

Late-spring rains crucial to Valley

Snow conditions in Okanagan Valley are well below normal

Special to The Daily Courier

The Okanagan's expanding population and extreme weather are taxing an already fragile water supply, a panel of environmental and weather experts heard Wednesday.

Panellists participating in an on-line seminar presented with the Okanagan Basin Water Board, learned an earlier melt, low summer stream flows, hotter summers and more evaporation are reason to be worried.

These place greater demands on the water supply, which may already be diminished.

Mission Creek, Brenda Mine, Grano Creek (Kettle River) and

Blackwall Peak (Similkameen) have water levels that are currently below yearly averages for this time.

On April 1, these regions are measuring about 80 per cent of normal snow amounts.

"That's about typically the date when we're pretty close to being at the peak snow in the Okanagan Valley," said Allan Chapman of the River Forecast Centre for the Ministry of Environment. "The snow is pretty comparable to what we experienced in 2009."

Chapman said mountain snow will continue melting into the regions lakes and reservoirs until about the end of June.

Overall snow conditions in the Okanagan Valley are well below normal and are comparable to those of 2009 and 2003, when there were low flow and drought situations, said Chapman.

At several measuring sites in the Okanagan Valley, snow conditions range between 55 and 90 per cent of normal levels. The Trout Creek area near Summerland and southward to Mount Kobau near Osoyoos have near normal snow levels thanks to precipitation in mid-January.

Meanwhile, snow levels in the Kettle and Similkameen drainage basins are about 45 to 75 per cent of normal range.

Three criteria determine a drought year: the flow in the Similkameen River from April to July, inflow to Okanagan Lake from April to July and Okanagan Lake water levels from June to July.

Doug Lundquist, an Environment Canada meteorologist, said climate conditions in the Okanagan were influenced by the effects of an El Nino winter, which brought a dry, mild winter to most parts of the province.

The Okanagan has two wet seasons, one in the winter and another in the late spring to early summer, said Lundquist, noting there is very little precipitation from February until early May.

"It's really critical that we receive our normal rainfall during the next rain season ... for two reasons," he said. "First of all, we want to try and build up water supplies by having the rains of mid-May through early July. If we don't get the rains and have hotter and drier conditions, we tend to want to irrigate and use more of it."

April to June is expected to bring temperatures that will be about 60 per cent above normal. Lundquist said it is difficult to forecast how much precipitation to expect.

"At this point, it's a slightly higher probability it will be drier," he said.

Late-spring rains crucial to Valley

Snow conditions in Okanagan Valley are well below normal

Special to The Daily Courier

The Okanagan's expanding population and extreme weather are taxing an already fragile water supply, a panel of environmental and weather experts heard Wednesday.

Panelists participating in an online seminar presented with the Okanagan Basin Water Board, learned an earlier melt, low summer stream flows, hotter summers and more evaporation are reason to be worried.

These place greater demands on the water supply, which may already be diminished.

Mission Creek, Brenda Mine, Grano Creek (Kettle River) and

Blackwall Peak (Similkameen) have water levels that are currently below yearly averages for this time.

On April 1, these regions are measuring about 80 per cent of normal snow amounts.

"That's about typically the date when we're pretty close to being at the peak snow in the Okanagan Valley," said Allan Chapman of the River Forecast Centre for the Ministry of Environment. "The snow is pretty comparable to what we experienced in 2009."

Chapman said mountain snow will continue melting into the regions lakes and reservoirs until about the end of June.

Overall snow conditions in the Okanagan Valley are well below normal and are comparable to those of 2009 and 2003, when there were low flow and drought situations, said Chapman.

At several measuring sites in the Okanagan Valley, snow conditions range between 55 and 90 per cent of normal levels. The Trout Creek area near Summerland and southward to Mount Kobau near Osoyoos have near normal snow levels thanks to precipitation in mid-January.

Meanwhile, snow levels in the Kettle and Similkameen drainage basins are about 45 to 75 per cent of normal range.

Three criteria determine a drought year: the flow in the Similkameen River from April to July, inflow to Okanagan Lake from April to July and Okanagan Lake water levels from June to July.

Doug Lundquist, an Environment Canada meteorologist, said climate conditions in the Okanagan were influenced by the effects of an El Nino winter, which brought a dry, mild winter to most parts of the province.

The Okanagan has two wet seasons, one in the winter and another in the late spring to early summer, said Lundquist, noting there is very little precipitation from February until early May.

"It's really critical that we receive our normal rainfall during the next rain season ... for two reasons," he said. "First of all, we want to try and build up water supplies by having the rains of mid-May through early July. If we don't get the rains and have hotter and drier conditions, we tend to want to irrigate and use more of it."

April to June is expected to bring temperatures that will be about 60 per cent above normal. Lundquist said it is difficult to forecast how much precipitation to expect.

"At this point, it's a slightly higher probability it will be drier," he said.

Late-spring rains crucial to Valley

Snow conditions in Okanagan Valley are well below normal

Special to The Daily Courier

The Okanagan's expanding population and extreme weather are taxing an already fragile water supply, a panel of environmental and weather experts heard Wednesday.

Panelists participating in an online seminar presented with the Okanagan Basin Water Board, learned an earlier melt, low summer stream flows, hotter summers and more evaporation are reason to be worried.

These place greater demands on the water supply, which may already be diminished.

Mission Creek, Brenda Mine, Grano Creek (Kettle River) and

Blackwall Peak (Similkameen) have water levels that are currently below yearly averages for this time.

On April 1, these regions are measuring about 80 per cent of normal snow amounts.

"That's about typically the date when we're pretty close to being at the peak snow in the Okanagan Valley," said Allan Chapman of the River Forecast Centre for the Ministry of Environment. "The snow is pretty comparable to what we experienced in 2009."

Chapman said mountain snow will continue melting into the regions lakes and reservoirs until about the end of June.

Overall snow conditions in the Okanagan Valley are well below normal and are comparable to those of 2009 and 2003, when there were low flow and drought situations, said Chapman.

At several measuring sites in the Okanagan Valley, snow conditions range between 55 and 90 per cent of normal levels. The Trout Creek area near Summerland and southward to Mount Kobau near Osoyoos have near normal snow levels thanks to precipitation in mid-January.

Meanwhile, snow levels in the Kettle and Similkameen drainage basins are about 45 to 75 per cent of normal range.

Three criteria determine a drought year: the flow in the Similkameen River from April to July, inflow to Okanagan Lake from April to July and Okanagan Lake water levels from June to July.

Doug Lundquist, an Environment Canada meteorologist, said climate conditions in the Okanagan were influenced by the effects of an El Niño winter, which brought a dry, mild winter to most parts of the province.

The Okanagan has two wet seasons, one in the winter and another in the late spring to early summer, said Lundquist, noting there is very little precipitation from February until early May.

"It's really critical that we receive our normal rainfall during the next rain season ... for two reasons," he said. "First of all, we want to try and build up water supplies by having the rains of mid-May through early July. If we don't get the rains and have hotter and drier conditions, we tend to want to irrigate and use more of it."

April to June is expected to bring temperatures that will be about 60 per cent above normal. Lundquist said it is difficult to forecast how much precipitation to expect.

"At this point, it's a slightly higher probability it will be drier," he said.