

November 14, 2017

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OKANAGAN WATER BOARD ANNUAL GRANT PROGRAM FOCUSSES ON FLOODS, DROUGHTS

Kelowna, B.C. – The Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) is now accepting applications to its 2018 Water Conservation and Quality Improvement (WCQI) Grant Program.

This is the 13th year for the program, providing \$300,000 to water projects in the Okanagan. The grants are distributed according to the percentage of tax each region pays into the program. The allocation this year will provide \$54,119 for projects in the North Okanagan, \$185,442 in the Central Okanagan, and \$60,439 in the southern part of the Okanagan Basin.

For the past few years, the board has chosen an annual theme to encourage projects that address current issues in the valley. This year, the board is seeking projects that address **flood and/or drought preparedness, mapping, source water protection and water quality assessments.**

“As most Okanagan residents already know, this valley experienced record flooding in the spring followed by drought in summer and fall,” said James Littley, OBWB’s Operations and Grants Manager. “What they may not know is how those events affect water quality and water availability, and how tools like maps and plans can help mitigate the damage from these types of events in the future.”

Last year, the board also focussed on drought and flood preparedness, with one project mapping the entire shoreline of Okanagan Lake before the historic flooding. “This project demonstrates the value of the program. With this mapping, we have a picture of the shoreline, including every dock, retaining wall, natural feature, and habitat type from only months before the flood,” added Littley. “This information can feed directly into management decisions around the lake, and assist in regulatory and enforcement actions, as well as assist local residents with re-building.”

While the board has prioritized funding in certain theme areas, all projects which address water conservation or quality improvement are eligible for the funding. Categories that will also be considered include **education, irrigation, groundwater studies, metering, system improvement, water treatment studies, water management planning, xeriscape, water flow monitoring and restoration.** Those eligible to apply 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.

“The grants have really demonstrated their value over the history of the program, and even more so with the extreme events we saw last year,” said OBWB Chair Tracy Gray, giving the example of grant funds to assist the Mission Creek Restoration Initiative’s diking project that helped alleviate flooding. “The program has also funded numerous conservation projects, like metering, leak detection audits, low-water demonstration gardens, and much more. As in past years, we are looking to assist projects that might not have a lot of other funding, but will have a big impact and benefit the entire Okanagan.”

Since 2006, the WCQI Grant Program has funded almost \$3.8 million to 232 projects with total combined budgets over \$26.9 million – a more than seven-fold matching investment back into our valley for water conservation or quality improvement.

“The Okanagan is one of the fastest growing regions in Canada. It is also known as one of this country’s most water-stressed regions,” added Gray. “These projects are helping protect the water of our valley, ensuring greater resilience and helping meet the challenges ahead.”

This year’s application deadline is 4 p.m. Friday, February 16, 2018. The complete program guide and application forms can be found at www.obwb.ca/wcqi

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