

# WATER PROTECTION PROJECTS IN THE OKANAGAN

Friday, April 22nd 2022 - 1:18 pm



As the Okanagan continues to grow, and the impacts of climate change continue to challenge the availability of sufficient clean water in the region, the Okanagan Basin Water Board has announced funding for several projects to help address these issues. "By protecting the waters we have and finding better ways to do this, our valley will be in a much better position to weather whatever comes our way – flooding, drought, and wildfires," explained James Littley, OBWB's Operations and Grants Manager.

In all, the Water Board (OBWB) approved \$350,000 in funding to 15 projects through its Water Conservation and Quality Improvement (WCQI) Grant Program.

One innovative project funded this year, is City of Kelowna's "Snow Storage Location Risk Assessment." Currently, the city stores urban snow at four locations with various conditions (e.g. paved/unpaved, connected/not connected to city storm sewer, close/not close to environmentally sensitive areas). The city proposes to sample the four sites for pollutants like metals, tire-derived contaminants, and more, which could harm surface water, groundwater and soil. The study will also include recommendations that will be shared with other Okanagan local governments. "This could be an easy win for water," noted Littley.

Another project funded this year is the Town of Spallumcheen's "Source Water Quality Sampling in Deep Creek." Historically, this stream has been heavily stressed due to agricultural production and run-off. This project will sample water quality at various sites along the creek before and after spring melt and also sample for aquatic invertebrate diversity to measure ecosystem health. The township will also work with each landowner to fine-tune prescriptions to address water health. Instead of using enforcement and compliance, the board noted that this project focuses on working collaboratively with people to protect the water in their backyards and on their farms, helping ensure better water quality as it flows south through the rest of the valley.

Another project, which was granted a second year of funding, is "Assessing Microplastics in Okanagan Lake" by Seven in the Ocean. Last year, phase one of the project sampled surface waters in Kelowna and at the Kelowna Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) and discovered microplastics. Phase 2 will expand sampling on Okanagan Lake and include sub-surface water and sediment sampling in Vernon, Kelowna, Peachland, Summerland and Penticton, as well as continued water sampling at Kelowna's WWTP. The goal is to gather enough data to inform strategies to reduce microplastics in the environment. "As we try to reduce plastic pollution it's important to understand the scope and the source of the problem, helping drive solutions to address it," Littley said.

Since the program began in 2006, and with this latest award of 15 grants worth \$350,000, the board has now provided 315 grants to Okanagan non-profits, First Nations, local governments and irrigation districts, worth more than \$5.47 mill. in total. These projects have had combined budgets of over \$37.5 million going toward water improvements in the Okanagan.

For a full listing of this year's funded projects and more information on each, please see below. For more information on projects funded over the past 16 years, visit our WCQI database at [https://www.obwb.ca/wcqi\\_project/](https://www.obwb.ca/wcqi_project/).