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## NEWS

# Camping ban unpopular



The Village of Keremeos is seeking help from across the province to deal with camping and garbage along rivers.

— Image Credit: Keremeos Review Photo



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by Richard Rolke - Vernon Morning Star

Calls for a camping ban along B.C.'s rivers are making waves.

The Regional District of North Okanagan board refused Wednesday to support the efforts of the Village of Keremeos, in the Similkameen, to have camping prohibited along active riverbeds.

"It could sterilize all rivers in B.C. and it seems to be more of a local issue than something that needs a draconian approach," said Mike Macnabb, RDNO director.

Currently, provincial rules allow camping for 14 days on unregulated Crown land. But Keremeos officials say large numbers of campers are negatively impacting the environment.

"I know this strikes close to home for many regions around the province, particularly in the sunny Interior," said Manfred Bauer, Keremeos mayor in a letter.

Catherine Lord, an RDNO director, disagrees with Keremeos' proposal.

"A blanket condition covering all rivers is too much," she said, adding that camping is a critical part of tourism and the economy in some communities.

"It would be disrupting a lot of businesses."

Macnabb insists there are already mechanisms in place to handle concerns.

"It's a people management issue through conservation officers, the RCMP or bylaws. They have the ability to ticket," he said.

The only support for Keremeos came from director Juliette Cunningham.

"It's related to a community that relies on a river for water quality," she said, adding that there is a link between healthy communities and river health.

The Okanagan Basin Water Board supports a restriction on camping within channel areas corresponding to the annual water line to ensure debris from camping does not enter rivers when the water rises each year.

"The long-term health of rivers relies on protection of the riparian areas and the health of communities depends on healthy rivers and healthy water quality," said Doug Findlater, OBWB chairperson.