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NEWS RELEASE

OKANAGAN MAYORS TAKE TO SOCIAL MEDIA WITH WATER CONSERVATION CALL

Kelowna, B.C. – As the weather heats up in the Okanagan, so does the competition between communities to be named “Make Water Work Community Champion.” This week, Okanagan mayors helped kick off Make Water Work, a valley-wide outdoor water conservation campaign, with videos on social media, pledging to conserve this summer.

“It’s fun, but also a serious issue,” notes Armstrong Mayor Chris Pieper, whose community has collected the most number of pledges to win the champion title in 2015, 2017, 2018 and 2020. “We all drink out of the same watershed,” he adds.

The Make Water Work campaign, led by the Okanagan Basin Water Board and its Okanagan WaterWise program, is delivered in partnership with Okanagan local governments and utilities and is aimed at addressing the second largest use of all water in the valley, residential outdoor use.

“This spring, the Okanagan has seen record-breaking temperatures and record low precipitation,” added OBWB chair and Osoyoos Mayor Sue McKortoff. This week’s rainfall, while welcome, was not enough to make up for this water deficit and all indicators suggest we could be headed for another drought this summer. “We often take water for granted and we need to be much more mindful about water waste,” she said.

In response, McKortoff and mayors from across the valley are posting videos on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube, pledging to make water work better for grandchildren, their community, the fish, and more. They’re sharing what actions they’re taking to conserve water outdoors, and encouraging residents to join them.

“We all share this one water so we’re all in this together,” added McKortoff.

Since the Make Water Work campaign began in 2011, McKortoff says she has seen a shift in people’s attitude. “I think Make Water Work has caused people to be more aware of how much water they use and when they use. I see people putting in the right type of irrigation, like soaker hoses and drip emitters, and planting the right material for our dry climate.”

Pieper agrees. “When you look at new subdivisions, you see more WaterWise landscapes for sure. And I think nurseries and landscapers are more on board.”

Okanagan residents are being encouraged to go to www.MakeWaterWork.ca and 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.

For their efforts, residents who pledge online will be entered to win a \$750 WaterWise gift certificate in WaterWise plant, yard or irrigation materials. A 2nd \$750 gift certificate is also available to residents who post a photo on

Facebook or Instagram of them making water work better in their yard and using #MakeWaterWork and tagging @OkWaterWise on Facebook, or @Okanagan_WaterWise on Instagram. The contest runs until August 29, 2021.

“The Okanagan is one of Canada’s most water-stressed regions,” added OBWB Communications Director Corinne Jackson, who manages the OkWaterWise program and its Make Water Work campaign. “The fact that we have water restrictions is an indication of that.

“During the past year, due to COVID-19, people have been spending more time in their yards. While they’re out there, we want to encourage and help them transition their yard to be more water efficient.”

As part of the Make Water Work campaign, OkWaterWise teamed up with the Okanagan Xeriscape Association to create the *Make Water Work Plant Collection*, which includes 105 perennials, grasses, trees and shrubs, including a number of native and edible plants. The plant collection is featured at a number of garden centres throughout the valley. Partners include: Shepherd's Hardware and Blue Mountain Nursery in Armstrong, Nicholas Alexander Landscaping and Swan Lake Market & Garden in Vernon, Ace Hardware in Lake Country, Better Earth Gardens in Kelowna, GardenWorks in Penticton, Sagebrush Nursery in Oliver and Sandhu Greenhouses in Osoyoos. The campaign is also working with ProSource Irrigation to promote WaterWise irrigation product.

For more on the *Make Water Work Plant Collection*, water restrictions, tips to Make Water Work, and more, visit www.MakeWaterWork.ca.

While Pieper can't predict the weather this summer, he's willing to predict another championship win for Armstrong. “We’ve proven to be leaders,” he added with a laugh.

Check out some of the mayors’ pledge videos here:

- **Osoyoos Mayor and OBWB Chair Sue McKortoff:**
https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=3004520946458328&id=100007013567403
- **Peachland Mayor and OBWB Vice-chair Cindy Fortin:**
<https://www.facebook.com/DistrictofPeachland/videos/961120548038946>
- **Lake Country Mayor and OBWB Dir. James Baker:**
<https://www.facebook.com/lakecountry.gov/posts/4063196313735763>
- **Kelowna Mayor and OBWB Dir. Colin Basran:**
<https://www.facebook.com/cityofkelowna/posts/10159000124904029>
- **West Kelowna Mayor Gord Milsom:**
<https://www.facebook.com/cityofwestkelowna/posts/5537610236313055>
- **Oliver Mayor Martin Johansen:**
<https://www.facebook.com/TownofOliver/posts/3704395029672124>