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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OBWB reignites decades-long fight against chemicals in Okanagan Lakes

Kelowna, B.C. – Syilx Territory – The Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) is renewing its long-standing opposition to aquatic herbicides and pesticides in Okanagan Lakes. Recent federal and provincial approvals of chemicals, including the aquatic herbicide “ProcellaCOR FX,” and an aquatic pesticide formulation of potash, have reignited these concerns.

“From the earliest days of the OBWB in the 1970s, there were concerns about the use of herbicides and pesticides in the lake.” says OBWB Executive Director Anna Warwick Sears. “It’s not acceptable to apply these chemicals in Okanagan Lakes. These lakes are our drinking water sources, and their environmental, social and cultural value is priceless.”

Chemicals have not been permitted in Okanagan Lakes since the 1970s, when provincial agencies attempted to use 2,4-D to treat invasive Eurasian watermilfoil. This effort was abandoned after strong public opposition. However, herbicides are permitted for use in the U.S. portion of Osoyoos Lake.

Board Directors voted unanimously in support of adopting OBWB’s Statement Against the Application of Chemical Pesticides and Herbicides in Okanagan Waters that reads:

For over 50 years, the Okanagan Basin Water Board has played a crucial role in safeguarding water quality, ensuring access to clean drinking water, supporting healthy agriculture, and maintaining thriving aquatic ecosystems and advocating for source protection. Okanagan communities deeply value and depend on their water, not only drinking water, but for clean, safe water for the environment, recreation and tourism. Our communities strongly oppose the use of chemical pesticides and aquatic herbicides in our lakes, streams, and reservoirs. The Okanagan Basin Water Board stands firmly against the application of these and any other chemicals in Okanagan waters.

The OBWB warns that without regulatory protections, Okanagan waters remain at risk.

“We cannot wait. Without immediate, stringent regulatory protections, the health of Okanagan waters, and our drinking water, remains critically endangered,” states OBWB Board Chair Blair Ireland.

To bolster its opposition to aquatic chemicals, the OBWB is seeking further support and partnerships.

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