project categories considered for priority funding will be discussed by the Board of Directors at their December 1 meeting and posted to the grants page on the OBWB website. The complete program guide and application forms can be found at www.obwb.ca/wcqi.

STORY LINK: <http://www.castanet.net/news/West-Kelowna/152763/The-future-of-water>

VIDEO LINK: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nE0Cyz2ib5g>