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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OKANAGAN WATER BOARD ANNUAL GRANT INTAKE OPENS WITH FOCUS ON SOURCE WATER PROTECTION

Kelowna, B.C. – The Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) is now accepting applications to its 2025 Water Conservation and Quality Improvement (WCQI) grant program.

With \$350,000 available in total, applicants that meet the program criteria can receive between \$3,000 and \$30,000 for projects that occur within the Okanagan Basin. Eligible applicants include Okanagan local governments and First Nations, irrigation districts and non-profit community organizations.

Since 2006, the OBWB has granted over \$6.55 million to 358 projects that conserve water and/or enhance water quality in the Okanagan and provide valley-wide benefit.

An ongoing issue of concern in the Okanagan is the management and protection of source waters. “Source water refers to the point where our drinking water originates. Source protection extends beyond drinking water and includes protecting water for all other uses as well—agriculture, the environment, wildlife habitat, and fisheries.” says Carolina Restrepo, Office and Grants Manager. “Source water pollution is a growing concern and comes primarily from human influences. Water can be polluted by runoff from roads and other impermeable surfaces, people directly polluting reservoirs and illegal dumping in the bush, industrial activities like mining and forestry, and some agricultural practices. Over time, a lot of the natural systems like wetlands that would have historically helped clean and filter water have been damaged, impacting water quality for people, but also fish and the larger ecosystem.”

This year, the board is focusing on this theme of **Source Water Protection**, prioritizing projects that enhance and protect water quality. These projects will 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 drought planning, climate change, groundwater, and education.

Applicants are encouraged to review the application package early to ensure they meet the program requirements before the application deadline of Feb. 21, 2025, 4 p.m. The complete Program Guide, including scoring criteria and other detailed information, and application forms can be found at www.OBWB.ca/wcqi.

MEDIA CONTACT: Anna Warwick Sears, OBWB – Executive Director
Office: 250-469-6251
Mobile: 250-306-1753
E-mail: anna.warwick.sears@obwb.ca