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## 'Make Water Work' winner announced as Peachland

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Osoyoos Mayor Sue McKortoff holds up a sign with her pledge to support this year's O.B.W.B. WaterWise community challenge. (Photo: from O.B.W.B. WaterWise video)

The annual 'Make Water Work' campaign, hosted by the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB), awarded this year's winner to be the District of Peachland. This will be their third win after achieving it in 2016 and 2019.

The campaign has been going on for the last 11 years, and is done through the partnership of the OBWB and local governments throughout the valley. Communities are encouraged to collect as many pledges from their residents as possible who are committed to reducing their water usage.

The community that collects the most pledges is awarded as the 'make water work community champion.'

"Given this year's record-breaking heatwave, earlier start to the wildfires, and the ongoing drought through the summer, making water work – and not wasting it – was more critical than ever," explained OBWB's communications director Corinne Jackson, who manages the OkWaterWise program and its Make Water Work campaign.



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Mayors from across the valley take to posting videos on social media to pledge who they will be conserving water for, whether that is their community, grandchildren, or the plant.

"When I first started to ask people to pledge I was looking to win against Armstrong," Peachland Mayor Cindy Fortin joked. "But then I saw Summerland coming up from

behind and I couldn't quit," she laughed. "In all seriousness, it was such an important message here this year. We got a stark look at climate change this summer. What we do in Peachland and around our valley, in our own yards, has a powerful effect. Collectively we can make a difference."

Although the contest is finished this year, the need to conserve water still continues, said Jackson.

"The temperatures are cooling, which helps with evaporation, but we still are not seeing enough precipitation to help us through the current drought," Jackson explained. "We are asking residents to continue to follow current water restrictions and reduce their use. This has been a tough year for salmon which are making their way back to streams that are experiencing low flows, and for farmers who still need water for fall crops."

Fall is an excellent time to plant, according to Jackson, who suggests swapping out a water-thirsty lawn and plant material for more WaterWise varieties which will hold up in the Okanagan climate. The Make Water Work Plant Collection is a helpful guide Jackson references, which includes 105 perennials, grasses, trees and shrubs.

"If we have another year like the one we just had, people are going to be forced to make some tough choices and look at where do we use the water we have," said Jackson. "Now's a good time to make changes in your yard, getting drought tolerant plants in now so that roots can get established and ready for next year."

The OBWB encourages residents to find water restrictions for their neighbourhood and tips to make water work best in their yard at [www.MakeWaterWork.ca](http://www.MakeWaterWork.ca).