



Okanagan gem tarnished

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Kalamalka Lake, between the Okanagan cities of Kelowna and Vernon is well known for its amazing aquamarine colour.

But the precious Okanagan gem is in danger of losing its glow according to a local environmentalist.

"In this area we love the climate and people are moving here from all over Canada," says Randy Schellenberg. "What we don't realize is that it's having an impact on our water."

Schellenberg has been studying Kal Lake for years.

He's been identifying sources of contamination, ranging from development to agriculture, and even taking water samples.

He believes water quality is steadily deteriorating.

"I think it's a big problem. I don't know there's the political will there to actually do anything. We seem to have a history of pushing things to the limit until they break. I don't think we'll take the steps necessary to protect the lake."

Kalamalka is known as the lake of many colours but Schellenberg fears that in the future, some of those colours may be caused by algae blooms.

"We might see chronic algae blooms every summer which could affect the domestic water supply as well as the recreational resource," he says.

The Okanagan Basin Water Board is the government agency that monitors and protects the valley's major lakes.

It's impressed with the work Schellenberg has been doing on his own, but is more optimistic.

The board says the lake's water quality is constantly being tested.

"The quality is actually pretty good," says board member Genevieve Dunbar. "There has been some recent work, and there is always ongoing work on the water quality in Kalamalka Lake. It's one of the lakes that is regularly monitored. Overall it is quite good."

The Water Board says there are a number of programs under way to preserve lake quality.

Some of them are designed to clean up Coldstream Creek, which is a major source of both water and contamination for the lake.