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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OKANAGAN WATER BOARD SEEKS GRANT APPLICATIONS TO ADDRESS DROUGHT & OTHER WATER CHALLENGES

Kelowna, B.C. – The Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) is now accepting applications to its Water Conservation and Quality Improvement (WCQI) grant program for 2024.

With an annual funding pool of \$350,000, applicants that meet the program criteria can receive between \$3,000 and \$30,000 for water projects within the Okanagan Basin. Eligible applicants include Okanagan local governments and First Nations, irrigation districts and non-profit organizations. This year, the board of directors has chosen the theme “Drought Resilience,” encouraging projects aimed at prevention, management, and/or mitigation of drought or water shortages in the basin.

“We are already seeing the impacts from climate change with extreme weather events,” says Carolina Restrepo-Tamayo, the OBWB’s Office and Grants Manager. “When it comes to water, that translates to more flooding and droughts. It means greater stress and impacts on infrastructure like dikes that may fail, water and wastewater treatment plants – either overwhelmed with flood water, or unable to keep up with demand in the case of drought. This summer’s drought has impacted some streams and their ability to support fish. It also fueled the terrible wildfires that broke out across the valley. But there are solutions – ways that communities can create resiliency and get prepared,” added Restrepo-Tamayo.

The WCQI grants focus on solutions - improving ways to manage water, to lessen current and future problems, and protect the environment and ultimately, Okanagan communities.

Projects that address drought can receive up to 10 extra points during their evaluation, which could increase their chances of being funded. There are also several other project categories eligible for funding, including source (drinking) water protection, groundwater, restoration, and education.

The complete WCQI Program Guide, including scoring criteria and other detailed information, and application forms can be found at www.OBWB.ca/wcqi. This year’s application deadline is Friday, Feb. 23, 2024, 4 p.m.

Since the WCQI program began in 2006, the OBWB has funded 331 projects worth more than \$5.8 mill., recognizing the importance of enhancing water quality and conserving water in the Okanagan, known as one of Canada’s most water-stressed regions.

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