



Water experts talk about the dreaded 'D' word

Wed, 2010-04-14 12:44.

Local News

Officials at all three levels of government are talking about how to "drought-proof" the Okanagan.

Local, provincial and federal officials met this morning to talk about a number of factors that could lead to drought conditions in the valley.

Okanagan Basin Water Board Executive Director Anna Warwick Sears says the demand for water is increasing.

"What has increased is...the domestic outdoor use, which is really just domestic landscaping, residential landscaping.

As it stands, agriculture use tops the list of water demand in the Okanagan.

But Warwick Sears says farming demand for water is decreasing, as efficiencies have been found.

Environment Canada Meteorologist Doug Lundquist says we could be looking at a dry spring.

"At this point, (there's) a slightly higher probability it will be drier."

Lundquist says May to June will be a critical time for precipitation, when temperatures tend to increase.

Allan Chapman with BC's River Forecast Centre says the snowpack is beginning to melt filling the lakes and water sources.

But he says the snow pack is still well below normal for this time of year.

"Overall, the snow conditions in the Okanagan valley are well below normal. Generally, comparable to, or even in some areas slightly below last year's values."

Chapman says record temperatures in January and February helped melt the snow pack early, causing the low snowpack numbers we are seeing today.

Officials will meet again in the coming weeks to again discuss what steps can be taken to avoid drought conditions in the valley this summer.

David Woodard - Kelowna