

## MEDIA RELEASE

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For immediate release

### Shuswap Watershed Council awarding grants for water quality protection

The Shuswap Watershed Council (SWC) is announcing grant funding for projects that protect and improve water quality in the Shuswap watershed.

“Protecting water quality is the main objective of the Shuswap Watershed Council,” states Rhona Martin, Chair of the SWC. “Data shows us that at this time, the quality of the water is pretty good. Through our granting program, we have an opportunity to contribute to protecting our water and mitigating risk factors.”

The SWC’s Water Quality Grant Program offers funds to assist farms, landowners, and stewardship groups with projects that protect and improve water quality, with a focus on mitigating the risks associated with nutrient-loading from land into surface waters.

“Our grant program is focussed on phosphorus,” explains Erin Vieira, Program Manager for the SWC. “Phosphorus is an important factor of water quality and soil health. It’s needed for productive crops, but it’s also a key factor contributing to algal blooms. When more phosphorus and other nutrients flow into the lake, the likelihood of water quality issues and algal blooms can increase.”

“Our goal with the grant program is to help farmers and other land stewards keep nutrients on the land and in the soil, not running off or leaching into nearby creeks and rivers where it could contribute to water quality concerns,” Vieira says.

One of the grant recipients, Sunnybrae Winery and Vineyards, is using grant funds to upgrade existing irrigation infrastructure to ‘fertigation’ – a system that efficiently incorporates a precise amount of fertilizer with the water and applies it directly to the vines, reducing the risk of run-off.

“We are proud to support these innovative projects to reduce nutrient run-off into the watershed,” Vieira says. “It is inspiring to see our grant recipients working to protect the environment for now and the future.”

The other grant recipients for 2024 are Gietema Farms in Grindrod where grant funds will be used to install a Precision GPS™ to improve accuracy and efficiency in applying fertilizer and seed; Syme Farms in



Salmon Arm where manure storage will be improved on-farm; Foxtrot Dairy in Salmon Arm where new livestock control fencing will be built along a creek on-farm; and for livestock control fencing along Kingfisher Creek on a developing farm site owned/operated by Jeffrey and Kristy Czepil.

“Agriculture is a significant part of the economy in the Shuswap and contributes greatly to local food security. We want to support the adoption of new and improved nutrient management strategies by local farms to help protect our water quality,” says Chair Martin.

The total value of the grants being awarded in 2024 is \$59,961. The grant program is administered via a competitive process whereby applicants submit applications. The expense was approved at a SWC meeting in March, with work getting underway later this year. The SWC grant funds will leverage other cash and in-kind contributions for a combined total value of \$121,847.

Since the Water Quality Grant Program began in 2020, the SWC has awarded 18 grants worth a total of \$238,130. The next round of intakes for the grant program will open in November.

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About: The Shuswap Watershed Council is a watershed-based partnership organization that works on water quality and safe recreation in the Shuswap.

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