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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**OKANAGAN RESIDENTS COMMIT TO CONSERVATION – WIN
WATERWISE YARD PRIZES**

Okanagan Valley, B.C. – The Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) and its Okanagan WaterWise program has wrapped up its valley-wide outdoor residential water conservation campaign “[Make Water Work](#)” for another year with the awarding of prizes.

As part of the annual campaign, Okanagan residents are encouraged to visit the Make Water Work website (www.MakeWaterWork.ca), review a list of water-saving tips, and pledge to conserve. In addition to saving water in our valley, residents are then entered to win prizes. There were three winners this year, one each in the North, Central and South Okanagan.

Kelsey Powell of Vernon won the \$500 in WaterWise irrigation material from ProSource Irrigation Supply, Pam Kirstiuk from Lake Country won \$500 in drought-tolerant turf material from Eco Turf Farms, and Summerland’s Holly Dunlop won \$500 in plant material from the Make Water Work Plant Collection courtesy of Grasslands Nursery.

“That’s awesome!” Kelsey responded when called with the news. “We put in a raised bed for veggies this year but we really wanted to expand our garden. Putting in the right irrigation will make sure water is getting to only what needs it.”

Asked what drew her to the contest she noted: “There needs to be more responsibility by homeowners to take care of what is a finite resource.” Plus, with two young children, there is even more reason to be concerned she added, noting that she and her husband Ryan are already teaching their four-year-old and 16-month-old boys to use water wisely, helping ensure a secure water future for them.

Les Gillespie is with ProSource and added that his company’s partnership in the Make Water Work initiative makes sense. “With water being such a valuable commodity in our region and with today’s advances in products and techniques, we believe that by educating on proper irrigation and installation we can make a difference. We are really proud to be a part of this program,” he added.

As for Pam, she noted the amount of water waste in the dry Okanagan and the need to conserve as her reason for taking the pledge. “I’m on a water meter now and can see how much I’m using, so over the last few years I’ve been doing things to do my part. Make Water Work is a great way to learn ways to do that.”

Asked why she chose the drought-tolerant turf prize, Pam explained she has planted a number of drought tolerant plants, including Sedum, lavender, yarrow, hens and chicks, wooly thyme, and more. Plus she has in-ground irrigation and drip irrigation in her garden beds. Re-doing a small part of her yard with drought-tolerant turf for her Chihuahuas Mojito and Tink, “is the last part of the yard that needs doing. It’ll make them very happy!”

Sue and Barry Paull, with Eco Turf, have been a Make Water Work partner since 2014. As for why they’ve stayed with the program, Sue said it’s an easy choice. “We value our environment. By working together, we are able to reach more people with our mutual message of water conservation and raise awareness about how to create beautiful, WaterWise yards in the Okanagan. Plus, we have kids. It’s important to us to lead and set examples for our children, teaching them to make eco-friendly choices and preserve our water.”

As for Summerland prize winner, Holly, she decided to pledge after seeing an ad on Instagram, not realizing she would be entered to win a prize. “I thought I could do my part to be WaterWise because I try to do these things. I make sure to not water during the day... I talk to my neighbours about xeriscaping...” She lives in an apartment and helps with the gardening, and has even been converting the space to include more low-water variety plants. But, Holly decided to donate the prize to a friend, Melissa Johnson, also from Summerland, who has been xeriscaping her yard.

“This is amazing. It’s amazing that she’d choose me!” said Melissa when told. “She’s quite a giving, thoughtful person. I need to find a way to give back to her.”

According to Melissa she started her front yard makeover last spring but there’s more to do. Asked why she took an interest in re-doing her yard, she notes, “I know how in the Okanagan it’s so dry and I don’t want to waste water.”

Thanks to Lauren Forsyth of Grasslands, Holly and Melissa spent Wednesday checking out a wide variety of low-water plants, part of the Make Water Work Plant Collection.

Lauren said that being involved in something where she is making a difference is important to her and her partner Mike Hughes, as well. “We do encourage customers to be WaterWise. There is a concern about water in the Okanagan. So we encourage people to conserve, we promote rainwater capture. The Make Water Work program has been great at helping us extend that message, with the Plant Collection list, the contest, and more.”

OBWB’s Communications Director Corinne Jackson, who manages the MWW program, notes that participation in this year’s campaign exceeded last year’s numbers.

“We had 603 unique entries this year, an increase of 33% over last year,” she said. “That’s great news when we know the need to conserve is an ongoing challenge in our valley.” Of course, for the second year in a row, the Okanagan was hit with flooding followed by drought. “The more we can help residents prepare their landscapes for these two extremes the more resilient our communities will be.”

In addition to the individual contest winners, a “Make Water Work Community Champion” is announced based on the number of pledges a community collects, per capita, each summer. The 2018 champion was announced as part of this year’s OBWB Annual Meeting in August. The City of Armstrong won the title again, after winning in 2015 and 2017. Other community champions have included Oliver in 2014 and Peachland in 2016. And, even though the Annual Meeting was held a month earlier than normal, with one month less to collect pledges, Jackson said the results were phenomenal. “Congratulations to Kelowna and West Kelowna who doubled their pledges this year, and to Coldstream and Lake Country who tripled their pledges!”

In addition to ProSource Irrigation Supply, Eco Turf Farms, and Grasslands Nursery, the OBWB-Okanagan WaterWise thanks MWW partners, Swan Lake Nurseryland, GardenWorks Penticton, Sagebrush Nursery and Sandhu Greenhouses.

Make Water Work is delivered in partnership with local governments and water utilities throughout the Okanagan.

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