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## September Water Board Report

The Sept. 5, 2025 Board Meeting was an abbreviated meeting following our Annual Public Meeting. Below are highlights from both.

### Annual Public Meeting Highlights

- **Osoyoos named Community Champion:** The Town of Osoyoos was named the 2025 "Make Water Work Community Champion" for the first time. [Learn more.](#)
- **A farewell to Dr. Anna Warwick Sears:** Retired Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) Executive Director Dr. Anna Warwick Sears said goodbye with an impactful 19-year retrospective.
- **Monitoring our water:** OBWB Water Stewardship Director Dr. Nelson Jatel presented on the OBWB's hydrometrics program, emphasizing, "You can't manage what you don't measure."

[Click here to read more about the 2025 Annual Public Meeting.](#)

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**Water Board echoes ONA - new provincial drought ratings aren't measuring up:** OBWB will send an official letter to the province to address

concerns with the new drought rating system, echoing issues raised by the Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA). The ONA recently sent a letter to Honourable Randene Neill, Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS) outlining concerns regarding the disconnect between the province's assigned regional drought levels and on-the-ground conditions. OBWB staff have also been reporting this disconnect as the summer progressed—with the province's new method of regional drought rating indicating low or no drought conditions in the Okanagan despite a number of key creeks with concerning low flows, and many utilities requiring advanced stage watering restrictions.

[Click here to read the ONA's letter to the province](#)

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### Development of potentially revolutionary invasive mussel detection tool proposed:

Directors received a presentation from Dr. Michael Russello, Professor of Population and Conservation Genomics at UBCO, with a proposal to develop a rapid eDNA detection tool for zebra, quagga, and golden mussels. Developed in combination with University of California Davis and Queen's University, the tool would allow for detection results in minutes, with the analysis done in the field. The current gold standard for field inspections is the use of mussel-detecting dogs that are limited in numbers and expensive to train/deploy. The final phase of the proposed project would test the new tool against the dogs. If the ability to detect invasive mussels is similar, this tool would provide an extremely economical and accessible method of inspection. Board Directors were very enthusiastic about the proposal and staff were directed to explore a potential partnership with UBCO and return to the Board with recommendations.

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### New invasive milfoil identification guide available to public:

Directors heard about a new public education tool recently launched by OBWB staff to help Okanagan residents better identify invasive milfoil in Okanagan lakes. The visual identification guide includes photos of native aquatic plants for comparison, helping to reduce inaccurate public reports and allowing staff to prioritize verified sightings. The guide is available on the OBWB's six milfoil machines, and online through our website.

[View the chart here.](#)

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## **New milfoil harvester arrives - summer launch planned:**

The OBWB's newest milfoil harvester, a custom-built 2025 Aquarium HM620, was delivered on Sept. 8, 2025. This unit replaces a machine from 1978 and offers significant improvements in efficiency and maneuverability, including a custom design that allows the machine to safely pass under the low-clearance bridge in Osoyoos. With the 2025 harvesting wrapping, an official launch is planned for summer 2026.



**The next regular meeting of the OBWB will be  
Tuesday, Oct. 7, 2025 at the offices of the RDOS,  
101 Martin St., Penticton, B.C.**

[Go to OBWB.ca](https://www.obwb.ca)

# Okanagan Basin Water Board 2025 DIRECTORS



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**Doug Holmes** - Vice-Chair, Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen



**Victor Cumming**, Regional District of North Okanagan



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**Sue McKortoff**, Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen



**Tim Lezard**, Okanagan Nation Alliance



**Bob Hrasko**, Water Supply Association of B.C.



**Sheena Spencer**, Water Stewardship Council

## Resources



Okanagan Basin Water Board | 1450 K.L.O. Rd | Kelowna, BC V1W 3Z4 CA



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