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NEWS RELEASE

OKANAGAN WATER BOARD ANNUAL MEETING SHOWCASES WATER PROTECTION EFFORTS WHILE RIDING WAVES OF CHANGE

Kelowna, B.C. – The Okanagan Basin Water Board held its Annual Meeting today, highlighting its work over the past year and previewing projects for the year ahead. The gathering was held online, like the majority of the board’s meetings since the COVID-19 pandemic reached our shores.

Looking back, it has been a year of turbulence as the board steadied itself against the waves of the COVID-19 pandemic, learning to work in new ways, still keeping its sights set on the challenges faced in the Okanagan, helping communities prepare for the impacts of climate change including droughts and flooding.

“We had to do a lot of paddling in the beginning, but once we got up on that wave, we’ve been working as hard as ever,” explains OBWB Executive Director Anna Warwick Sears. “The issues around water in the Okanagan don’t care if there’s a pandemic, flood or heatwaves. We miss all the people and in-person events, but we’ve made a lot of progress.”

Aptly, the theme of this year’s annual meeting and annual report is “*Waves of Change*.”

The year (April 1, 2020 – March 31, 2021) began with the launch of the OkanaganFloodStory.ca website with up-to-date flood maps and information for residents to reduce risk and prepare. The B.C. [AquaHacking Challenge](#), hosted by the OBWB, worked with university students, water leaders and business mentors to develop solutions to water issues, and successfully moved mid-stream from an in-person challenge to online. The [Our Relationship with Water in the Okanagan](#) education guides – a new series of outdoor curriculum resources focusing on local water issues, in response to growing requests from teachers – were completed and launched. Work to launch a new [hydrometric network program](#) also began, with the goal of adding hydrometric stations to collect water supply data and improve water management. Significant work was done to start building a source protection toolkit for water suppliers, helping them address water quality issues. All the while, annual programs like the Water Conservation and Quality Improvement Grants, Sewage Facilities Grants, Milfoil Control, and outreach campaigns like “Make Water Work” and “Don’t Move A Mussel,” continued.

“Looking back and looking through the annual report, it amazes me all we’ve been able to accomplish,” added Sue McKortoff, OBWB Chair. “Since then and through this summer, we’ve all been dealing with drought, fire, flood and climate change. All these things help us realize the importance of the work we’re doing.”

Sears agreed, adding that a lot of the work was made possible thanks to the support of many partners, also committed to improved water management and action on climate change. “We’re grateful to all of our community partners for hanging in there with us.”

A copy of the 2021 Annual Report can be found at <https://bit.ly/3mUZo0V>. A recording of the annual meeting will also be available on our website soon, at <https://www.obwb.ca/overview/annual-reports/>.

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