



Okanagan Basin
WATER BOARD

BOARD REPORT: June 5, 2014

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OBWB Directors

Doug Findlater - Chair,
Regional District of Central
Okanagan

**Juliette Cunningham - Vice-
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North Okanagan

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North Okanagan

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of Okanagan-Similkameen

Allan Patton, Regional District
of Okanagan-Similkameen

Stu Wells, Regional District of
Okanagan-Similkameen

James Pepper, Okanagan
Nation Alliance

Toby Pike, Water Supply
Association of B.C.

Don Dobson, Okanagan Water
Stewardship Council

**The next meeting of the OBWB
will be 10 a.m., August 5, 2014
at Regional District of Central
Okanagan.**

Okanagan Basin Water Board Meeting Highlights

Water Board launches “Speak Out” campaign to urge action on invasive mussels:

Residents of the Okanagan are being encouraged to send letters to their MLAs and MPs, urging action to help prevent introduction of invasive zebra and quagga mussels into our waters. Visitors to www.DontMoveAMussel.ca can simply click on the “Speak Out” button, add their name and address, and hit send. The email campaign was launched in response to concerns from residents, local governments and water utilities. The letters echo the call from the OBWB, urging the B.C. government to set up inspection stations and the federal government to pass regulations requiring Canada Border Services agents to inspect watercraft for invasive species before allowing them to enter Canada. The radio ad can be heard at: <http://chirb.it/F3tFBr>

OBWB to request mussel decontamination unit for the Okanagan:

The OBWB will be asking the B.C. government to permanently move equipment for decontaminating boats to the Okanagan – a region considered at high risk for invasive zebra and quagga mussels given the region’s draw as a boating destination. There are two decontamination units in Kamloops and one in the Kootenays. To improve the capacity of trained staff in the Okanagan, the OBWB will be offering to help host decontamination training for its milfoil control crew, other local government employees and conservation officers in the Okanagan.

Board approves receipt of \$50,000 grant to extend wetland strategy work:

The OBWB has been awarded \$50,000 from Environment Canada for Phase 2 of its Okanagan Wetland Strategy. Phase 1 included mapping existing wetlands. Phase 2 will focus on communication and protection strategies. Wetlands, once considered a nuisance and a waste of valuable land, are now known to be valuable to communities. They act as giant sponges during storms, soaking up extra water to prevent flooding. They are also like giant filters, absorbing pollutants and breaking them down over time. Wetlands also attract birds and wildlife. Today, more than 85% of the Okanagan’s wetlands and natural riparian areas are gone, and remaining areas are at risk of loss.

Joint board-council meeting hears First Nations success story on fish:

As part of its annual joint Water Board and Water Stewardship Council meeting, board directors and council members received an update from Okanagan Nation Alliance on efforts to restore sockeye salmon to the Okanagan. In the 1800s, the sockeye population was estimated at 100,000. Those numbers dropped as dams were built and riparian areas disturbed. The ONA, with help from senior governments in the U.S. and Canada have been restoring fish passage and habitats. The 2014 sockeye run is expected to reach historic levels with salmon making it all the way back up to Skaha Lake.

Board approves Annual Financial Statements:

Directors approved the 2013-14 audited financial statements. Programs include milfoil control, Sewage Facility Assistance Grants to Okanagan local governments, and the Water Management Program including the Water Conservation & Quality Improvement grant program, water education and outreach, the Water Stewardship Council, and an array of water science initiatives.

For more information, please visit: www.OBWB.ca