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Water Board wants policy change to stop illegal ATV use in Okanagan watersheds

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photo contributed

The Okanagan Basin Water Board is once again raising concerns over drinking water reservoirs being damaged by people illegally riding ATVs in them.

Doctor Anna Warwick-Sears, Executive Director of the water board, says it has been an issue for years throughout the Okanagan, but it's gotten worse recently in the Greater Vernon area.

"They're harming the water quality, they're putting the dam safety at risk, and they're creating a lot of expenses. For example, if the water gets all muddy from driving around in it then it has to be cleaned and that's just more money out of their tax dollars," says Warwick-Sears.

That's why the water board is pushing the BC government to make water protection a higher priority on the watersheds in the Okanagan located on Crown land.

Right now, the province has a multi-use policy on those lands, meaning things like recreational use, commercial logging and agriculture are all the same priority as water protection.

For now, Warwick-Sears suggests off-roaders either stick to forest service roads or use the Bear Creek recreation area designed for ATVs and dirt bikes