



Flood management tackled at AGM of Okanagan Basin Water Board

Cate Hanlon **Aug 10, 2018** Updated Aug 13, 2018



Former Director of Water Stewardship Brian Symonds spoke about the causes that led to last spring's flooding.



"You don't want to waste a good crisis," said engineer Brian Symonds, speaking at the annual meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board.

After dramatic flooding locally in 2017, flood management is a subject very much on the minds of Okanagan residents.

Symonds and flood management expert Tamsin Lyle were the keynote speakers Friday at the water board's meeting at the Innovation Centre in Kelowna.

Lyle said people fall into two categories in their responses to flooding. Ostriches stick their heads in the ground, while meerkats are alert, looking around and looking at alternative flood management solutions.

"We need to focus on finding the right project rather than getting the project right," said Lyle.

Options to limit damage and speed up recovery are protection (dikes), adaptation (stilts and other architectural solutions for buildings) and retreating from the shore altogether.



"We have to embrace uncertainty and strive for adaptive solutions," Lyle concluded.

Symonds explained the limitations of flood control with Okanagan Lake.

After a 1.15-metre rise in the lake level from May 4 to June 9 in 2017, the 40-year-old lake management systems are being reviewed.

Greater value is being placed in harm's way with the rising value of lakefront property, and floods like the one in 2017 may not be as unusual as we would like them to be, he said.

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