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NEWS RELEASE

OKANAGAN WATER BOARD CELEBRATES 50th ANNIVERSARY WITH ONLINE SPEAKER SERIES TO GET WATER CONVO FLOWING

Kelowna, B.C. – The Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) is celebrating its 50th anniversary, providing leadership on water issues in the valley, by hosting a public speaker series online.

“We wanted to celebrate this significant milestone with the public, but due to COVID-19 and the inability to gather in-person, we decided to hold an online event,” explains OBWB Exec. Dir. Anna Warwick Sears. “This way we can ensure physical distancing while allowing people the opportunity to celebrate with us from the comfort of their own homes.”

The series, hosted by the OBWB and its Okanagan WaterWise program, includes presentations and Q&A sessions with two heavy-hitters in the water world: Bob Sandford on Oct. 22, 7-9 PM (PT), and Seth M. Siegel on Oct. 29, 4-5:30 PM (PT).

Sandford is Global Water Futures Chair in Water and Climate Security at the United Nations (UN) University Institute for Water, Environment and Health. In a talk entitled "The Okanagan Basin Water Board: The Next 50 Years," Sandford will discuss the OBWB – its challenges and successes – over the past 50 years and in the context of 21st century global water policy. He will look ahead to the next 50 years with the coming storm of climate change, political and social turmoil, rapid population growth and the need for a clear vision and strategic direction for the OBWB. Finally, Sandford will describe the transformational moment we find ourselves in, and give insights into what we can do to weather the storm.

Siegel is a New York Times bestselling author, international water activist, and Senior Fellow at the University of Wisconsin's Center for Water Policy. Siegel tells the inspiring story of how Israel has become a world-leader in water management, governance, and water innovation, exporting more than \$2.4 billion USD in water technology and equipment annually and recycling more than 90% of its wastewater. This, despite 60% of the country being desert. Siegel will reflect on the state of water management in the U.S. and globally, and provide lessons for the future of water management and governance, including in Canada's most water-stressed region, the Okanagan.

“Our wish is that people will come away from hearing the presenters feeling inspired,” added Sears. “We hope people will be better informed about the work of the OBWB, and how they can engage as residents to help meet the needs of our water future as we embark on our next 50 years and beyond.”

Both presentations are free. Tickets for Sandford's presentation can be found at https://obwb-50_bobsandford.eventbrite.ca, and for Siegel's presentation at https://obwb-50_sethsiegel.eventbrite.ca.

Additional information on the OBWB, Sandford and Siegel, is provided below.

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BACKGROUND

The **Okanagan Basin Water Board** (OBWB) is unique to B.C. and Canada, and was formed in 1970 as a collaboration between the three regional governments in the Okanagan: the Regional Districts of North Okanagan, Central Okanagan, and Okanagan-Similkameen. The agency was initially created in response to water quality issues, primarily invasive milfoil that was choking out Okanagan lakes, and failing sewage systems polluting the water. At the time, and in the background, there were also concerns about future water quantity as our population grew. Climate change, and its impacts on water, wasn't even on the radar.

The water board was created as a valley-wide partnership to identify and resolve critical water issues in the Okanagan watershed, recognizing that our water is all connected, and what happens in one area can affect another.

For the past 15 years, the Board of Directors has included three representatives from each of the three Okanagan regional districts, and one each from the Okanagan Nation Alliance, the Water Supply Association of BC and the WSC (a multi-stakeholder group established by the Board to provide independent science-based advice on water issues).

Today, in addition to its Milfoil Control Program and Sewage Facilities Grants Program, the OBWB provides the Water Management Program which includes the WSC, Water Conservation and Quality Improvement Grants, Water Research (including floodplain mapping, source protection efforts, wetland strategy), and Communications and Outreach (including OBWB's public outreach and education program *Okanagan WaterWise* and its "Make Water Work" and "Don't Move A Mussel" campaigns).

Bob Sandford, in his capacity at the UN University Institute for Water, Environment and Health, has co-authored a recent UN expert report examining the capacity of Canada's water sector to meet and help others meet the UN's 2030 Transforming Our World water-related Sustainable Development Goals.

Among his many accomplishments, Sandford is the author, co-author or editor of more than 30 books, including *Our Vanishing Glaciers: The Snows of Yesteryear*, which won a Lane Anderson Award for best Canadian science writing in 2017. Sandford is also senior advisor on water issues for the InterAction Council (a global public policy forum composed of more than 30 former Heads of State). And, he is a member of Canada's Forum for Leadership on Water (FLOW), a national water policy research group centred in Toronto.

Seth M. Siegel's critically acclaimed award-winning book *Let There Be Water: Israel's Solution for a Water-Starved World* has been published in 19 languages and is on sale in more than 50 countries. His newest work, *Troubled Water: What's Wrong with What We Drink*, sets forth an ambitious agenda for a fundamental rethinking of America's drinking water system.

His commentary on a range of topics has appeared in many leading publications, including The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, and The Washington Post. Siegel has spoken on water issues at more than 325 venues in 68 cities, 26 states, and on four continents—and during the Coronavirus lockdown, to dozens of others via video. For his work in communicating water needs, Siegel was named one of the 100 Global Water Heroes in 2018 by Mina Guli.