



Experts gather to discuss Okanagan water needs

Kelowna environmental water flows conference Oct. 17-18 has global reach

[BARRY GERDING](#) / Oct. 16, 2018 5:30 a.m. / [LOCAL NEWS](#) / [NEWS](#)



Water science experts from across the globe will descend on Kelowna for an international water conference on environmental flow needs this week.

The two-day conference takes place Oct. 17-18 at the Coast Capri Hotel, co-sponsored by the Okanagan Basin Water Board and B.C. branch of the Canadian Water Resources Association.

Corinne Jackson, communications director with the OBWB, says Environmental Flow Needs, the volume and timing of water required to ensure effective functioning of an aquatic ecosystem, remains an evolving science.

In areas like the Okanagan where significant competition and demand for water exists in an arid climate, scientists, policy-makers, planners and water regulators are focussed on developing methods to determine appropriate EFNs.

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In February 2016, the province adopted the Water Sustainability Act, requires that EFNs be determined for water bodies potentially affected by any new proposed surface or groundwater licenses.

This requirement creates both opportunities and challenges for water management, but also the need for better EFN science methods to reconcile competing water interests.

"We need to know how much water is required to sustain the fish in our streams," said Jackson.

"If we can't do that, then all the other animals and people who depend on sustainable water will be in trouble as well.

"The connection between surface water and groundwater is something that is not yet well understood."

Among the keynote speakers will be Claudia Pahl-Wostl, a resources management professor at the Institute of Environmental Systems Research in Osnabruck, Germany; Richard Bussanich, biologist with the Okanagan Nation Alliance salmon re-introduction program; Deborah Curran, associate professor with University of Victoria Faculty of Law and executive director of Environmental Law Centre; and Mark Lorang, former research professor at the University of Montana Flathead Lake Biological Station and founder of the Freshwater Map aquatic river habitat mapping system.

