

## Okanagan Basin Water board hands out grants

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Published: **April 06, 2016 03:00 PM**

Updated: **April 06, 2016 03:393 PM**

The Okanagan Basin Water Board has awarded \$300,000 in funding to 18 projects that will help conserve and improve the quality of water in the valley.

OBWB directors approved the water conservation and quality improvement grants at their regular board meeting on Tuesday.

The successful grants applications came from a total of 27 asking for a total of \$495,523.

"This year we had more applications with collaborative partnerships than ever before," said James Littlely, the board's operations and grants manager.

"Multiple organizations, across jurisdictions, partnered and came to the table with funding and in-kind contributions to match the grants they were seeking."

In the Central Okanagan, funded projects include support to the Ocoola Fish and Game Club, part of the B.C. Wildlife Federation, to develop a mobile app which will allow users to document and report damage in local watersheds.

This information will allow for follow-up enforcement, restoration and protection efforts and is being developed in partnership with UBC Okanagan.

Also funded was a project that will take some of the scientific water research by OBWB and others and turn it into a hands-on public exhibit, connecting people with the water of the valley and the need to take care of it.

The Social Life of Water in the Okanagan Valley: Past, Present and Future is a project of UBCO's Centre for Culture and Technology, the Kelowna Museum Society, the Okanagan Nation Alliance and others.

"So often we concentrate on data and science. We want to share research results in an engaging way that helps people – of all ages - understand the complex relationship between people and water in the valley – how one affects the other and vice versa," Littlely said.

"This project, informed by experts, will be presented in a friendly way that goes far beyond reports and graphs."

In the North Okanagan, the Deep Creek Improvement District received funding to do sensitive habitat inventory and mapping.

Deep Creek passes through Armstrong, Spallumcheen and Okanagan Indian Band lands before flowing into the north arm of Okanagan Lake. The area is known to have been impacted by agriculture as well as urban and rural land development. The mapping will be conducted in partnership with the OIB and is intended to help guide habitat restoration decisions.

According to Littlely, the inventory and mapping will be a great addition to several other projects that have been supported by the water board in the Okanagan and will help it better understand what is happening in those areas as well as the work needed to protect and restore them.

A comprehensive review of last summer's drought identified the need for up-to-date drought plans in the valley. As such, that was one of the strategic priorities for grant funding this year, said the board.

So among the projects funded this year in the South Okanagan will be three drought plans one by the City of Penticton, one by the Town of Oliver and one by the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen.

"This combination of new drought plans in the South Okanagan will fill a significant gap in our collective ability to manage drought in the valley," said Littlely.

"As each utility and area manages local drought, there will be more water left in reservoirs for human use, and more water flowing in the streams for fish and other species. This is where individual projects can have a big collective impact

Since the water board began awarding its water conservation and quality improvement grants in 2006, it has handed out \$3.5 million to 215 projects throughout the valley.

Projects must meet a number of criteria, including the ability to demonstrate water savings or improvements to water quality, show collaboration, and provide valley-wide benefit.

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