



Board Report – August 2025

August 7, 2025

Highlights from the August 5, 2025 Meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board, held at the offices of the Regional District North Okanagan, Coldstream BC.

1. Water Board looks back as they prepare to look forward:

Board Directors received a presentation “51 Years Later: A Look Back at the 1974 Okanagan Basin Study.” The study that led to the formation of the OBWB took a new approach to water management, bringing together the combined skills of many experts in the fields of water quantity, water quality, waste treatment, socioeconomics, limnology and fisheries. Directors noted the valley’s growth in population surpassed the upper range of the predictive population modeling done in the study. The presentation set historical context for the strategic planning process that OBWB will undertake this fall. The formal engagement process will begin in October 2025, with the final draft scheduled for delivery at the March 2026 OBWB Board meeting.

Read the 1974 Okanagan Basin Study summary – [click here](#).

2. OBWB continues advocacy to Provincial, Federal Government on invasive mussel defence:

The OBWB continues to sound the alarm to senior governments on the economic devastation that follows the arrival of invasive mussels, calling for funding to enhance invasive mussel defense. James Littley, Chief Operating Officer, presented to the provincial Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services for Budget 2026 on June 10, urging the province to commit to annual funding of at least \$5.5 million for the Invasive Mussel Defense Program and establish a one-time \$5 million emergency response fund. On July 15, Executive Director Melissa Tesche, accompanied by OBWB Chair Blair Ireland, presented to the federal Pacific Caucus, which includes all B.C. Members of Parliament from the Liberal party, advocating for the federal government to match provincial funding and play a coordinating role with the western provinces that are currently mussel-free. She also underscored the need to bolster infrastructure funding for communities and the need for equitable federal funding at the new Canada Water Agency, where less than 2% of the total funds will be available for work in B.C.

3. OBWB responds to early, prolific invasive milfoil bloom:

An unusually early and significant milfoil bloom in Osoyoos this summer has prompted the milfoil team to begin harvesting in the lake two weeks ahead of schedule. In the first month alone, over 300 cubic yards of milfoil have been removed, a volume equivalent to covering a hockey rink with six inches of milfoil. Harvesting operations are also underway in Wood Lake, with plans to commence in Vaseux and Okanagan Lakes by early August.

4. New invasive milfoil harvester on its way:

A significant upgrade to the OBWB's lake management equipment is expected to arrive soon; a new milfoil harvester is expected to arrive in mid-August. The modern machine will replace the 1978 model that has reached the end of its service life. As of late July, the new harvester has been fully manufactured, painted, and in its final assembly stage in North Prairie, Wisconsin, boasting a more efficient on-board storage capacity of 15.5 cubic yards of invasive milfoil.

5. Mid-season outreach campaign update:

As the Okanagan heads into summer, the "Don't Move A Mussel" outreach campaign, in partnership with the Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society (OASISS), provided a mid-season update. As of July 25, OASISS has participated in over 20 community events, engaged with nearly 900 individuals, and surveyed close to 500 watercraft at 15 boat launches.

The “Make Water Work” campaign has also seen record-setting engagement this year and the contest for the Community Champion is heating up, with Armstrong currently leading, closely followed by Oliver and Osoyoos.

CTWIN for your garden AND your community – [Take the Make Water Work Pledge](#) and be entered to win one of two \$500 gift cards towards a WaterWise yard upgrade from one of our participating garden centre or irrigation partners!

The next regular meeting of the OBWB will be Tuesday, October 7, 2025 at the offices of the RDOS in Penticton, 101 Martin St, Penticton, BC. [Meet the Board – click here](#)