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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OKANAGAN WATER GRANTS AIM TO CONSERVE AND IMPROVE WATER QUALITY IN FACE OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Kelowna, B.C. – The Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) has approved more than \$318,000 in funding to 17 projects that will help conserve and protect water in the valley while addressing the larger issues of climate change. Directors approved the Water Conservation and Quality Improvement (WCQI) grants at their last board meeting, April 2. Recipients have now been notified. In all, there were 31 applications with a total ask of \$688,281.

The projects tackle Okanagan water issues from several different angles, working with residents, businesses, and local governments. In addition, the projects include collaboration, leveraging OBWB funding and extending on-the-ground efforts.

“Climate change is a reality in our valley,” noted OBWB Chair Sue McKortoff. “We have seen extreme flooding, drought and fires, sometimes all in the same year. We can’t work in silos. We need to work together, sharing ideas and resources. This program does that,” she added.

Although the WCQI annual budget is \$300,000, additional funds were made available from other previous projects that came in under-budget, allowing the Water Board to award additional dollars. Projects had to show valley-wide benefit and additional consideration was given to those that addressed the board’s annual theme of climate change.

Some of the projects funded this year include:

- Funding to the Okanagan and Similkameen Stewardship Society to work with residents with riparian areas on their property. The society will work with residents to improve these spaces to act as carbon sinks but also improve water quality before it reaches valley creeks, rivers and lakes.
- Several water improvement projects were funded including a floodplain re-engagement project on the Okanagan River Channel by the Okanagan Indian Education Resources Society (OIERS)-En'owkin Centre. This project will improve rearing habitat for Indigenous fish species while supporting recovery of at-risk species that require healthy waterways. Renaturalizing the area with native plants will also enhance carbon sequestration and flood mitigation.
- The three Okanagan regional districts will develop a Climate Projections Report for local governments, non-profits and interested citizens to develop plans and actions to reduce risks associated with climate variability and changes in water quality and quantity.
- O’Keefe Ranch received funding to move some animal pens to improve water quality before it enters Okanagan Lake, an important source of drinking water to valley residents.
- The Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association received funds to engage tourism operators on eco-efficiency, including improving energy and water efficiency.
- The Regional District of North Okanagan will work with landscape contractors to promote proper WaterWise plant selection and irrigation methods.
- A number of projects aim to engage educators and students on water-related projects including one by the Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen and En’owkin Centre. This project will develop Okanagan water-focussed classroom materials bridging Traditional Ecological Knowledge and

western science for valley teachers and students, creating a better understanding and ways to address water issues in our region.

"Despite the fact that we see water in our lakes and streams, we have less water available in the Okanagan per person than elsewhere in Canada," added McKortoff. "As our population continues to grow, as water availability becomes less certain, and as fires and extreme rain events impact our water quality, things need to change. We can't keep on the same path. These projects help build a more resilient Okanagan, and offer the opportunity to engage all of us in that effort."

Since 2006, the WCQI program has provided more than \$4.4 million to 267 projects.

For a full listing of funded projects please see the attached.

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WATER CONSERVATION AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT GRANT AWARDS – 2019

Number of Applications	Total Requested	Total Available
Totals	\$688,281	\$300,000

Organization	Project	Funding
OIERS	Floodplain Re-engagement project	\$25,000
RDNO	Climate Projections report	\$25,000
OCCP	Okanagan Lk Mgmt Initiative 4 Source Protection	\$25,000
OSSS	Riparian Area Stewardship and Enhancement	\$20,000
MCRI	Adaptive Mgmt Program	\$19,000
RDOS and En'owkin Centre	Follow the Water K-5 Curriculum Project	\$30,000
ONA	Ellis Sediment Basin	\$15,000
TOTA	Eco Efficiency Advisor and Education Program	\$15,000
NBBS	Spallumcheen Wetland Ambassador Program	\$11,000
Kelowna	Managing City Stormwater Ponds	\$27,000
ABNC	Stream Science	\$8,000
Sqilxw Apna	N'sisooloxw Watershed Corridor Improvement	\$25,000
COLT	Wetland Management Model	\$25,000
Spall, Armstrong, OKIB	Deep Creek Stormwater Quality Mgmt Plan	\$30,000
RDNO	Water Efficient Landscape Outreach Project	\$8,200 Funds from related project under budget
O'Keefe Ranch	Animal Pen Relocation and Construction	\$5,182 Funds left over from WCQI project under budget
OLWQS	Replace Pontoon Boat, Motor and Trailer	\$5,464 Funds from related project under budget
TOTAL:		\$318,846

Project Title:	Floodplain Re-engagement project
Organization:	Okanagan Indian Education Resources Society (OIERS/En'owkin Centre)
Project Goals:	The aim of this project is to advance habitat restoration and enhancement of the Okanagan River Channel floodplain in Penticton by re-connecting the Penticton portion of the Okanagan River Channel to 4.83 ha of the river's adjacent historic floodplain, allowing for natural backwatering as water levels in the main river channel rise and fall (i.e. no direct in-line river flow). This restoration project will

	create seasonal off-channel rearing habitat for Indigenous fish species, especially refuge for juvenile salmon stages, specifically for sk'lwist/ntytyix (i.e. spring-run and fall-run Chinook Salmon). It will also restore a diversity of fish-free wetland habitats and riparian habitats that support Indigenous biodiversity and recovery of species at-risk populations; Improve connectivity between rare and endangered riparian and wetland floodplain habitats and upland terrestrial habitats; and provide opportunities for local Indigenous cultural and ecological education, awareness and interaction.
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Project Title:	Climate Projections Report
Organization:	Regional District of North Okanagan
Project Goals:	To develop a Climate Projections Report that will provide quantitative indicators on the future impacts of climate change and climate variability for the Okanagan Basin. Results from this work will provide regional districts, municipalities, non-profits and interested citizens with the information they need to develop plans and actions for reducing the risks associated with climate variability and changes in water quantity and/or quality.

Project Title:	Okanagan Lake Management Initiative for Source Water Protection
Organization:	Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program
Project Goals:	This continuing project (began in 2018) will begin to address current challenges in shoreline management and plan for the future at a multi-jurisdictional scale. The main objectives of the project are to: (1) identify and form a better understanding of the most pertinent issues impacting our lake(s) including: water quality, aquatic and terrestrial ecosystem health, and cultural and recreational values, and ultimately collaborating to develop a practical and enforceable strategy to enhance shoreline management for water source protection throughout the Okanagan Basin. The project will engage with applicable agencies and partners to gather input and direction for developing an approach for the strategy that will address the cumulative impacts of shoreline development by identifying effective multi-jurisdictional policies, bylaws, regulations and common processes to enhance shoreline management.

Project Title:	Riparian Area Stewardship and Enhancement
Organization:	Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship Society
Project Goals:	The goal of this project is to improve climate change resilience and water quality by encouraging best management practices by residents of the Regional District of Central Okanagan on their lands (eg riparian setbacks, native plant revegetation, livestock exclusion from riparian areas, invasive plant management, etc.). By protecting and establishing riparian buffers, these areas act as carbon sinks, absorbing emissions that would otherwise contribute to climate change. At the same time, riparian buffers established through this project will serve to naturally filter water before it reaches our creeks, rivers and lakes.

Project Title:	MCRI Demonstration Project Adaptive Management Program
Organization:	Mission Creek Restoration Initiative
Project Goals:	The primary goal of this multi-year restoration project is to restore fish and wildlife stocks and supporting habitat. Complimentary objectives are to conserve and expand biodiversity and species at risk, improve flood protection, contribute to

	improved water quality and quantity, to educate the public, and to inspire and support community stewardship. The focus of this application is to support the continuation of an adaptive management program to document all monitoring activities and structural modifications including methods and results.
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Project Title:	Follow the Water K-5 Curriculum Program
Organization:	RDOS and En'owkin Centre
Project Goals:	This project will expand curriculum based programming to include Syilx Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) as it relates to Indigenous views on water and plants. Place based learning is an essential part of B.C.'s renewed curriculum. With the support of this proposal, we can offer presentations at a subsidized rate and/or free of charge to help schools meet their new curriculum requirements. Students will be able to learn Syilx words specifically the words related to the water through stewardship documents, such as ONA's existing Water Declaration, along with newly developed materials that will serve as teaching tools.

Project Title:	Ellis Sediment Basin Riparian Restoration
Organization:	Okanagan Nation Alliance
Project Goals:	The Ellis Sediment Basin was reconstructed in 2018 to allow for new, innovative "friendlier" fish, wildlife, and habitat management methods. In addition to re-vegetating the construction footprint, there is significant opportunity and interest from project partners to expand the riparian restoration vision. A riparian restoration conceptual plan was created for the overall site vision, to; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • revegetate the construction footprint and maximize the entire riparian buffer, • increase overall site habitat diversity and complexity. This may include constructing a backwater wetland and adding shade/cover features, • restore self-sustaining creek ecosystem functions and processes, and • enhance positive interaction between the public and the site, potentially via a clearly marked walking path, edible (native) plant species, and additional bench and education features.

Project Title:	Eco Efficiency Advisor and Education Program
Organization:	Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association
Project Goals:	In 2016 TOTA retained GreenStep Solutions to help facilitate a sustainability charter to provide a framework to guide the region and its stakeholders towards sustainability. In November 2017 the region was certified as the first destination in the Americas to achieve Sustainable Tourism Destination certification from Biosphere International and the Responsible Tourism Institute. TOTA subsequently developed an action plan and established a committee representing local governments, first nations, utilities, water boards, wildlife conservation groups, and more, to help guide the implementation of the action plan. A priority within the plan is water assessment, preservation, and public/private participation within the Thompson Okanagan Region. Alongside the measurable outcome of 100 year one organizations participating in the program, public awareness and adoption of water preservation through alignment with the Region's Biosphere Designation will increase public support of responsible tourism and its supporting business. This application requests funding to conduct water assessments to local businesses, to quantify and document areas for potential water savings.

Project Title:	Spallumcheen Wetland Ambassador Program
Organization:	New Beginnings Benevolent Society
Project Goals:	The goal of this project is to raise awareness of the important role small wetlands play in climate change adaptation through a wetland construction project and wetland ambassador program. The project location, on Pleasant Valley Road in Spallumcheen, is close to the town of Armstrong and surrounded by ALR. One of the goals of this project is to demonstrate that by establishing hydrologic dynamics, vegetation, and structural characteristics, a constructed wetland and riparian zone can reduce nonpoint source pollution including excess fertilizers, herbicides and insecticides from agricultural lands and residential areas; and oil, grease and toxic chemicals from urban runoff, as well as sediment, nitrogen, and phosphorus.

Project Title:	Managing City Stormwater Ponds
Organization:	City of Kelowna
Project Goals:	The aim of the project is to review 28 retention ponds within City of Kelowna boundaries amended to receive stormwater and develop the results to form a Storm Water Management Plan. The intent of this project is to ensure cost-effective monitoring is in place at all ponds as well as development of individual prescriptions to optimize both the bioreactor (water treatment) and habitat functions simultaneously for each pond. In addition to environmental benefit, this should help provide substantive responses when resident/environmental concerns arise. It should also help define the carrying capacity of each pond receiving storm water and if the treatment capacity can be enhanced.
Staff Notes:	This project will help to reduce storm water runoff into source waters, while providing a pilot for other urbanized areas throughout the Okanagan to develop better stormwater management. Partial funding is (98%) recommended due to funding limitations.

Project Title:	Stream Science
Organization:	Allan Brooks Nature Centre
Project Goals:	Stream Science is an educational water quality monitoring program that gives students in the Okanagan Basin a hands-on learning experience with their local stream and the greater watershed. The guiding questions of the program are: What is the health of my local river? What is the cause of its state of health? And what can we do to improve it? To answer these questions students will use scientific protocols to collect aquatic benthic macro-invertebrates (water bugs) and conduct water quality tests, then analyze their findings to understand the health of their local waterways. This is part of the current school curriculum, and test results are compiled across the watershed to add to our water quality data.

Project Title:	N'sisooloxw Watershed Corridor Improvement
Organization:	Sqilxw Apna
Project Goals:	The NWCI Project is currently in the first phase of restoration work, encompassing three years of effort to provide the seedlings to rebuild the N'sis'ooloxw corridor forest and watershed system. The first year of the project (2019-2020) will be funded through this grant with matched funding from the ECCC EcoAction Funding Program, Sqilxw Apna Society volunteers in-kind, and BC Arts and Culture to cover all of the portions of this phase. The riparian strip descends from source waters to the Okanagan Lake with scattered and struggling examples of numerous Indigenous plants that are known to enter systems at all levels of ecological succession. Due to over-grazing, mining, and forestry, the system requires

	remedying. We will address this by installing swales, sediment collection ponds, comprehensive Indigenous plantings, defined trails, erosion control gardens, range animal/wildlife diversions, and fencing. We will host community engagement activities and workshops based out of the N'sis'ooloxw gathering place on Skookum Road. These measures will structure necessary cooperative and collaborative activities and documentation needed to restore balance in the corridor with and along side Syilx land owners. This empowerment framework ensures a higher probability of intergenerational continuance of culturally sustainable land and water protection.
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Project Title:	Wetland Management Model
Organization:	Central Okanagan Land Trust
Project Goals:	There are two main goals for this project. First, to establish Management Plans for four small wetland sites in Kelowna. Second, through this process a wetland management template will be created, that can be used region-wide. In addition to these two main goals, we also hope to gain institutional experience working with consultant specialists, engage project funding partners, and engage collegial environmental groups and local government in a collaborative planning strategy.

Project Title:	Deep Creek Stormwater Quality Management Plan
Organization:	Spallumcheen, Armstrong, Okanagan Indian Band
Project Goals:	Deep Creek is located within OKIB, the Township of Spallumcheen and Armstrong. Deep Creek stretches 37.1km in length, is largely encompassed by agricultural land and is a major tributary to the Head of Okanagan Lake (OKIB). Recently, OKIB and the Township of Spallumcheen completed a Natural Capital Asset Management Plan which identified that water quality within Deep Creek is poor primarily due to runoff from agricultural fields and numerous drainage pipes that discharge to the Creek. Also, multiple species of fish have been recorded within the creek. The aim of the project is to collaboratively develop with Armstrong and OKIB a stormwater quality management plan to mitigate the effects of poor surface runoff from stormwater into Deep Creek and ultimately into Okanagan Lake.

Project Title:	Water Efficient Landscape Outreach Project
Organization:	Regional District of North Okanagan
Project Goals:	The aim of this project is to support homeowners in reducing landscape water use through industry and resident education on water efficient landscaping. Landscape water use drives over a quarter of annual water demand in the Okanagan Basin and there are many opportunities to improve water use efficiency in this sector. By engaging with the landscape contractor industry this project will promote plant selection and irrigation methods adapted to the Okanagan climate to help improve resiliency to climate change.

Project Title:	Animal Pen Relocation and Construction
Organization:	O'Keefe Ranch & Interior Heritage Society
Project Goals:	The O'Keefe Ranch is moderately flat with slight undulations and one small hill. Deep Creek separates the western lot from the other two lots, which constitute the Ranch site. This creek floods each spring causing annual damage and problems with animal pens and Ranch infrastructure. Each spring, animals must be relocated in order to prevent them from living in wet and undesirable conditions. In addition, the flood waters permit the flow of manure and other animal waste products to

	enter Deep Creek. The goal of this project is to relocate the animal pens to an area of the Ranch that is out of the flood zone in order to protect the water quality of Deep Creek as well as the animals and Ranch infrastructure.
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Project Title:	Replace Pontoon Boat, Motor and Trailer
Organization:	Osoyoos Lake Water Quality Society
Project Goals:	Our old and leaking boat and its twenty-year-old-motor need to be replaced so that our volunteers may safely continue to sample the water quality in Osoyoos Lake, as well as perform veliger sampling to check for the presence of invasive mussels. Since the early 1990s the OLWQS has been providing the Ministry of Environment with readings of pH, temperature, specific conductivity, turbidity, and dissolved oxygen at specific positions in the lake and at two meter intervals of depth. This data is used to provide information to the MOE and other collaborating groups, who assess the effect of increasing population and climate change. It assists them to create a proactive plan for the future of our lake.