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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OKANAGAN WATER BOARD OPENS DOOR ON WATER CONSERVATION & QUALITY IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM

Kelowna, B.C. – Have a project idea that will conserve or improve water quality in the Okanagan and benefit the valley as a whole, recognizing we are all part of ‘*One valley. One water.*’? The Okanagan Basin Water Board is now accepting applications to its 2017 Water Conservation and Quality Improvement (WCQI) Grant Program.

This is the twelfth year of the program, with \$300,000 available for Okanagan projects. Grants are distributed according to the percentage of tax each region pays into the program. The allocation this year will see \$55,800 for projects in the North, \$182,760 in the Central, and \$62,520 in the southern part of the Okanagan basin.

Each year the Water Board (OBWB) looks at where there may be current issues, or gaps that need to be addressed. These project categories are then prioritized for funding during the selection process. This year the board is putting a special focus on projects which address: **Drought and Flood Preparedness, Water Flow Monitoring, Groundwater Studies, Restoration and Water Quality Projects.**

“With global changes in climate, and the variability of weather here at home, we have seen flooding and droughts – sometimes in the same year – and science tells us to expect more of these extremes,” says James Littlely, OBWB Operations and Grants Manager. “That’s why there is the added emphasis this year on understanding what water we have available and projects that will build resiliency in Okanagan communities, preparing for both extremes.”

Although certain project categories are being prioritized, the OBWB encourages applications in all conservation and quality improvement categories, including: Education, Conservation, Irrigation, Mapping, Metering, System Improvement, Source Water Protection, Water Treatment Study, Water Management Planning, and Xeriscape.

Eligible grant recipients include non-profit community groups, local governments (regional districts or municipalities), and irrigation or improvement districts. Successful applicants can receive up to \$30,000 for their project.

“These grants have done a lot to improve our water conservation and our water quality throughout the valley,” added OBWB Chair Doug Findlater. “The number of projects, and the quality of the projects, is quite remarkable. You can go into any community in the Okanagan, and there has been a Water Board-funded project there, or multiple projects, that have made a positive difference.”

Since 2006, the WCQI Grant program has funded almost \$3.5 million to 215 projects with total combined budgets worth more than \$21.5 million. “Much of that extra project money is brought into the Okanagan

through partnerships with senior levels of government and grants from other funders. That is an excellent return on investment for the Okanagan,” noted Findlater.

This year’s application deadline is 4 p.m. Friday, February 17, 2017. The complete program guide and application forms can be found at www.obwb.ca/wcqi

MEDIA CONTACT: Corinne Jackson, OBWB – Communications Director
Office: 250-469-6271
Mobile: 250-718-7249
E-mail: Corinne.Jackson@obwb.ca