

June 26, 2020

NEWS RELEASE

B.C. AQUAHACKING CHALLENGE 2020 WINNERS ANNOUNCED, CREATING WIN FOR WATER

Kelowna, B.C. – Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) and Aqua Forum held its 2020 B.C. AquaHacking Challenge live and online yesterday afternoon, on June 25. Five final teams, representing universities from across Canada, presented their pitches to address water challenges in B.C. and beyond, Judges and participants voted for their top choices and winners were announced.

The winners are:

5th place – **UniteAG** from University of Victoria and Toronto's Queens University, solving stormwater contamination

4th place - **Elite** from UBC Okanagan in Kelowna, tackling stormwater contamination

3rd place – **Above Atlantis** from UBC Vancouver and Simon Fraser University, addressing flood risk

2nd place – **GAPSS (Gravity Assisted Particle Separation Systems)** from UBC Okanagan in Kelowna, working on stormwater contamination,

1st place – **Ozero** from Sherbrooke University, Quebec, addressing invasive mussels

The final prizes are \$20,000 in seed funding to the 1st place team, \$15,000 for 2nd, \$10,000 for 3rd, and \$2,500 for the teams placing fourth and fifth. In addition, the teams are awarded a spot in a local business incubator, and promotional video and media coverage for their new start-up. And, of course, there's the lasting impact these projects have on our freshwater.

An additional prize of \$1,000 was awarded to the Audience Top Choice – Team Elite.

"I'm so pleased and proud of the work of all the teams, and was delighted with the strong showing of the hometown teams," noted Anna Warwick Sears, OBWB's Executive Director. "We are very happy to see these projects go forward to become startup innovations. And we are very pleased that the first place team, Ozero, is focused on preventing the spread of invasive mussels! All of these issues are so important to the people of the Okanagan, and elsewhere. We welcome new partners and new solutions to help address them."

"We are grateful to OBWB for their invaluable partnership in making the B.C. AquaHacking Challenge such a success, and look forward to building on this in the near future," added Desiree McGraw, Aqua Forum's Chief Executive Officer. "We salute and celebrate the final teams who embody our mission to engage and empower the next generation of leaders, entrepreneurs and ideas in solving pressing water problems."

Olivier Liberge, Co-founder and Communications Manager for Ozero, explains that his team was working on a ballast wash to combat invasive zebra and quagga mussels as part of their Bachelor's degree when they learned of the B.C. AquaHacking Challenge. "We chose the project because we were interested in the lakes of Quebec and Canada, and making them a better place. We know water is a valuable resource and we wanted to preserve it," he said.

Indeed, invasive mussels was one of five issues chosen as part of the B.C. challenge. The others were stormwater contamination, flood risk, outdoor water use, and drinking water in Indigenous communities.

“We’ve seen mussels in our lakes and how they propagate very easily, and so we wanted to tackle this problem. You can see that they have caused biodiversity to drop,” Liberge added. “And because they are filter feeders, the water is clear, but algae has more access to light so this creates toxic algae blooms, Our beaches are covered in mussel shells that smell. It’s very sad. Tourists don’t go there.

“With this prize, we will be able to take our product out across Canada and prevent more lakes from being invaded from this and other aquatic invasive species. We are very excited.”

And to the other four teams, Liberge noted that the issues they are also tackling are important as well “We wish them all the very best.”

To watch the broadcast of the B.C. AquaHacking Challenge final, visit the OBWB’s Okanagan WaterWise Facebook page at <https://bit.ly/3i4KL6g>. A program with more on the teams, their solutions, the judges and more, can also be found at <https://bit.ly/31cRvZA>.

Special thanks to B.C. AquaHacking Challenge funders: De Gaspe Beaubien Foundation, RBC Foundation, Real Estate Foundation of BC, Teck Resources, Telus Friendly Future Foundation, IBM, Mitacs, Ovivo and Lavery Lawyers.

Please find a Backgrounder with Fast Facts attached below.

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BACKGROUND & FAST FACTS

B.C. AquaHacking Challenge by the numbers:

- 195 participants registered from post-secondary institutes across B.C., Alberta, Ontario and Quebec, forming 30 teams, of which 20 pitched at the semi-final in March 2020
- 76% of participants were undergraduates; 8% - young professionals; 7% - MSc students; 6% - college students; 3% - getting their PhD

B.C. AquaHacking Challenge issues:

- contaminants in storm water
- outdoor water conservation
- flood damage and risks
- invasive zebra and quagga mussels
- access to potable water in Indigenous communities

Participants per water issue:

- Stormwater contamination: 26%
- Invasive mussels: 8%
- Flood Damage and Risks: 23%
- Outdoor Water Use: 26%
- Potable Water in Indigenous Communities: 17%

The five finalist teams:

- **Above Atlantis** (UBC Vancouver and Simon Fraser University) – Issue: flood risk. Solution: Interactive online platform makes flood risk information more accessible to the public, adaptable to changing climate scenarios, and able to integrate public sourced information. *Team members: Joshua Kamijan, Jay Matsushiba, Hanieh Daliri, and Shantanu Dutt.*
- **Ozero** (Sherbrooke University - Quebec) – Issue: invasive mussels. Solution: A technology to decontaminate ballast water in sport boats to prevent propagation of zebra and quagga mussels in freshwater. *Team members: Benjamin Farley, Maxime Guay, Olivier Harpin, Matys Tessier, Olivier Liberge, and Christophe Morin*
- **Elite** (UBC Okanagan - Kelowna) – Issue: stormwater contamination. Solution: A gravity-based filtration system that removes oil, dust and petroleum contaminants from water. *Team members: Keyvan Khadem, Gavin Saini, Ahmed Ramadan, and Harvir Mann.*
- **GAPSS - Gravity Assisted Particle Separation Systems** (UBC Okanagan - Kelowna) – Issue: stormwater contamination. Solution: An engineered system that fits under existing storm drain basins to remove hydrocarbon compounds, sediment, and particulate matter from the point source. *Team members: Jacob Sol, Rudransh Kumar, Cole White-Robinson, Jayden Wong, Graeme Kumagai*
- **UniteAG** (University of Victoria and Queens University - Toronto) – Issue: stormwater contamination. Solution: A digital simulated platform that provides feedback to policy makers on the efficacy of farm incentives aimed at water conservation and nutrient management to protect water quality. *Team members: Waseem Jawad and Luke Trinity.*

- B.C. AquaHacking Challenge is one of three programs being held across Canada this year. Other challenges are taking place in Winnipeg and Atlantic Canada.

- Aqua Forum was founded by the De Gaspé Beaubien Foundation to connect youth and young professionals with an interest in freshwater issues, clean-tech innovation and entrepreneurship, with mentors who could help them launch real-world solutions. The AquaHacking Challenge is the organization's flagship program. After five years of programming in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Basin, the program is now coast to coast thanks to funding from RBC Foundation.



- B.C. AquaHacking Challenge funders: RBC Foundation, Real Estate Foundation of BC, Teck Resources, Telus Friendly Future Foundation, IBM, Mitacs, Ovivo and Lavery Lawyers

- Advisory committee partners: Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission, Okanagan Sustainability Leadership Council, Urban Systems, City of Kelowna, Okanagan Nation Alliance, and the B.C. Ministry of Environment and Climate Change and Ministry of Jobs, Trade and Technology – Cleantech Planning and Innovation Branch

- Academic partners: UBC Okanagan and UBC Vancouver, Okanagan College, Simon Fraser University, BC Institute of Technology, University of Victoria and University of Northern B.C., as well as several universities in Alberta, Ontario and Quebec.

- Implementation partners are: Hackworks, Waterlution, Purppl, and the OBWB's Okanagan WaterWise education and outreach program.

For more on the B.C. AquaHacking Challenge 2020, visit <https://aquahacking.com/en/bc-2020/>.