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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**OKANAGAN MAYORS GATHER & ENCOURAGE WATER
CONSERVATION IN FACE OF WEATHER EXTREMES**

Kelowna, B.C. – As flooding issues remain top of mind in the Okanagan, we are reminded of the extreme weather events seen in our valley and the need for all of us to do our part and prepare. Okanagan mayors came together today to speak with one voice, encouraging residents to prepare their yards for wet and dry years. The gathering comes as the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB)'s Okanagan WaterWise program, and Okanagan municipalities and water utilities, prepare for the launch of their annual residential outdoor water campaign "Make Water Work."

The gathering was held at the UnH2O Demonstration Garden in Kelowna, a great example of what's possible in the Okanagan with little additional water than what nature provides. The event included Okanagan mayors challenging each other – and the residents – to "Take the Make Water Work Challenge" this summer and make a pledge at www.MakeWaterWork.ca.

"Even with this year's historic flooding, communities throughout the Okanagan have watering restrictions now in place, albeit for different reasons than we've seen in recent years," explained OBWB Chair Tracy Gray, also representing the City of Kelowna. "Just as too little precipitation can cause problems, so can too much. Too much water, as we're seeing now, can overwhelm water treatment plants. By conserving, we can help alleviate the pressure on our infrastructure.

"But also, as the summer goes on, and as the temperatures go up and people want to irrigate, we can have issues meeting peak daily demand for water," Gray added. "By following the watering restrictions in your community, you are helping ensure there is enough for everyone – for residents and for farmers."

Now in its 7th year, Make Water Work is aimed at tackling the 2nd highest use of all Okanagan water – residential outdoor use. Tips and tools are provided to increase water awareness and help residents do their part to conserve and use water more effectively and efficiently. One way to do this, promoted as part of Make Water Work and especially relevant this year, is to prepare yards to slow, spread and sink water on site as a conservation method, as well as to reduce stormwater runoff and protect water quality.

"We have been promoting our '[Slow it. Spread it. Sink it! – Okanagan Homeowners Guide](#)' as part of Make Water Work since 2012," added OBWB Communications Director Corinne Jackson, who's also responsible for the Okanagan WaterWise program and its Make Water Work campaign. "This guide, along with the rest of the Make Water Work program, is intended to help residents prepare for the extreme weather events we are seeing in the Okanagan. We hope to help people create resilient landscapes that can handle wet and dry years, and ensure a sustainable water supply for our valley."

As part of that effort, the [Make Water Work Plant Collection](#) was introduced two years ago, developed in partnership with Bylands Nursery and the Okanagan Xeriscape Association to suit the Okanagan's climate and promote WaterWise gardening. Since then, several Okanagan garden centres have joined the effort to promote the collection. This week, as part of the 2017 launch, they are holding "MAKE WATER WORK Week" events. (Find event listing attached.)

"Swan Lake Nurseryland joined the Make Water Work initiative because we recognize that water is a precious resource in the Okanagan valley, and that plants are also an integral part of healthy living," said Kirk Hughes, Swan Lake's manager. "It only makes sense to support an initiative that promotes the integration of water conservation with growing water wise landscapes."

And there is the annual contest. Residents who pledge to conserve at www.MakeWaterWork.ca are entered to win a \$6,000 WaterWise yard upgrade. Plus there are additional prizes to be won. And, as in past years, the community with the most pledges wins the title of “Make Water Work Champions.” Past winners include the Town of Oliver (2014), the City of Armstrong (2015) and the District of Peachland (2016).

Thanks once again to our contest partners: KelownaGardens.com, Bylands Nursery, ProSource Irrigation, and Ecoturf Farms, who are providing more than \$8000 in prizing in-kind.

Those joining Gray in taking the challenge today included: Armstrong Mayor Chris Pieper, Vernon Mayor Akbal Mund, West Kelowna Mayor Doug Findlater, Peachland Mayor Cindy Fortin, and Penticton Mayor Andrew Jakubeit.

Residents can Take the Challenge and enter the contest, find the Make Water Work Plant Collection, the “Slow it. Spread it. Sink it!” guide, and water restrictions for their community, by visiting www.MakeWaterWork.ca.

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Make Water Work in your yard!

**Learn how at our partner garden centres during
MAKE WATER WORK WEEK (June 10-18, 2017):**

North Okanagan

Saturday, June 17	Swan Lake Nursery -Vernon	10 AM—12 PM
Saturday, June 17	Blue Mountain Nursery - Armstrong	1 PM—3 PM

Central Okanagan

Details coming soon Bylands Garden Centre—West Kelowna

South Okanagan

Thursday, June 15	Gardenworks - Penticton	1 PM—3 PM
Friday, June 16	Sagebrush Nurseries - Oliver	10 AM—12 PM
Friday, June 16	Sandhu Greenhouses - Osoyoos	1 PM—3 PM
Saturday, June 17	Grasslands Nursery - Summerland	10 AM—12 PM

Learn more at MakeWaterWork.ca

