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Mayors 'make water work'

Okanagan Mayors call to action on water conservation

Madison Erhardt - Jun 20, 2021 / 4:00 am



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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 water this summer.

"It's fun, but also a serious issue," said 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," said 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.

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.

"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."

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.

"The Okanagan is one of Canada's most water-stressed regions," said 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.

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