



Okanagan Basin
WATER BOARD

BOARD REPORT: September 9, 2020

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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.
Tues. Oct. 6, 2020.
Location to be determined.

Okanagan Basin Water Board Meeting Highlights

Water Board's 2020 Annual Report released: Board of Directors were presented with the OBWB's Annual Report "Water Connects Us," now available online at obwb.ca/annualreport. The report includes an overview of the main initiatives undertaken during the past year (April 1, 2019 – March 31, 2020) as part of the OBWB's three main programs: Water Management, Milfoil Control and Sewerage Facilities Grants. This year is the OBWB's 50th anniversary and plans are underway to hold a public event online in the fall. Details TBA.

Directors vote to initiate Water Monitoring Program: The board adopted Terms of Reference for an Okanagan Hydrometric Information Network Program. The program responds to a long-recognized deficit of hydrometric monitoring stations in the valley in which stations, previously operated by various levels of government, have dropped from 156 in the 1980s to 25 by 2007. The stations, which help monitor water use, are important to local and senior governments for community planning and decision-making, especially with climate change affecting water availability. The goal of the program is to increase the number of stations, and improve data access from existing stations, in partnership with Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA), senior governments and Okanagan water suppliers.

Water Board to engage province in talks on lake water levels: In response to a request from Peachland council and concerns around annual flooding in recent years, the OBWB board discussed Okanagan lake levels, managed by the Province of B.C. Okanagan Lake level operations are based on targets to address flooding, drought, and the needs of fish and the larger ecosystem, but do not account for climate change. Staff noted that recent Okanagan flood mapping also suggested the need for a review of lake management. Provincial staff have agreed to come and speak with the board in October to begin the conversation.

B.C. budget committee hears call for watershed funding: The OBWB joined a number of B.C. watershed organizations and sent the province a letter supporting a BC Watershed Security Fund as part of the province's economic recovery from COVID-19. The board was told that, among other recommendations, B.C.'s Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services has recommended the government commit in the next budget to "advance water sustainability in (B.C.) by providing a dedicated, sustainable, annual funding source." For its part, OBWB is preparing a source protection toolkit for water utilities which would be applicable to other areas of the province. Such a fund could help implement best practices from the toolkit.

OBWB proposes to partner for B.C. AquaHacking Challenge 2021: Following a successful B.C. AquaHacking Challenge in 2020, the board voted to enter into a partnership with AquaForum to host the challenge again in 2021. AquaHacking is intended to engage young professionals in helping solve critical water issues. The 2020 B.C. challenge resulted in teams focusing on invasive mussels, stormwater pollution and flooding.

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