

THE DAILY COURIER



SPORTS - PICKED TO PLAY FOR CANADA - PAGE B1

EXCITED

MOUNTIES NAMED TO ALEXA'S TEAM PAGE A3



19 C



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ENVIRONMENT

Record April heat shrinks snowpack

While snowpack was well above normal last month, it's down to 75% of normal this month

By ANDREA PEACOCK
The Daily Courier

Record-breaking temperatures in April melted a lot of the snowpack for the Okanagan and boosted seasonal runoff.

The Okanagan's current average snowpack is 75 per cent of normal, down from 131 per cent of normal last month.

Last year's May snowpack was at 57 per cent of normal, while last April's was at 76 per cent of normal.

"Last year, the snowpack conditions were low through the winter, and what we've seen this year is an earlier melt than what we experienced last year," said Toby Gardner, hydrologist at the B.C. River Forecast Centre. "The Okanagan had some record temperatures for a few days in April, and it's been really dry."

April was a record-warm month in Kelowna with an average temperature of 12.9 C. The old record for the month of April was 10.4 C in 1987. Temperatures soared into the mid- to high 20s on several days last month.

The snowmelt is three to four weeks ahead of normal this year, stated the River Forecast Centre report released this week.

"If it stays dry, there are drought concerns, but it's difficult to predict precipitation outside of 10



GARY NYLANDER/The Daily Courier

A cyclist rides along a path near Kelowna's City Park on Wednesday with hills bare of snow in the background. Except for the odd day of cloudy or rainy weather, the past several weeks in the Okanagan have generally been sunny, warm and dry, speeding snowmelt in the hills.

VALLEY RESIDENTS CHALLENGED TO CONSERVE WATER

— page A3

days or so," said Gardner. "With the warm conditions and the early melt, it's similar to what we saw last spring, but there is no immediate drought issue."

Flooding is not a major concern with not much rain in the forecast, although stream flow is seasonally high, said Gardner.

"The flows we're seeing now are typical for the third week of May or late May," he said.

The advance in runoff timing is expected to continue to lead to earlier peak flows.

"With the expectation of warmer conditions, we could see low summer flows coming earlier than normal," said Gardner.

Precipitation in southern B.C.

was well below normal for April, stated the report.

However, May and June are typically the wettest months in the Okanagan.

Seasonal forecasts from Environment Canada are indicating an increased likelihood of above-normal temperatures across B.C. from May to July.

Extreme wet or dry weather during the spring and summer months will play an important factor in the likelihood of high or low stream flows, said Gardner.

HEALTH CARE

B.C. nurses ratify deal including 5.5% hike

Wage increase works out to just over 1% per year

By The Canadian Press

VICTORIA — The British Columbia Nurses' Union has voted to ratify a five-year contract that gives 40,000 members a 5.5-per-cent wage increase.



Lake

Health Minister Terry Lake said Wednesday the deal includes government commitments to contribute \$4 million to programs targeting workplace violence and rural recruitment of nurses.

The agreement also includes a pledge by the Health Ministry to improve nurses' education and provide training for operating-room procedures and community-care settings.

"We know we need to shift health into communities more and more and reduce our reliance on the acute-care system," Lake said. "We will need nurses to be our partners in that they work with patients, particularly seniors' populations, and those suffering from health and substance-use issues."

He said the government and the union will each contribute \$2 million to fund violence-prevention measures that include training and upgrading communications and distress systems at health facilities.

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INSIDE

Okanagan residents challenged to use water wisely this summer

By Daily Courier Staff

Mayors in the Okanagan are challenging each other, and the residents of their communities, to conserve water this spring and summer as part of the Valley-wide Make Water Work campaign.

"Last year's experience with drought, and previous drought years, has shown us the importance of working together in the Okanagan on water conservation efforts, where water is all connected," said West Kelowna Mayor Doug Findlater. "I'm proud to personally take the Make Water Work challenge, doing my part to get the most out of the water I use and conserve, starting with making sure to water plants, not pavement."

Mayors from Osoyoos to Armstrong also pledged to take the challenge.

Make Water Work was launched in 2011 with the goal of tackling outdoor residential water use in the summer.

The City of West Kelowna is in Stage 1 of water restrictions and will likely move to Stage 2 soon, said Findlater.

For the first time, West Kelowna council is asking for regular reports from staff on the reservoir levels, he said.

"We had a scare last year with the drought. We need a drought plan."

The Make Water Work plant collection, a project encouraging low-water landscapes, is also expanding this year.

"The collection has been expanded to include 54 plants, including beautiful grasses, perennials, shrubs and trees, perfect for the dry Okanagan climate," said Corinne Jackson, spokesperson for the Okanagan Basin Water Board.

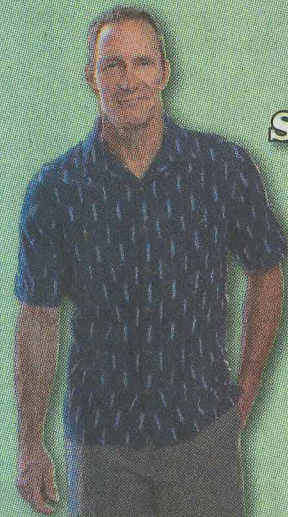
Nine garden centres in the Okanagan are participating in the program, offering the plants in the Make Water Work collection.

Those who take the online Make Water Work challenge will be entered to win several prizes, including a grand prize of a Water Wise yard upgrade worth \$6,000.

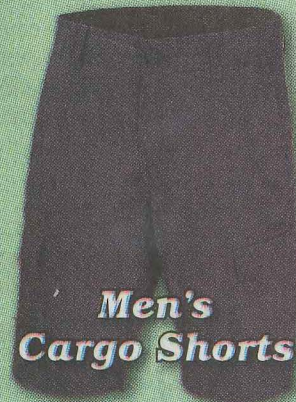
Residents can take the challenge and find more information about water restrictions for their community by going online to makewaterwork.ca.

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