

WaterWise Tips to Protect Okanagan Drinking Water

The water of the Okanagan watershed is all connected – from the snow and water that collects in the hills, to the streams and lakes in the valley bottom, to the water that flows unseen, under our feet in aquifers.

We are all part of “One valley. One water.”

HELP KEEP WATER CLEAN:

- 1** **MAINTAIN HEALTHY FORESTS**
 WHY? Forests hold water, allowing for slower snow melt which can prevent flooding. The snow and water also help prevent wildfires.
- 2** **STAY ON TRAILS WHEN RECREATING AROUND WATERWAYS**
 WHY? Recreational activities in the watershed can muddy waters and add pollutants to reservoirs and streams.
- 3** **PROTECT NATIVE VEGETATION ALONG WATERWAYS**
 WHY? Removing and damaging vegetation along waterways can cause sediments to enter the water, increasing treatment costs, and can create the difference between safe drinking water straight from the tap vs. a boil water advisory.
- 4** **USE COMPOST AS A NATURAL FERTILIZER & PREVENT IT FROM RUNNING OFF YOUR PROPERTY**
 WHY? Chemical fertilizers, oil and grease, road salt, and other pollutants can run off our properties and contribute to invasive milfoil growth and algae blooms.
- 5** **IF YOU HAVE A SEPTIC SYSTEM, MAKE SURE TO PROPERLY MAINTAIN IT. GET IT PUMPED & INSPECTED BY A PROFESSIONAL EVERY 3 TO 5 YEARS**
 WHY? Wastewater from leaking septic tanks can pollute groundwater and make its way into waterways.
- 6** **PREVENT OIL AND GREASE, AND OTHER POLLUTANTS FROM ENTERING STORM DRAINS. DIVERT STORMWATER INTO VEGETATED SWALES TO FILTER POLLUTANTS**
 WHY? Storm drains flow directly into streams and lakes, carrying pollutants from our yards, driveways and parking lots.
- 7** **WHEN BOATING, MAKE SURE TO PLAY IN THE DEEPEST PART OF THE LAKE**
 WHY? Boating near the shoreline churns up sediment which can affect drinking water and water for wildlife. The wake can also damage sensitive shoreline habitat and disturb bird nests.
- 8** **ALWAYS PACK OUT WHAT YOU BRING IN TO BEACHES, WHEN HIKING AND CAMPING**
 WHY? Garbage, such as cigarette butts, plastic bottle lids, drinking straws, and bottle caps, left on beaches or near waterways will pollute water.
- 9** **HELP PROTECT THE OKANAGAN'S FLOODPLAINS, RIPARIAN AND WETLAND AREAS.**
 WHY? Almost 90% of the Okanagan's low elevation wetlands have been lost to development and invasive species, and are increasingly under pressure from climate change. But, these spaces are also important as natural filters – removing excess sediment and nutrients. They absorb carbon, helping address climate change, and produce oxygen. They are also critical habitat for wildlife and plants.

Resources



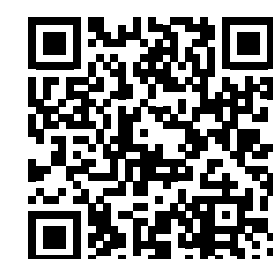
Slow It. Spread It. Sink It! An Okanagan Homeowner's Guide to Using Water as a Resource



Okanagan Lakeshore Living Guide



Source Water Protection Toolkit



Our Relationship with Water in the Okanagan – Education Guides

Learn More!

Find tips to protect Okanagan water at www.OkWaterWise.ca and www.OBWB.ca



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