



Okanagan Basin
WATER BOARD

BOARD REPORT: June 3, 2020

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Okanagan Basin Water Board Meeting Highlights

OBWB Directors

Sue McKortoff - Chair,
Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen

Cindy Fortin - Vice-Chair,
Regional District of Central Okanagan

Victor Cumming, Regional District of North Okanagan

Rick Fairbairn, Regional District of North Okanagan

Bob Fleming, Regional District of North Okanagan

James Baker, Regional District of Central Okanagan

Colin Basran, Regional District of Central Okanagan

Toni Boot, Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen

Rick Knodel, Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen

Chris Derickson, Okanagan Nation Alliance

Bob Hrasko, Water Supply Association of B.C.

Denise Neilsen, Okanagan Water Stewardship Council

The next regular meeting of the OBWB will be 10 a.m. Tuesday, July 7, 2020. Location to be determined.

Water Board repeats call to Province to improve groundwater licencing: Directors voted to send a letter to the B.C. Government, urging them to step up efforts to licence existing groundwater users. Groundwater licencing was key in moving from the century old B.C. Water Act to the new Water Sustainability Act in 2016, recognizing that it would help users and decision makers better understand B.C.'s water use and manage it during scarcity. In fall 2018, the OBWB pushed for an extension to help more users register and the province extended the deadline to March 2022. However, only about 4,000 of 20,000 groundwater users have applied to-date. The board's letter will include recommendations, including better communication to potential applicants. More info on the importance of licencing can be found at <https://www.obwb.ca/well/>.

Board moves forward on Indigenous reconciliation: The board accepted a staff report on the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People and Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls for Action, as it relates to water. The report is consistent with the goals in the OBWB's recently adopted "Strategic Plan – 2020-2024." The board and staff will be embarking on an education process to advance reconciliation with Okanagan Indigenous communities. The Strategic Plan is available at <https://bit.ly/3eJeSxw>.

Virtual events planned to wrap 2020 B.C. AquaHacking Challenge: The board heard that after a successful virtual semi-final in late March, the B.C. AquaHacking (AH) Challenge Final will be held online on June 25. As part of the lead-up to the final, there will be a screening of "Brave Blue World" on June 19. The film, like the AH Challenge itself, focuses on tech solutions to today's water issues. More details will be available soon at www.OBWB.ca and on our Facebook page www.facebook.com/OkWaterWise.

Okanagan mayors sharing water-saving videos from home: An update was provided on the launch of the OBWB-Okanagan WaterWise's annual outdoor water conservation campaign, "Make Water Work." Due to COVID-19 and the difficulties with an in-person, public launch, Okanagan mayors submitted videos of themselves pledging to Make Water Work (MWW) and taking actions to conserve water in their yards, recognizing the hot summer ahead. The campaign, delivered in partnership with Okanagan local governments and water utilities, includes an expanded MWW Plant Collection and 10 garden centres promoting the collection, encouraging residents to make WaterWise plant choices. Details at www.MakeWaterWork.ca. The mayor's video is at <https://youtu.be/Xv4evZNbeWM>.

Long-anticipated Okanagan flood maps unveiled: After two years of effort, and with the help of many partners, new Okanagan flood maps are complete. The maps are the cornerstone of a new website at www.OkanaganFloodStory.ca. Visitors to the site will also find information on the Okanagan's flood history, how climate change is effecting flooding, how to reduce risk, prepare and more. The board learned that one of the partners, Regional District of Central Okanagan, has received a "Community Excellence Award for Environmental Sustainability" from the Southern Interior Local Government Association for the collaborative project.

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