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NEWS RELEASE

OKANAGAN MAYORS PROMOTE WATER CONSERVATION, OFFERING PEEK INTO THEIR OWN BACKYARDS

Kelowna, B.C. – The Okanagan Basin Water Board’s Okanagan WaterWise program has released an amusing [video](#) of mayors showing how they are conserving water in their yards as part of its annual “Make Water Work” launch.

“Normally we would have been having a public launch, with the mayors pledging to conserve water outdoors this summer and encouraging their residents to do the same. But with the current COVID-19 pandemic, and the need for physical distancing, we had to get creative. We thought this would be a fun way to get the message out and the mayors were wonderfully game,” explained Water Board Communications Director Corinne Jackson, who manages the Okanagan WaterWise program and its Make Water Work campaign.

In response, mayors got quite innovative with their 30-second videos while still getting the outdoor water conservation message across.

“It was fun,” said OBWB Chair and Osoyoos Mayor Sue McKortoff, acknowledging the talent of her fellow mayors and noting Armstrong Mayor Chris Pieper’s “doctoring” of his community’s 2018 “Make Water Work Champion Community” certificate, declaring his intention to win the championship title in 2020. And while a little community rivalry is entertaining, McKortoff said the annual campaign is also an important reminder to valley residents. “For many years we’ve had high snow and rain in spring, and then a couple months later we are dry and dealing with drought. As our valley grows and with increased use during the summer months, for orchards, vineyards, and people’s yards, it’s important that we create more resilient landscapes and use water wisely.”

“Environment Canada and others are forecasting that our summer is going to be hotter than normal,” added Jackson. “With the coronavirus, more people are sticking closer to home and focussing on their yards. Now’s a great time to consider a yard makeover to be more water efficient.” To help, OkWaterWise teamed up with the Okanagan Xeriscape Association (OXA) to expand its *Make Water Work Plant Collection*, growing the list from 54 to 105 plants. In response to public feedback, the updated list includes a number of native and edible plants.

“We’re thrilled to be a part of this effort, helping residents of the Okanagan make the right plant choices for our climate,” added OXA Executive Director Sigrie Kendrick, “For those looking for some inspiration and an example of what’s possible for gardening in the Okanagan, we invite people to visit our UnH2O Demonstration Garden at 4075 Gordon Dr. in Kelowna, where a number of the Make Water Work plants are featured.”

In addition to a larger plant list, the program has also expanded the number of garden centre partners in the valley who are promoting the collection. Partners include: Shepherd's Hardware and Blue Mountain Nursery in Armstrong, Swan Lake Nurseryland and Nicholas Alexander Landscaping in Vernon, Ace Hardware in Lake Country, GardenWorks in Penticton, Sagebrush Nursery in Oliver and Sandhu Greenhouses in Osoyoos. And new this year: Better Earth Gardens in Kelowna and Dogwood Nursery in West Kelowna.

Okanagan residents are encouraged to visit www.MakeWaterWork.ca, pledge to take one or more of the listed actions to help save water and receive a \$2 coupon towards the purchase of a plant from the *Make*

Water Work Plant Collection, available at participating garden centres. As well, their pledge goes towards helping their community win the Make Water Work Community Champion title.

“The competition has been fun but, really, we all win when we help protect the water of our valley,” added McKortoff.

Okanagan residents are encouraged to pledge to:

1. Water lawn between dusk and dawn.
2. Water plants, not pavement.
3. Never mow low. Let it grow.
4. Choose plants suitable to our dry climate.
5. Tune up my irrigation.
6. Aerate my lawn and top dress with compost.

Check out the mayors video at <https://youtu.be/Xv4evZNbeWM>. To pledge and find the Make Water Work Plant Collection, visit www.MakeWaterWork.ca.

Make Water Work is a valley-wide water conservation initiative aimed at tackling the second largest use of all water in the Okanagan, residential outdoor use, and delivered in partnership with Okanagan local governments and utilities.