



BOARD REPORT: October 7, 2020

1450 KLO Road, Kelowna, BC V1W 3Z4

P 250.469.6271 F 250.762.7011

www.obwb.ca



Okanagan Basin

WATER BOARD

OBWB Directors

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Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen

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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. Nov. 3, 2020.
Location to be determined.

Okanagan Basin Water Board Meeting Highlights

Water Board celebrates 50th anniversary: The Okanagan Basin Water Board held a small celebration on October 1st, to mark its 50th year in the valley. The event was deliberately small to keep within COVID-19 health guidelines. On hand were current and past board chairs and Water Stewardship Council chairs. Photos from the event can be found at http://bit.ly/FB-OkWW_50Anniv. An online public event is being planned with details available soon. Also, the OBWB's 2020 Annual Report, which celebrates the agency's 50th, is available at <https://bit.ly/36pZMMo>.

OBWB & province to work together on lake level management review: The board heard from Shaun Reimer, with B.C.'s Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development. Reimer is in charge of managing Okanagan lake levels, operating the Okanagan dam in Penticton. The presentation was requested following a request from Peachland Council, asking the OBWB to work with the province to address lake levels and flooding in recent years. City of Vernon has also raised concerns about the high level of Kalamalka Lake this year. Reimer agreed that the lake level management targets and operations should be reviewed and added that there are several issues that make it complex to manage. Only so much water can be released downstream at a time to prevent flooding, erosion of the Okanagan River channel, and to protect fish. At the same time, just enough has to be held back to meet irrigation and ecosystem needs in summer. Compounding the management of the lake level is the variable inflows in the last few years, he added, noting that the variability is expected to increase with climate change. The OBWB and Reimer agreed that they would work together to review lake management and acknowledged the importance of including Okanagan Nation Alliance, local communities, the province and federal government in the discussions.

Milfoil control to be reviewed and new machines added: The OBWB was updated on some recent discussions with UBC Okanagan to review current milfoil control methods. The current method of rototilling the invasive weed in winter and harvesting in summer was developed in the 1970s and 80s and little research has been done since. The research will look at lower-impact alternatives that reduce sediment and native mussel disturbance, and limit turbidity. The board also approved funds to purchase a new milfoil equipment trailer and milfoil crane truck.

Water survey underway in Okanagan: Directors were briefed on a telephone survey that is underway in the Okanagan. The survey is a repeat of ones conducted in 2009 and 2014, aimed at gauging resident's awareness and concern regarding various water issues in the valley. The survey will be used to help guide public outreach efforts, as well as the OBWB's response to water quality and quantity issues.

Additional flood maps to be developed: The board approved funds to make improvements to Okanagan lakeshore flood maps (available at www.OkanaganFloodStory.ca), so that they can be used more widely in local government planning.

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