



Okanagan Basin
WATER BOARD

BOARD REPORT: July 10, 2015

1450 KLO Road, Kelowna, BC V1W 3Z4

P 250.469.6271 F 250.762.7011

www.obwb.ca

OBWB Directors

Doug Findlater - Chair,
Regional District of Central
Okanagan

**Juliette Cunningham - Vice-
Chair,** Regional District of
North Okanagan

Doug Dirk, Regional District of
North Okanagan

Bob Fleming, Regional District
of North Okanagan

James Baker, Regional
District of Central Okanagan

Tracy Gray, Regional District
of Central Okanagan

Andre Martin, Regional
District of Okanagan-
Similkameen

Sue McKortoff, Regional
District of Okanagan-
Similkameen

Peter Waterman, Regional
District of Okanagan-
Similkameen

Peter Waardenberg,
Okanagan Nation Alliance

Toby Pike, Water Supply
Association of B.C.

Rob Birtles, Okanagan Water
Stewardship Council

**The next meeting of the OBWB
will be 12 p.m. September 4,
2015 at Rotary Centre for the
Arts, in Kelowna, following our
Annual General Meeting.**

Okanagan Basin Water Board Meeting Highlights

Mudboggging concerns in Okanagan watersheds discussed: The board heard from Regional District of North Okanagan staff on efforts to protect drinking water reservoirs from damage by recreational users — a valley-wide concern. Current options include creating specified recreation sites in the area but away from their drinking water source, or closing the area to recreation all together. After hearing the presentation the board voted to update its policy on Multiple Use of Crown Land in Watersheds, emphasizing that water protection should be the highest priority use and calling on statutory decision makers to ensure permitted land uses do not degrade water. This will be sent to B.C.'s ministries of Environment, and Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations with a letter urging increased enforcement and fines to deter further damage to these sensitive and important areas.

Water Board renews call to Province on Blue-Green Algae protocol: It's been a year since the province conducted a pilot in the Okanagan to test a new protocol for local governments to respond to blue-green algae blooms. This type of algae when it blooms can be toxic and cause illness to swimmers and be fatal to pets. The need for a consistent approach came to light after a bloom in Osoyoos in 2013. Town staff could not find any guidance on when to close or open a beach when a bloom is suspected. The OBWB asked the province to help find a solution, but progress has been slow. The board is sending a letter to the province urging that the protocol be completed and will be sharing it with municipalities to raise awareness regarding the algae and include info on what to look for. It is expected that blue-green algae blooms could be an issue in the Okanagan this summer given warmer-than-normal water temperatures. For more on blue-green algae, visit: www.obwb.ca/bga/.

Directors hear response to milfoil challenges: The board was updated on summer milfoil control efforts. Despite extra time spent rototilling the invasive weed this past winter, growth this year is reportedly the worst it has been in 30 years. Early spring run-off and warm water temperatures have contributed to the problem. Additional staff and shifts have been added to help with harvesting (mowing). While rototilling deroots the plant, this can only be done in cold temperatures after the tops die back. Directors were told that in addition to super-charged growth this year, recent vandalism to a harvester put an added strain on control efforts. As well, staff must work within specified work windows under federal fishing regulations. This became an issue this year because of how fast the weed has grown.

Mussel expert announced as OBWB keynote speaker: The Water Board has invited Julia Lew, with the Southern Nevada Water System, to provide the keynote at its AGM on Sept. 4 at Rotary Centre for the Arts. Lew will be presenting on her agency's invasive mussel response and management in Lake Mead. Directors also applauded the recent adoption of federal regs allowing Canada Border Services agents to stop and inspect incoming watercraft for aquatic invasives, including mussels. The board is continuing to urge the province to provide permanent, mandatory inspection stations along the B.C.-Alberta border and commit to funding all treatment and containment programs should an infestation occur.

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