

September 22, 2017

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**AS SUMMER OF WACKY WEATHER COMES TO CLOSE IN
OKANAGAN, WATERWISE RESIDENTS RECOGNIZED**

Kelowna, B.C. – As summer draws to a close, the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) and its Okanagan WaterWise program begin to wrap up their valley-wide residential water conservation campaign “[Make Water Work.](#)”

As part of the annual campaign, Okanagan residents are encouraged to visit the Make Water Work website (www.MakeWaterWork.ca), review a list of water-saving tips and pledge to conserve. In addition to saving water in our valley, residents are then entered to win prizes, including a \$6,000 WaterWise yard upgrade. Yesterday it was announced that Kelowna’s Laurie Weisgarber is this year’s Grand Prize winner.

Called with the good news, Weisgarber couldn’t quite believe it. “No way – you’re kidding! I think I’m going to cry.

“When I heard about Make Water Work, I initially checked out the website to learn more and looked at the check list to make sure I was doing everything I could do. And then when I saw there was a prize I thought ‘Wouldn’t that be nice to have some work done.’ I don’t normally enter contests,” Weisgarber explained, adding she was very aware of the flooding followed by drought this summer and the need to do her part to conserve.

“It was a crazy summer,” notes OBWB’s Communications Director Corinne Jackson, who manages the Okanagan WaterWise program and its Make Water Work campaign. “We’ve normally started talking about water conservation in May, as people start turning on the taps, but of course in May this year we were dealing with historic flooding.”

And while it may have seemed strange, added Jackson, Make Water Work partners, both local governments and utilities in the valley, were encouraging conservation during the flooding because their water treatment facilities were overburdened. Then right away, the fire season started. “By the end of the summer, we have had streams drying out, there are concerns about having enough water for fish, the Okanagan broke lowest precipitation and highest temperature records, and B.C. has battled the worst fire season on record.”

This year, when we saw the two extremes of climate change on display in our valley – both flooding and drought – the reasons for preparing our landscapes to be more WaterWise and adopt Make Water Work principles could not have been clearer, Jackson said.

Weisgarber noted she has already done some work in her yard, including removal of several cedars. “They were using huge amounts of water, they’re messy, and attract wasps.” Next, she looks forward to replacing some water-thirsty lawn with beautiful low-water plantings and making fixes to her old irrigation system.

Thanks to contest partners, Weisgarber will receive \$4,000 in service from KelownaGardens.com who will provide a landscape audit, plus landscape and irrigation improvements. Another \$2,000 in materials is being provided through Bylands Nursery, ProSource Irrigation and Eco Turf Farms. All prizing has been kindly donated.

“My family is very environmentally conscious,” she added. “My mom comes from a family of farmers. My uncle still farms here in Kelowna and talks about the importance of water.

“I think we all have to do things to make sure the future is secure for generations to come. Plus, anything that I can do to save me time, with less yard maintenance, and money on my water bill, is great. This is very exciting! I can’t wait to phone my mom!”

In addition to awarding a Grand Prize winner, the community with the most pledges per capita is named Make Water Work Community Champions. This year, the City of Armstrong emerged as the winner. This is Armstrong’s second win, after taking the title in 2015. Past winners include the District of Peachland (2016) and Town of Oliver (2014),

Armstrong Mayor Chris Pieper was on hand for an announcement of his community’s win at the OBWB’s recent Annual Meeting, and noted he was shocked to receive the news after his community lost the title to Peachland last year. But, he added, he and others worked hard to win it back this year, going so far as handing out Make Water Work bookmarks with water-saving tips and pledge information at garden centres, and elsewhere.

“I think there is more awareness every year about the need to protect and conserve our water,” Pieper said. “I see more lawns in town that are allowed to go dormant over the summer, and people changing their yards to low-water landscapes.

“I congratulate all the residents who pledged and we look forward to the 2018 challenge,” he added.

Although the Make Water Work campaign is winding down for the season, Jackson added that with cooler temperatures and more precipitation on the way, now is a good time to be outside, converting yard space to be more WaterWise. The Make Water Work Plant Collection, created in partnership with the Okanagan Xeriscape Association and Bylands Nursery, is a great place to start. Learn more at www.MakeWaterWork.ca.

Another good resource is the Okanagan WaterWise website at www.OkWaterWise.ca and the [Slow it. Spread it. Sink it! – Okanagan Homeowners Guide](http://www.OkWaterWise.ca/pdf/HomeDrainageGuide_Okanagan.pdf) (www.OkWaterWise.ca/pdf/HomeDrainageGuide_Okanagan.pdf).

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