

Sept. 14, 2021

## NEWS RELEASE

# OKANAGAN RESIDENTS WHO CONSERVED WATER THIS SUMMER CELEBRATED IN CRITICALLY WATER-SHORT YEAR

**Kelowna, B.C.** – In a year when it really mattered, Okanagan residents are being thanked for their efforts to conserve water this summer. As it has for the last 11 years, the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB)'s Okanagan WaterWise program launched its annual "Make Water Work" campaign in May, encouraging residents to pledge to reduce their water use.

"Given this year's record-breaking heatwave, earlier start to the wildfires, and the ongoing drought through the summer, making water work – and not wasting it – was more critical than ever," explained Water Board Communications Director Corinne Jackson, who manages the OkWaterWise program and its Make Water Work campaign.

Make Water Work is delivered in partnership with local government and water utilities throughout the valley, recognizing the water is connected – from Armstrong to Osoyoos, from the water in upper valley reservoirs, to the valley-bottom lakes, to the aquifers. As an incentive, the title of "Make Water Work Community Champion" is awarded each year to the community that collects the most pledges per capita. In an effort to drum up pledges in friendly competition, mayors from across the valley posted [videos](#) this summer declaring who they were making water work better for. For some it was for their community, for others it was their grandchildren, or the planet. An additional prize of a \$750 WaterWise yard upgrade was to be awarded to one lucky person who pledged online.

Lindsey Craig of Summerland has now received the good news that her name was drawn for that \$750 prize. "We're pretty water conscious," said a happy Craig. "It's hard not to be. It's pretty dry," she added, noting how low nearby Trout Creek and other creeks are this year. "And it just seems to be getting hotter with fires every summer. It hardly rains."

Craig was born and raised in Penticton and is now, with her partner, raising her own young family. She said she notices things are changing in the valley and is interested in doing what she can to conserve water, be a good steward, and be a role model to the family's three and six-year-old.

"We talk about how we treat our world, pick up garbage, we try to teach the kids to not waste water. We help with the school gardens. We also have a small garden at home with raspberries, blueberries, carrots, tomatoes, squash and peppers, and we don't use chemicals in the garden." With her winnings, Craig is looking to remove some turf at home and change it to be more WaterWise and pollinator friendly.

As for the awarding of the "Make Water Work Community Champion," the title went to the District of Peachland. This is the district's third win after achieving it in 2016 and 2019. In [recent years](#), the championship seems to be ping-ponging between Peachland and Armstrong. While the District of Summerland had the most pledges overall this year, Peachland had more per capita.

"When I first started to ask people to pledge I was looking to win against Armstrong," Peachland Mayor Cindy Fortin joked. "But then I saw Summerland coming up from behind and I couldn't quit," she laughed. "In all seriousness, it was such an important message here this year. We got a stark look at climate change this summer. What we do in Peachland and around our valley, in our own yards, has a powerful effect. Collectively we can make a difference.

“I’m very proud of the people of Peachland who understand the importance of saving water, especially this year with the drought. But I really want to give a shout out to everyone who pledged this year,” she added.

“Sorry Summerland – next year!” Fortin added, tongue in cheek.

According to Jackson, although the contest is finished for this year, the need to conserve continues.

“The temperatures are cooling, which helps with evaporation, but we still are not seeing enough precipitation to help us through the current drought,” Jackson explained. “We are asking residents to continue to follow current water restrictions and reduce their use. This has been a tough year for salmon which are making their way back to streams that are experiencing low flows, and for farmers who still need water for fall crops.”

Residents can find water restrictions for their neighbourhood and tips to make water work best in their yard at [www.MakeWaterWork.ca](http://www.MakeWaterWork.ca). Plus, fall is an excellent time to plant. Jackson suggests swapping out some water-thirsty lawn and plant material for more WaterWise varieties which will hold up in the Okanagan climate. A great place to start is with the [Make Water Work Plant Collection](#) which includes 105 perennials, grasses, trees and shrubs.

There are a number of Okanagan garden centre and irrigation businesses that have partnered with the Make Water Work campaign to help residents WaterWise their yards. Partners include: Shepherd's Hardware and Blue Mountain Nursery in Armstrong, Nicholas Alexander Landscaping and Swan Lake Market & Garden in Vernon, Ace Hardware in Lake Country, Better Earth Gardens and ProSource Irrigation in Kelowna, GardenWorks in Penticton, Sagebrush Nursery in Oliver and Sandhu Greenhouses in Osoyoos.

“If we have another year like the one we just had, people are going to be forced to make some tough choices and look at where do we use the water we have,” said Jackson. “Now’s a good time to make changes in your yard, getting drought tolerant plants in now so that roots can get established and ready for next year.”

-30-

**MEDIA CONTACT:** Corinne Jackson, OBWB – Communications Director  
Office: 250-469-6271 Cell: 250-718-7249  
E-mail: [corinne.jackson@obwb.ca](mailto:corinne.jackson@obwb.ca)