



Okanagan Basin

WATER BOARD

BOARD REPORT: December 4, 2015

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www.obwb.ca

Okanagan Basin Water Board Meeting Highlights

Kelowna groundwater research shows overuse in some areas: The board heard from Nicole Pyett and Craig Nichol from UBC Okanagan on groundwater research looking at the interaction between ground and surface water and how water from aquifers contributes to Okanagan Lake supply. The areas studied included Knox Mountain, Maude Roxby and Okanagan Mountain Park. While there was significant variation year-to-year (2011-13), overall there appears to be a drop in supply in some study areas and extraction may be the cause. As population increases this could affect water supply, the board was told. Also, because of the interconnection between ground and surface water, and the connection between all waters of the Okanagan, it was noted that over-use in one area will affect other communities. Research suggests that water licences need to consider the connection between surface and ground water. For more on the research visit: http://www.obwb.ca/wcqi_project/groundwater-discharge-to-okanagan-lake/.

Board approves annual grant themes for funding: Directors approved a list of themes as priorities for the 2016 Water Conservation and Quality Improvement (WCQI) Grant program, helping address issues identified as needing attention. The themes include source drinking water protection, drought planning, water flow monitoring, groundwater studies, irrigation improvement, and water metering. In all, \$300,000 is available. Eligible applicants include non-profit community groups, local governments (regional districts or municipalities), and irrigation or improvement districts. Even with the increased focus on specific types of projects, the Water Board will consider all eligible applications. The complete program guide and application forms can be found at www.obwb.ca/wcqi. Application deadline is 4 p.m. Friday, Feb. 12, 2016.

Okanagan wetland restoration efforts continue to grow: The board was provided an update on wetland restoration efforts in the valley, working with Okanagan Nation Alliance, BC Wildlife Federation, the Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program, South Okanagan and Similkameen Conservation Program, Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship Society and others. Projects currently under development include Munson Pond in the Central Okanagan, Lakers Pond in the North Okanagan and Osoyoos oxbows in the South Okanagan. These projects have been chosen for their strategic importance in bringing back valley wetlands and natural riparian areas, with an estimated 85% of them already gone.

OBWB looks to renew commitments for water monitoring: Water Board staff will be meeting with local governments in the valley, looking to continue the collaboration on stream flow volume (hydrometric) monitoring stations. The purpose of the stations is to help track valley water supplies, recognizing that the supply is expected to come under greater pressure as our population increases and with climate change. The hydrometric data has proven useful to local government in making planning decisions and helping determine climate change-related infrastructure decisions (e.g. improvements to address 1 in 100-year flood events). It will also support research on Environmental Flow Needs for fish as required under the new B.C. Water Sustainability Act. The board also discussed various water quality monitoring projects currently underway in the valley by a variety of agencies.

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 10 a.m. February 2,
2015 at Regional District of
Central Okanagan in Kelowna.**

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