

OKANAGAN DROUGHT BULLETIN #2021-1

JULY 15, 2021



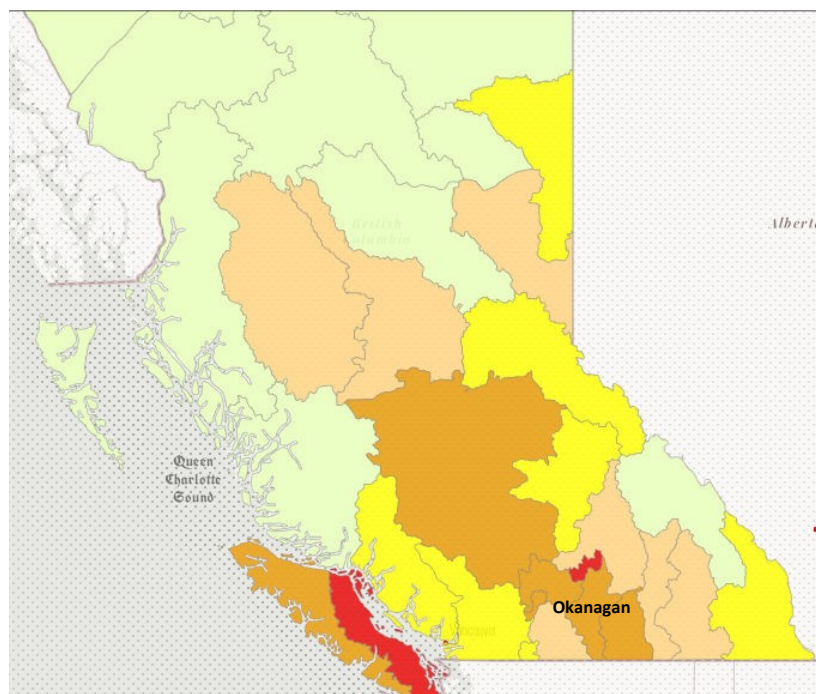
OKANAGAN MOVED TO DROUGHT LEVEL 3

Warm and dry conditions have prompted the Government of B.C. to move the Okanagan to a Level 3 drought. Water suppliers should continue to monitor weather, reservoir and groundwater levels, and customer demand to assess whether higher water restrictions are necessary for your community.

Drought is currently impacting about half of B.C, with extremely dry or very dry conditions in the Okanagan, Shuswap, Thompson-Nicola, Fraser Canyon, and Cariboo regions and on Vancouver Island. In the Okanagan, a warm, dry spring and an unprecedented heat wave in June has stressed water sources and infrastructure. Additionally, Okanagan and Kalamalka lakes did not reach “full pool” this year. Warmer than normal temperatures and below average precipitation is forecasted for the summer. Residential, agricultural and industrial water users are being asked to observe all water conservation bylaws, watering restrictions, and advice from their local government, irrigation district or water utility.

Level	Conditions	Impacts	General Response Measures
0	Non-Drought	There is sufficient water to meet socio-economic and ecosystem needs	Preparedness
1	Dry	Adverse impacts to socio-economic or ecosystem values are rare	Conservation
2	Very Dry	Adverse impacts to socio-economic or ecosystem values are unlikely	Conservation Local water restrictions where appropriate
3	Severely Dry	Adverse impacts to socio-economic or ecosystem values are possible	Conservation Local water restrictions likely
4	Extremely Dry	Adverse impacts to socio-economic or ecosystem values are likely	Conservation and local water restrictions Regulatory action possible
5	Exceptionally Dry	Adverse impacts to socio-economic or ecosystem values are almost certain	Conservation and local water restrictions Regulatory action likely Possible emergency response

Local water regulations (stages) and conservation targets differ from provincial drought levels. Many Okanagan water suppliers have drought management plans and operate with year-round watering restrictions for their domestic customers. Water supply conditions are different across the valley, and whether a community moves to a higher restriction stage depends on several factors, including customer demand, infrastructure capacity, and local water supply levels.



Provincial drought level map on July 13, 2021.

Source: [BC Drought Information Portal](#)

Contact kellie.garcia@obwb.ca for information about local drought planning and response efforts.

WATER FOR FISH AND ECOSYSTEMS

Sufficient streamflow is required for the health of fish and other aquatic species. Low water levels can impede fish passage to spawning and feeding areas, increase susceptibility to disease and predation, cause stranding, or result in fish kills due to low oxygen and high water temperatures. During the recent heat wave, the Okanagan Nation Alliance observed low flows and critically high water temperatures in some important fish-bearing watercourses. For example, the Okanagan River reached nearly 30°C and temperatures in Mission Creek were even higher. The optimum range for most salmon is 13-18°C, and anything above 24°C can be fatal. By using water efficiently on our farms and in our yards now, we can help keep enough water in the streams for fish spawning later in the year.



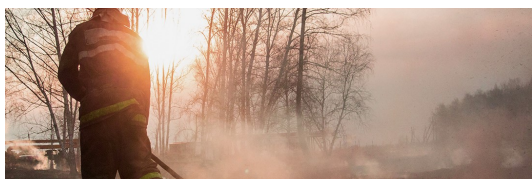
WATER FOR FOOD PRODUCTION

Agriculture is the number one use of water in the Okanagan, and rightly so. It feeds our community and our economy. Prolonged periods of dry weather like we've seen this year can cause crop damage and shortages in water supply for livestock. When it's hot and dry, both need more water to survive. Good water management by farmers is essential to making sure our limited and stressed water supply lasts throughout the growing season and that enough water is also available for fish, wildlife fighting and domestic users. Farmers are encouraged to visit www.obwb.ca/ag for information about increasing water-use efficiency.




WATER FOR FIRE FIGHTING

Water is also needed for fire suppression and protection, particularly in a year like this. As of today, more than 300 fires are burning in B.C., 26 of which are wildfires of note (highly visible or pose a potential threat to public safety). Eight of the fires are in the Kamloops Fire Centre, which includes the Okanagan. Nearly 1,000 wildfires have started this year; about double what is typically sparked by now.



RESIDENTIAL WATER CONSERVATION

Make Water Work (MWW) is a valley-wide water conservation campaign aimed at addressing the second largest use of water in our region – outdoor residential use. MWW is managed by the OBWB's Okanagan WaterWise program and delivered in partnership with a number of local governments, water utilities, and businesses throughout the Okanagan.

 District of Lake Country
June 14 at 9:05 PM · 📍

How are you planning to #MakeWaterWork this summer in Lake Country? Join Mayor Baker and Take the pledge at www.makewaterwork.ca.

We all can do our part to reduce outdoor water use and conserve water for the important things we need and love — like food, fish and firefighting. [Okanagan WaterWise](#)



MWW begins in May when residents begin to turn on their taps, and runs until early October as water supplies dwindle and farmers still need water for crops, and fish are returning to local creeks to spawn.

This year, Okanagan mayors helped launch the campaign with videos on social media, sharing what they are doing to make water work better. Find videos at <https://bit.ly/3AYKMIL>.

The campaign includes:

- the MakeWaterWork.ca website where residents can find watering restrictions for their community, tips to make water work better in their yards, the *Make Water Work Plant Collection* featuring plants best-suited to the Okanagan, a contest to encourage pledges to conserve, and more.
- advertising on billboards, bus benches and shelters, sandwich boards, and digital and social media ads;
- MWW garden centre and irrigation supply partners promoting the plant collection and outdoor water conservation;
- bookmarks for partners to hand out that include the MWW tips, info on the *Make Water Work Plant Collection*, and invitation to pledge to conserve for a chance to win WaterWise yard prizes;
- MWW garden kneeler boards, pledge buttons, and Frisbees for partners to give out that act as a water-measuring device; and
- a friendly community challenge, encouraging residents to pledge to win the title of "Make Water Work Community Champions."

Interested in becoming a Make Water Work partner? Contact Corinne Jackson at corinne.jackson@obwb.ca or 250-469-6271 for more information.