



SALMON ARM OBSERVER



A River Film was shot over an 18-month period across the Okanagan Valley starting in February 2016. Photo Credit: Contributed

Documentary examines Okanagan water conflicts

Competing Okanagan Valley water users profiled in documentary

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A new documentary presents an insightful look at the many competing needs for water within the Okanagan Valley and how those demands are managed between B.C. and Washington government authorities.

Called *A River Film*, the documentary was co-financed by the Okanagan Basin Water Board and its OkWaterWise initiative, the International Joint Commission (IJC) overseeing Canada-U.S. co-management of the Okanagan River system and the Washington State Department of Ecology.

Produced by Kelowna-based Ascent Films, the movie made its Okanagan debut Oct. 25 at the Oliver Theatre and is generating viewer interest across the region.



[A River Film Trailer 2017 from Ascent Films Inc. on Vimeo.](#)

A River Film is currently on its first-run screening at movie theatres and film festivals, so it's not available yet online.

Anna Warwick Sears, executive director of the OBWB, said they hope to have DVD copies on hand this month to distribute to local groups and schools wanting to show the 40-minute film.

"We are very pleased with it," said Sears, who is interviewed in the film along with B.C. and Washington water management and environment officials, Okanagan Nation Alliance staff and an Oliver orchardist.

Warwick Sears said the IJC was largely the fundraising driver behind it, with her and water stewardship director Nelson Jatel lending their time in helping develop the editorial content.

OBWB directors had an opportunity to screen the film at their November board meeting on Tuesday in Kelowna.

Through interviews and video footage, director Jiri Bakala examines the complexity of issues facing Okanagan Valley water management from agriculture irrigation and recreation use demands to flood control and salmon fisheries enhancement measures.

Filming took place over about 18 months starting in February 2016 and concluding with the flood conditions last spring.

A River Film offers a discussion about how biology experts are trying to find a balance between these potential conflicting issues while dealing with the changing realities brought on by climate change.

Bakala has done numerous documentaries on a range of issues, from health to environment. One such film was about Gloria Taylor, the West Kelowna woman with ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis) who became an advocate for medically assisted dying.

"Every time you start a new film as a documentary filmmaker, you find out how much you learn about these topics," Bakala said in a recent interview with the Osoyoos Times.

"For us it was incredible. We learned so much about the river that we had no idea. I've lived here for over 15 years now, and you take so many things for granted."

