



## BOARD REPORT: November 9, 2023



Okanagan Basin  
WATER BOARD

1450 KLO Road, Kelowna, BC V1W 3Z4

P 250.469.6271 F 250.762.7011

[www.obwb.ca](http://www.obwb.ca)

### OBWB Directors

**Sue McKortoff - Chair,**  
Regional District of Okanagan-  
Similkameen

**Blair Ireland - Vice-Chair,**  
Regional District of Central  
Okanagan

**Victor Cumming,** Regional  
District of North Okanagan

**Rick Fairbairn,** Regional  
District of North Okanagan

**Christine Fraser,** Regional Dis-  
trict of North Okanagan

**Wayne Carson,** Regional  
District of Central Okanagan

**Charlie Hodge,** Regional Dis-  
trict of Central Okanagan

**Doug Holmes,** Regional  
District of Okanagan-  
Similkameen

**Rick Knodel,** Regional District  
of Okanagan-Similkameen

**Tim Lezard,** Okanagan Nation  
Alliance

**Bob Hrasko,** Water Supply  
Association of B.C.

**Jeremy Fyke,** Environment &  
Climate Change Canada

**The next regular meeting of the  
OBWB will be Tuesday, Dec. 5,  
online.**

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## Okanagan Basin Water Board Meeting Highlights

**Water Board meets with Premier on water issues:** OBWB Chair (and Osoyoos Mayor) Sue McKortoff and Executive Director Anna Warwick Sears provided updates on recent meetings with B.C. Premier David Eby. Issues discussed included: stronger protection against the threat of invasive zebra and quagga mussels, an increase to B.C.'s Watershed Security Fund, the need to address provincial water staffing shortages, and funding to replace the aging Okanagan Lake dam in Penticton. The board also acknowledged the province's ministry restructuring, moving most water-related policies and water management from Ministry of Forests to Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, hoping it ensures water is given higher priority in natural resource decision-making.

**Board discusses next steps in addressing invasive mussels:** The board discussed the quagga mussel situation in Idaho, and efforts to bring attention to the issue in the Okanagan and beyond. Since the discovery in September, state officials have released a copper-based pesticide into the Snake River to kill the mollusks. Effectiveness won't be known until spring, but almost seven tons of fish have died. Following last month's board discussion, the OBWB sent letters to B.C. local governments, chambers and tourism associations, asking for support for its calls to action. Those calls include a temporary moratorium on boats coming into B.C. until the impact of Idaho's response is known and the B.C. government has time to address gaps in its inspection system. The OBWB has received several letters of support. An update will be given at the Thurs. Nov. 9th Okanagan Water Stewardship Council meeting where discussion will include the creation of a working group to address the threat to the Okanagan.

**OBWB keeps watchful eye on drought situation:** Directors were told recent rains have helped move the Okanagan from Drought Level 5 (where adverse impacts to socio-economic or ecosystem values are almost certain) to Level 2 (where impacts are unlikely). However, a number of streams remain between Level 3 (impacts possible) and 5, remaining impassable to spawning salmon. Some aquifers are also below normal levels. Significant precipitation over winter will be important to help water sources recover and ensure the Okanagan doesn't begin the 2024 irrigation season in drought.

**Water Grant program for 2024 reviewed:** The board reviewed its Water Conservation and Quality Improvement Grant Program for the coming year and approved the theme "Drought Resilience" for additional consideration during the application review process. The program awards grants up to \$30,000 to Okanagan local governments, improvement districts and non-profits, with \$350,000 total available. A call for applications and more details will be announced in the coming weeks. The application deadline is Feb. 23, 4 p.m.

**Board approves 2024-25 budget:** Board directors approved a \$3.9 million budget. The budget includes funds for the Sewerage Facilities Assistance Grants Program, Milfoil Control Program, and the Water Management Program (which includes the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council, Water Research, WCQI grants, and Communications and Outreach).

**For more information, please visit: [www.OBWB.ca](http://www.OBWB.ca)**