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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OKANAGAN WATER BOARD ANNOUNCES MAJOR CHANGE TO GRANT PROGRAM

Kelowna, B.C. – The Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) is now accepting applications to its revamped 2019 Water Conservation and Quality Improvement (WCQI) Grant Program.

This is the 14th year of the program which has provided more than \$4.1 million to 250 projects since 2006. This year, \$300,000 in funding will be available for projects valley-wide – a change from previous years when funds were allocated on a regional basis. The reason for the change, in part, was an acknowledgement that the water of the valley is all connected. That what happens in one part of the valley, affects another. That we are all part of ‘One valley. One water.’ The change was approved unanimously earlier this year by the Board of Directors at the North Okanagan, Central Okanagan and Okanagan Similkameen Regional Districts.

“This new funding distribution will allow the OBWB to award grants to those projects which will conserve water or improve water quality the best,” said James Littley, OBWB’s Operations and Grants Manager. “In the past, a certain amount of funds were distributed within each regional district. As a result, sometimes we didn’t have funds available for projects which would have had a greater valley-wide impact. The old distribution method also limited partnerships that sought to work across regions, so we’re looking forward to seeing what kinds of projects people will come up with this year.”

Local governments, irrigation districts and non-profit organizations are eligible for grants up to \$30,000 for projects that conserve water or improve water quality. The grants are awarded to projects that demonstrate valley-wide benefits, complement current OBWB activities, focus on action, promote best practices, and demonstrate collaboration and innovation.

“We have updated our forms and the Program Guide to reflect this change. It is important that applicants review these carefully, even if they have applied for funding in the past.” Littley cautioned.

Funding categories that will be considered include: drought and flood preparedness, education, irrigation, groundwater studies, metering, source water protection, system improvement, water treatment studies, water management planning, xeriscape, water flow monitoring and restoration. In addition, the OBWB’s Board of Directors will approve annual priorities in late December once the new board is sitting, following recent local government elections. These priorities will be posted to the OBWB website. Projects that address the board’s annual priorities can be awarded extra points during the evaluation process.

This year’s application deadline is Feb. 28, 2019, 4 p.m. The complete Program Guide, detailed information about program changes, and application forms can be found at www.obwb.ca/wcqi

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