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Armstrong Mayor Chris Pieper can celebrate as his community takes home the 2020 Make Water Work Community Champion title. (OBWB-OkWaterWise photo)

Armstrong crowned champion in Make Water Work campaign

Okanagan Basin Water Board campaign encourages communities to conserve water outdoors during summer

BRENDAN SHYKORA / Sep. 17, 2020 12:00 p.m. / [COMMUNITY](#) / [LOCAL NEWS](#)



Residents of Armstrong have once again proven their water wisdom.

The results of the 2020 Okanagan WaterWise program are in, and the city has recaptured the Make Water Work Community Champion title following wins in 2018, 2017 and 2015.

The annual Okanagan Basin Water Board campaign launched in May, encouraging communities to engage in a friendly competition to pledge water conservation outdoors throughout the summer months.

The Township of Spallumcheen took second place in what was a tight race throughout the summer, as the neighbouring communities tried to beat each other.

“We had real buy-in from staff and council,” said Armstrong Mayor Chris Pieper. “We went to our various clubs – Lions, curling, etc. – and sent members emails and went hard.

“Half the people we were harassing were from Spallumcheen, so it increased both of our numbers,” he laughed.

Spallumcheen Mayor Christine Fraser said staff and council also sent emails and had flyers with Make Water Work (MWW) information at the front counter when people came in to pay their taxes. But their best weapon was Coun. Gerry Popoff.

“Coun. Popoff is like the godfather of our community and any time someone called him he told them to go to [MakeWaterWork.ca](#), learn about water conservation and take the pledge – and they did!” Fraser said.

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For Pieper more important than the win over their regional rivals was the fact that the program led to water awareness and savings.

“We definitely see people turning to more drought-tolerant landscapes, especially in new subdivisions,” Pieper said. “It helps to have garden centres like Blue Mountain Nursery and Shepherd’s Home Hardware carry appropriate plant material, including the Make Water Work Plant Collection. And, I think people talk about it a lot more than they used to. There seems to be a greater recognition of water’s importance.”

In all, 677 people pledged to conserve – a 28 per cent increase over last year, according to Water Board Communications Director Corinne Jackson, who manages the Okanagan WaterWise program and its MWW campaign.

The MWW [website](#) had almost 12,000 visits in the last few months with more than 8,700 first-time visitors, Jackson said.

Jackson said it’s been a strange year for the program with no face-to-face outreach due to COVID-19. Instead, the campaign relied on social media and other advertising to get the message out.

“It seemed to work,” she said “We’ve had excellent engagement.”

Okanagan residents are encouraged to continue to be WaterWise and follow the MWW pledges. If you water:

- Water lawn between dusk and dawn
- Water plants, not pavement
- Never mow low. Let it grow
- Choose plants suitable to our dry climate
- Tune up your irrigation
- Aerate the lawn and top dress with compost

