



Water levels in Okanagan Lake are lower than normal and could drop lower based on results of a study by the Okanagan Basin Water Board' The board released its Okanagan water supply and demand study Friday in Kelowna'

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## LOCAL

### Water study suggests more dry years ahead for Okanagan

By Ron Seymour  
Saturday, March 27, 2010

Summer water shortages likely to occur decades from now underscore the need for present-day conservation programs and infrastructure improvements, say the authors of a new study.

Flows in Mission Creek during the summer are forecast to be down 20 per cent by 2040, and down nearly 50 per cent by 2070, the Okanagan Basin Water Board says.

"The water, when we need it the most, won't be there," OBWB executive director Anna Warwick Sears said Friday at a press conference to publicize a water supply and demand study that's been three years in the making.

As well as less precipitation during the summer months, the study – which factored in the effects of climate change, population growth and land-use changes – envisions more dry years ahead, a longer growing season with higher water demands, and less snow at higher elevations to fill reservoirs with runoff water in the spring.

However, the study's authors stressed the outlook regarding water availability in the future is not dire: "Overall, the results of the scenarios do not point to a sudden, dramatic decline in water availability," states a section of the report, called Key Findings.

Brian Symonds of the Ministry of Environment's Penticton office also sought to downplay any alarmist take on the study's projections.

"I think scare is probably the wrong word. I wouldn't use that word. People need to be responsible for the choices they make," he said.

To that end, there was support for the idea of encouraging greater water conservation through methods such as the

installation of residential water meters, which typically cut consumption by one-quarter.

Also, landscaping that uses less irrigation should be promoted, as well as upgrades to water distribution systems to prevent leaks. Construction of new reservoirs is also possible, though Symonds said many of the most suitable locations for water storage facilities had already been identified and developed.

There are more than 4,000 active water licences throughout the Okanagan basin, but the holders of those licences currently draw only half as much water as their licence would permit them to do.

Detailed information showing water supplies and usage in each region of the Okanagan will soon be up on the OBWB website, [www.obwb.ca](http://www.obwb.ca). The federal government is providing \$200,000 for the next phase of the water study, which is coming up with specific policies to encourage conservation and infrastructure improvement.

"We want to make sure this information doesn't sit on a shelf, but gets out into the community," said Kelowna-Lake Country MP Ron Cannan.

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## **Mission Creek flows forecast to drop**

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Read the full story in tomorrow's edition of The Okanagan Saturday newspaper.