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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Melissa Tesche Named New OBWB Executive Director



Sylix Territory, Kelowna, B.C. – The Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) proudly welcomes Melissa Tesche as its new Executive Director.

Tesche, already well-known to the organization, brings extensive experience from her roles as General Manager of the BC Fruit Growers Association, and the Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Board.

"Melissa is an exceptional addition to the OBWB and the Board is very excited to work with her to drive our future as we are increasingly being asked to do more," says Board Chair Blair Ireland. "In today's challenging climate, we need a strong leader who can address the growing threats to our water, such as increasing drought conditions,

invasive mussels and chemical pollution. Her prior experience with us gives her a deep understanding of our work, and her proven track record with local organizations makes her the perfect fit."

Tesche, originally from northern Alberta, moved to the Okanagan with her husband in 2008 to pursue a master's degree in Conservation Biology at UBC Okanagan. Her research took her across the valley's lakes, where she spent summers studying painted turtles and deepening her appreciation for the region's interconnected water systems. From 2010 to 2012, she worked at OBWB, covering a maternity leave placement, where she developed a passion for local governments collaborating on shared water challenges. She then spent nearly a decade leading the Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program, during which she started a family and put down roots in Kelowna. Most recently, she served as General Manager of the BC Fruit Growers' Association, successfully guiding the organization through a year of multiple crises, before returning to OBWB as Executive Director.

"It is an honour to lead OBWB into its next chapter," says Tesche. "Taking care of our shared water is essential to protecting the Okanagan's quality of life. Ensuring we have enough clean water—for our fish, our families, and our farms—is no small task. It requires collaboration across communities, governments, and industries. Water security isn't something we achieve alone; it takes all of us working together. As the saying goes, 'If you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far, go together.'"

Tesche is taking over from retiring Executive Director Anna Warwick Sears on April 22, 2025, following her 19-year tenure as Executive Director.

“I am pleased and proud that Melissa has accepted this position. She brings fresh ideas, leadership and vision to this role ensuring the OBWB's continued commitment to protecting the Okanagan's water for generations to come,” adds outgoing Executive Director Anna Warwick Sears.

Tesche has an M.Sc., Conservation Biology from the University of British Columbia, and B. Ed., Secondary Sciences and B.Sc., Biological Sciences, from the University of Alberta, 2004.

The OBWB is a valley-wide partnership established in 1970 to address critical water issues in the Okanagan watershed. The Board of Directors, comprised of representatives from the three Okanagan Regional Districts, the Okanagan Nation Alliance, the Water Supply Association of BC and the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council, will work closely with Tesche to ensure the protection of the Okanagan basin. The Okanagan basin, a nearly 200-km long and 8,000 km² area that includes the six main lakes – Okanagan, Kalamalka, Wood, Skaha, Vaseux and Osoyoos – and surrounding mountains, faces many unique water challenges.

For more information, visit www.obwb.ca.

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