



Kelowna city councillor and Okanagan Basin Water Board chairwoman Tracy Gray and West Kelowna Mayor Doug Findlater joined municipal politicians from several other valley communities Thursday to get hands-on instruction about planting drought-resistant plants during the Make Water Work campaign kick-off. —Alistair Waters/Capital News

Pledging to Make Water Work

Annual Okanagan Valley water conservation campaign kicks off

ALISTAIR WATERS / May. 17, 2018 2:20 p.m. / NEWS



The Okanagan Basin Water Board kicked off its annual region-wide Make Water Work campaign stressing the need to plan for the possibility of drought this year, despite the current talk of flooding.

“It can be hard to focus on being water-wise and on water conservation when there’s flooding, but it’s a priority for all communities to use water wisely,” said Armstrong Mayor Chris Pieper during the kick-off event with other municipal dignitaries from throughout the valley in Kelowna Thursday.

“Look at last year. Flooding was quickly followed by fire and drought. Water is a valuable resource and can’t take it for granted. We have to respect it.”

Pieper was joined by Kelowna councillor and OBWB chairwoman Tracy Gray, West Kelowna Mayor Doug Findlater, deputy Lake Country mayor Blair Ireland, deputy mayor Janet Peake of Summerland, Vernon Mayor Akbal Mund, Peachland Mayor Cindy Fortin and Osoyoos deputy mayor Mike Campol. They all pledged to make water work more efficiently in their communities and challenged each other to see which municipality could gather the most names of residents agreeing to take the same pledge.

Armstrong, winner of the challenge in 2015 and 2017, even threw down the gauntlet—albeit lightheartedly—to Peachland, which unseated it in 2016, raising the ante by making a bet with home-grown product having to be provided to the winner by from the losing community.

“We’re having fun, but there’s a serious message,” OBWB communications director Corinne Jackson said. “We are currently on track to have the same type of summer this year as we did last year—flooding followed by drought. As with last year’s flooding, water treatment plants in the valley are being overwhelmed. Conserving water can help alleviate the pressure on our infrastructure.

Gray said it’s important to start planning for water conservation now, by choosing plants that do not need a lot of water and are drought resistant, making sure irrigation systems work properly and are watering plants and grass, not sidewalks and driveways and proper water-use habits are instilled in everyone.

The pledge valley residents are being urged to take includes vowing to water lawns only between dusk and dawn (and following local municipal lawn-watering restrictions), watering plants not pavement, letting grass grow at least two to three inches high, leaving grass clipping on lawns to act as mulch, aerating lawns and using compost and planting low-water use plant varieties.

Following the comments by the politicians Thursday at Kelowna’s UnH2O Garden—a garden that demonstrates the use of xeriscaping and drought-resistant plants—they received a hands-on demonstration of what to plant and how to plant lead by local xeriscaping expert and Capital News gardening columnist Gwen Steele.

This year makes the eighth year of Make Water Work campaign and promotes tips and tools to help residents do their part to conserve water.

More information is available at MakeWaterWork.ca.

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