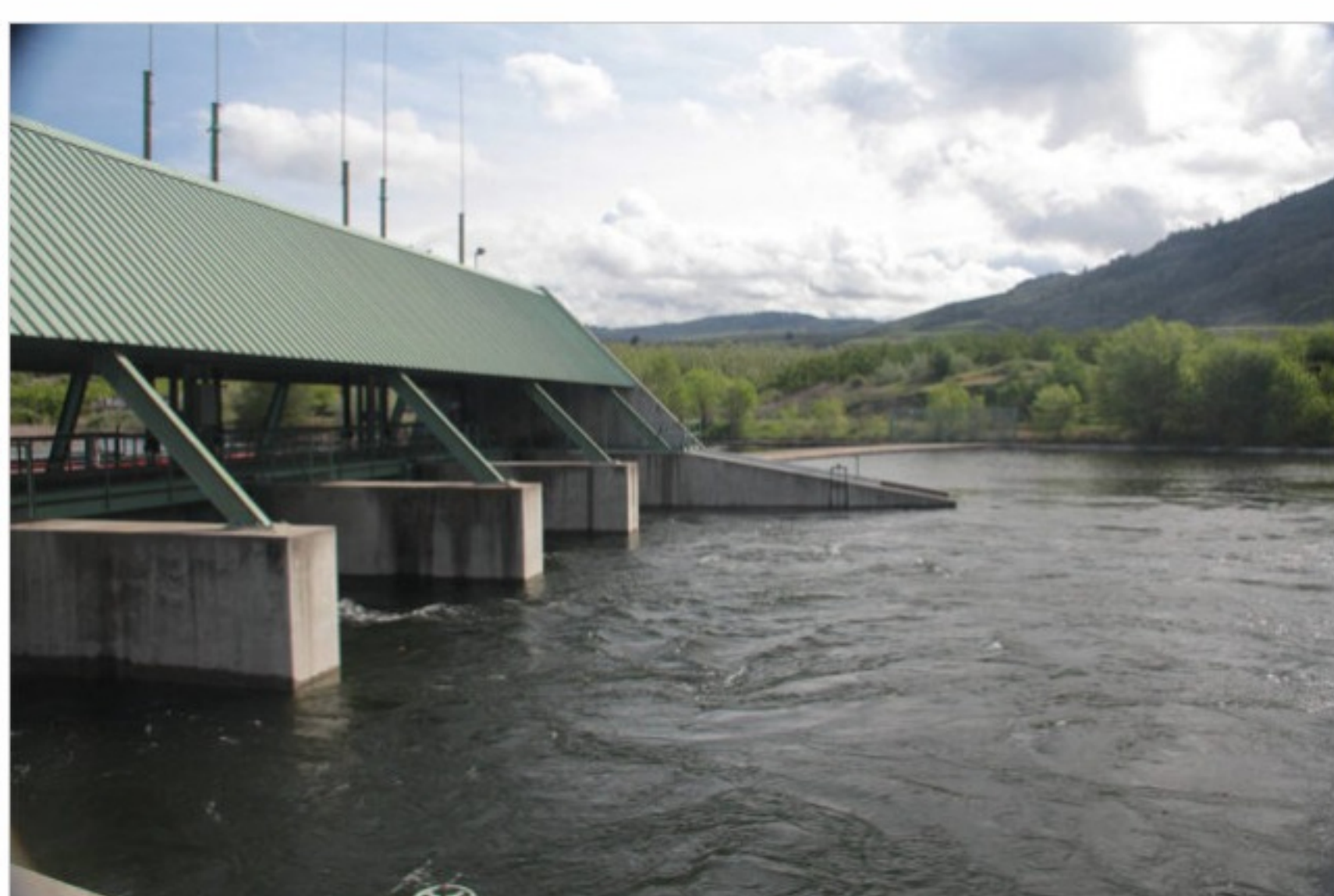


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The Okanagan Lake Dam pictured in 2019. (Okanagan WaterWise/Facebook)

Okanagan Lake Dam called 'inadequate' for flood mitigation

Climate change is driving the changes in lake levels, the Okanagan Basin Water Board said

TWILAAMATO / Oct. 5, 2021 12:00 p.m. / NEWS



The Okanagan Lake dam, in its current state, is not enough to manage the rapidly changing water levels at the lake.


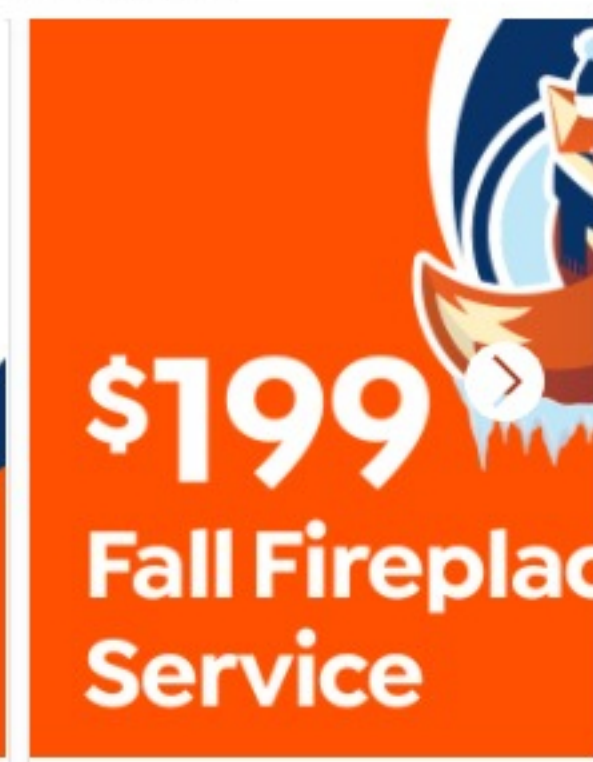
Executive director of the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) Anna Warwick Sears said as much in a report submitted to a provincial financial committee asking for funding for a variety of fixes — the most imminent being the aging Okanagan Lake Dam.

Water regulating infrastructures typically have a lifespan of 70 to 80 years. The Okanagan Dam is now more than 60 years old.

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"It is inadequate for managing future floods... given the increased volume and frequency of floods as a result of climate change, and the Province of B.C. needs to begin planning for its replacement," she wrote.

The dam is owned and operated by the Ministry of Forests, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNRORD). The board partnered with the ministry to develop a plan to modernize the lake's regulation system but in order for work to begin, funding is needed, according to Warwick Sears.

"Flooding is projected to become much more common in the next few decades, damaging public and private infrastructure at great cost."

The board is asking for \$1 million over the next five years in order to fund further studies and replacement of the infrastructure. In the report, Warwick Sears stated the OBWB is also asking to establish a permanent watershed security fund, so water suppliers who draw from streams and reservoirs can respond to damage by restoring resources.

"The Watershed Security Fund would provide funding to Okanagan water suppliers to restore damage to source areas from resource development and recreation, improving wildlife habitat as well as reversing water quality degradation."