

Mayors get WaterWise

Wayne Moore - May 20, 2018 / 5:00 am



Mayors from around the Okanagan have taken the pledge to get WaterWise.

The annual "Make Water Work" program from the Okanagan Basin Water Board seeks buy-in from residents up and down the valley to conserve water.

Corrine Jackson, communications director with OBWB, admitted it seems counter-intuitive to be asking people to conserve water when the valley is trying to beat back flood waters from rising creek and lake levels.

"But, the fact is conservation is critical during flooding and drought. We saw this last year with water treatment plants being overwhelmed and calls to slow the flow," said Jackson.

"Based on what the experts are telling us, we need to prepare this year for a repeat of what we had last year. Flooding, followed by record-breaking temperatures... and, we're expecting another long, hot summer."

Jackson says there is a very good chance of another drought this summer.

Mayors gathered at the UnH2O Demonstration Garden to pledge their support and try and drum up support within their communities as part of a community challenge.

Armstrong won that challenge in 2015 and 2017. Peachland won in 2016.

Armstrong Mayor Chris Pieper offered up a good-natured challenge to Peachland Mayor Cindy Fortin. The loser has to send the winner a home-grown product such as wine, or cheese.

Vernon Mayor Akbal Mund pledged not to wash his car as much this summer, while acting Lake Country mayor, Coun. Blair Ireland, suggested residents install rain barrels under their gutters and use the water to water their gardens.

West Kelowna Mayor Doug Findlater admitted there needs to be a culture change concerning water waste. He said West Kelowna's water rates have doubled, and reminded his residents they can lower that bill by conserving water.

Gwen Steele, executive director of the Okanagan Xeriscope Association, challenged city officials in attendance to enact bylaws that can promote conservation.

She said new developments could be required to have cisterns to collect rain water which lands on the roof which, in turn, could be used to irrigate the property.

Jackson added cities such as Las Vegas do not allow homes to have grass lawns in the front yard.

Residents are encouraged to make their own "Make Water Work" pledge for a chance to win \$500 in prizes from participating sponsors.

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