



Okanagan Basin
WATER BOARD

BOARD REPORT: April 4, 2019

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OBWB Directors

Sue McKortoff - Chair,
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Lisa Wilson, 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 an abbreviated session May 7, 2019 starting at 9 a.m. at the Four Points Sheraton Hotel in Kelowna. This will be followed immediately by a joint Board – Water Stewardship Council meeting.

Okanagan Basin Water Board Meeting Highlights

Invasive milfoil control and indigenous mussel discussed: The board was updated on the Eurasian Watermilfoil Control Program and efforts to attain a B.C. government permit to allow the OBWB to harvest (mow) the weed in summer and rototill in winter. At issue has been rototilling (de-rooting) the plant which is considered the most effective control method but which provincial staff are concerned could harm the native and at-risk Rocky Mountain Ridged Mussel. The board will be sending a letter to the province and federal government requesting additional research into the effects of invasive milfoil on native mussels. Staff will also continue to work with the province to address this issue, recognizing the importance of the weed control program to water quality, a healthy aquatic ecosystem, and public enjoyment of local beaches.

Preparations underway for potential drought: Staff have several projects underway to help Okanagan water utilities prepare for a possible drought this year, including an update of the OBWB's Okanagan Drought Response Strategy. If the B.C. government declares the valley in Level 2 drought, or higher, the strategy is triggered and includes activities that OBWB will undertake including drought bulletins to water providers, public communications, and more. Staff are also conferring with the province's Thompson-Okanagan Regional Drought Response Team. They are also working with utilities, who draw off the Okanagan's valley bottom lakes, to integrate a newly-developed drought trigger system into their local drought plans.

Registration opens for 2018 Water Supply Webinar: The OBWB is hosting its annual Water Supply Webinar on Friday, April 12, 11 a.m. to 12 noon. The online seminar will include updates from Environment and Climate Change Canada, B.C. River Forecast Centre and others. Updates will include the current state of reservoir levels, snow pack, groundwater, as well as a look at the weather and wildfire forecast. This event will be of interest to local government staff and elected officials, the agricultural community, water managers, water professionals and others. Register at <http://bit.ly/2VqOLUA>.

Board approves water grants: The Board of Directors approved funding for 17 projects through its Water Conservation and Quality Improvement Grant Program for a total of \$318,846. Projects had to show valley-wide benefit and additional consideration was given to those that addressed the board's annual theme of climate change. In total, 31 applications were submitted for a total ask of \$688,281. The program has an annual \$300,000 available. Additional funding was provided through other projects that came in under budget. Applicants will be notified of the results in the days ahead.

Okanagan youth challenged to "Be a Climate Hero": The OBWB re-launched its Okanagan WaterWise Challenge during Canada Water Week in March. Okanagan youth are being encouraged to "Be a Climate Hero" by participating in various activities that can improve our water and our planet and report back in multi-media format. They are then entered to win various water-related prizes. Entries are due April 30. A special page has been set up for teachers, parents and youth with full details at www.OkWaterWise.ca/challenge.

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