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# Unpredictable weather is the new normal

**JUDIE STEEVES**  
 STAFF REPORTER

Just hours after a one-in-10-year heavy rainfall hit the Kelowna area last Friday morning, a world-renowned expert on water and climate policy, Bob Sandford, told those at the annual general meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board such extreme weather events are now the norm.

"A warmer atmosphere can hold more water so storm water systems must be designed for a new normal," he said. "Major flooding events are increasing."

Current infrastructure was designed for an earlier time; a time when less extreme weather events were considered extreme and were rare, he said.

"The past is not a guide for the future," he added. "We need to manage water in a drastically changing west."

A resident of Canmore, Alta., Sandford witnessed this June's flooding of that city, Calgary and

High River due to a combination of heavy, prolonged rain and snowmelt. He says climate change is melting polar ice at an unprecedented rate, making the jet stream erratic, and de-stabilizing normal weather patterns around the world, rather than simply warming the planet.

"You must learn from Alberta's experience. Clearly no one is prepared. They're using 20-year-old flood maps which are no longer relevant," he warned.

Every one must become involved in adding resiliency to our hydrologic systems, he said.

He suggested enlisting nature to help, by protecting and restoring all aquatic ecosystems wherever possible and respecting them in the future. "We have to break out of our water and energy waste cycles. We don't have unlimited time to act," he warned.

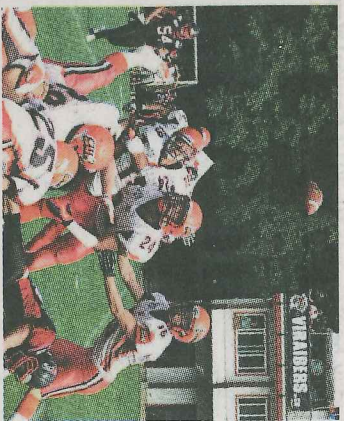
He had lavish praise for the OBWB, which he said is doing great work in this region in support of enhancing resiliency in the Canadian hydrological cycle.

Unfortunately, he said when there are budget cuts, monitoring is reduced, so the data is no longer available for relevant forecasting models.



**Bob Sandford**

**C A P I T A L**  
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