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NEWS RELEASE

QUESTIONS ON NEW B.C. GROUNDWATER REGS PROMPT OKANAGAN WATER BOARD TO HELP LOCAL WELL-OWNERS

Kelowna, B.C. – There has been some confusion about what new B.C. groundwater regulations – part of the recently introduced Water Sustainability Act – mean for residents who have a well. In response, the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) has developed a guide to help sort it out.

“Most people in the Okanagan are on municipal water utilities. But there are still a large number who are on their own wells and they should know how groundwater licencing will affect them,” said OBWB Executive Director Anna Warwick Sears, explaining the reason for developing the information. Under the new regulations, residential well owners are not expected to get licences and do have rights to water for domestic uses. However, she added, it is prudent for those with a well to register it to ensure its use is known and protected.

By registering a well, residents will help ensure their rights are protected if someone applies for a large volume groundwater licence in their area. “If the provincial government staff person reviewing a licence application doesn’t know about your well, they won’t be able to consider your water use when making their decision,” noted Sears, likening it to when you go hiking into the backcountry.

When you plan to go hiking, it’s advisable to let others know where you’re going. “If no one knows you’re out there, they don’t know to come looking for you.”

The OBWB has long recommended groundwater licencing for large water withdrawals. And well registration for homeowners makes sense. For one, it will help us understand how much groundwater is being used. It will also help us better understand the connection between ground and surface water, ensuring greater management of our water resources as a whole and help prevent shortages.

“Back when I lived in California in the 1990s, my neighbours and I had wells, and then a company applied for a big production well in our area and there was no protection for us. So this opportunity for people to register their domestic well is wise. If you want to make sure that water continues to be available, and licencing decision-makers are paying attention, it’s prudent to register your well.”

More information on who should register and how to do it can be found at Okanagan WaterWise (www.OkWaterWise.ca) and at www.OBWB.ca/well/.

- 30 -

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