

Okanagan Basin Water Board Meeting Agenda



Okanagan Basin

WATER BOARD

DATE: Friday, Sept. 5, 2025

TIME: 12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

PLACE: Rotary Centre for the Arts, 421 Cawston Ave, Kelowna, B.C.

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

1.1 Acknowledgement of First Nations Traditional Territory

We acknowledge that we work on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded tm̓x̌wúlaʔx̌w (land) of the syilx (Okanagan) people who have resided here since time immemorial. We honour and respect this land and the siw̓lk (water) which flows through the valley and connects us all.

2. INTRODUCTION OF LATE ITEMS

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

4.1 Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of Aug. 5, 2025 held at the Regional District of North Okanagan offices at 9848 Aberdeen Road, Coldstream, B.C.

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5. BOARD CHAIR REMARKS

6. DELEGATION/PRESENTATIONS

6.1 Delegation from Dr. Michael Russello, Professor of Population & Conservation Genomics at the University of British Columbia Okanagan regarding his invasive mussel detection research project.

7. STAFF REPORTS

7.1 Executive Director Report 7.2 Chief Operating Officer Report 7.3 Communications Manager Report 7.4 Water Science Specialist Report

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8. NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

9. CORRESPONDENCE

No correspondence attached.

10. IN CAMERA

No in-camera session planned.

11. NEXT MEETING

11.1 The next meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board will be Tuesday, October 7, 2025 at the offices of the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen at 101 Martin St., Penticton, B.C.

12. ADJOURNMENT

** **NOTE:** Meetings of the Okanagan Basin Water Board are open to the public and only closed for in-camera sessions as set out in the B.C. Community Charter. From time-to-time, the board will be holding its meeting online. If you are interested in attending an online meeting, please contact communications@obwb.ca for further details.*

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE OKANAGAN BASIN WATER BOARD
HELD AUGUST 5, 2025, at the Regional District of North Okanagan offices
at 9848 Aberdeen Road, Coldstream, B.C.**

PRESENT

Chair Blair Ireland	Regional District Central Okanagan
Vice Chair Doug Holmes	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Director Rick Fairbairn	Regional District North Okanagan
Director Victor Cumming	Regional District North Okanagan
Director Bob Fleming	Regional District North Okanagan
Director Charlie Hodge	Regional District Central Okanagan
Director Wayne Carson	Regional District Central Okanagan
Alternate Director Adrienne Fedrigo	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Director Subrina Monteith	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Director Sheena Spencer	Okanagan Water Stewardship Council (OWSC)
Director Bob Hrasko	Water Supply Association of B.C.

REGRETS

Director Tim Lezard	Okanagan Nation Alliance
Director Sue McKortoff	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen

STAFF

Melissa Tesche	Executive Director
James Littley	Chief Operating Officer
Nelson Jatel	Water Stewardship Director
Carolina Restrepo-Tamayo	Office and Grants Manager
Christina White	Water Quality Project Manager
Sandra Schira	Water Science Specialist
Amanda Burnett	Communications Coordinator

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair Ireland called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

He respectfully acknowledged that we work on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded tm̓xʷúlaʔxʷ (land) of the syilx (Okanagan) people who have resided here since time immemorial. We honour and respect this land and the siwl̓k (water) which flows through the valley and connects us all.

2. INTRODUCTION OF LATE ITEMS

In-Camera Session, item 10.1.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

“ THAT the agenda of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of August 5, 2025 be approved.”

CARRIED

4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

- 4.1** Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board held June 3, 2025, at the offices of the Regional District of the South Okanagan, 101 Martin St. Penticton B.C.

“THAT the minutes of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board on June 3, 2025, held at the Regional District of the South Okanagan, 101 Martin St. Penticton B.C., be approved.”

CARRIED

5. DELEGATION

Sandra Shira, OBWB Water Science Specialist, presented “A Look Back at the 1974 Okanagan Basin Study.”

51 years later, the foundation laid by the 1974 Okanagan Basin Study continues to guide the work of the Okanagan Basin Water Board. The study looked at the relationship of water resource management in comprehensive planning. Throughout 20 chapters, the study addressed water quality, water quantity, environmental quality, social betterment, quality of life, public education, water management, and focused in large part on economic growth.

Ms. Schira presented highlights from the study, noting that economic projections went up to 2020, examining different growth scenarios. The Okanagan ultimately reached the high end of population growth projections over the last 50 years.

The Comprehensive Framework Plan was one of the most important outcomes of the 1974 Okanagan Basin Study, which ultimately led to the formation of the Okanagan Basin Water Board.

“Only through careful planning and integrated management of the basin’s water, land, and human resources can the present ecological and environmental harmony continue,” states the study.

Following the presentation, Executive Director Melissa Tesche provided follow-up commentary, drawing comparisons between the thought process that guided the study and the thought process that will guide OBWB’s upcoming strategic planning process. In preparation for the process this fall, Ms. Tesche invited the Directors to consider both the similarities and the changes for water management in the Okanagan Basin between 1974 and 2025.

Director Cummings, who was involved in the original Basin Study, provided historical context for the time when the study was being conducted and discussed the important work being done at the time by Dr. Glenn Sinclair.

Directors discussed the immensity of some of the current and future water issues and opportunities facing the Okanagan, including discussion of the significantly higher costs for water infrastructure, increasing population growth, the growth of UBCO, and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.

10:31 a.m. Director Monteith joined the meeting.

6. BOARD CHAIR REMARKS

- 6.1** There were no Board Chair remarks at this meeting.

7. STAFF REPORTS

- 7.1** Executive Director Report – Melissa Tesche

Ms. Tesche shared an update on Mr. James Littley's continued work advocating for Invasive Mussel Defence Funding at the Jun 10, 2025 Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services for Budget 2026. The OBWB is awaiting the committee's conclusions.

Ms. Tesche noted that her presentation to the Pacific Caucus, July 14-15, 2025, was well received and focused on three main points; Increasing water infrastructure costs, the threat of invasive mussels, and the need for equity in federal funding. Since the July presentation, Kelowna MP Stephen Fuhr's office has already followed up, requesting more information, and the OBWB provided his office with the Preparing for Invasive Mussels: Vulnerability Assessment Guide for Raw Water Infrastructure, among other resources.

Ms. Tesche presented the Strategic Plan Engagement Timeline, with the formal process to begin in October and the final draft of the plan scheduled for delivery to the Board at the March 2026 Board meeting.

The Board was informed that OBWB Water Science Specialist Sandra Schira is set to start her PhD at UBCO this fall where she will be joining Dr. Mathieu Bournonnais' lab working on wildfire risk mapping.

"THAT the Executive Director's Report, dated July 27, 2025, be received."
CARRIED

7.2 Chief Operating Officer Report – James Littley

Mr. Littley updated the Board on the operations of the Invasive Milfoil Removal Program. An early milfoil bloom led to harvesting starting two weeks ahead of schedule in Osoyoos Lake. Harvesting is also taking place in Wood Lake and is set to begin in Vaseux and Okanagan Lakes by early August.

Mr. Littley shared that legislation for mandatory watercraft inspections has received Royal Assent, however further progress has been stalled. He is planning to engage with Okanagan partners to continue to pressure the province to implement mandatory inspections. A "Menu of Options" report was prepared to help inform the province's implementation, but it is currently unclear if the regulations will be ready for the 2026 boating season.

The OBWB is developing the first Regional Invasive Mussel Response Plan in B.C., which will act as a toolkit for a rapid, day-one response by compiling pre-detection information for major waterbodies.

Directors discussed the creation of a comprehensive inspection plan to be presented to the province. Mr. Littley expressed his intention to collaborate with the Okanagan Nation Alliance and the BC Wildlife Federation on this initiative.

Director Hodge exited the meeting at 11:01 a.m.

The Board discussed the potential for collaboration between mussel free provinces and asked about the delineation of responsibility between provincial and federal governments.

Director Hodge returned to the meeting at 11:12 a.m.

Mr. Littley concluded his report by noting that a second version of the Invasive Mussel Guide for Raw Water Infrastructure is in progress to account for the newly discovered invasive Golden Mussel.

"THAT the Chief Operating Officer Report, dated July 28, 2025, be received."
CARRIED

7.3 Water Stewardship Director Report – Dr. Nelson Jatel

Dr. Jatel provided the Board with updates regarding professional regulatory reform that came out of the June 12 Okanagan Water Stewardship Council (OWSC) Meeting. Directors discussed the issues of improperly conducted hurdles that small, rural communities face with small-water infrastructure systems, like septic systems, and the prohibitive costs associated for municipal governments with sewer expansions.

Dr. Sheena Spencer, Okanagan Water Stewardship Council (OWSC) Chair, provided Board Directors with a high-level overview of the work being planned and conducted by the OWSC.

Dr. Jatel reviewed the updates on ongoing water management projects and then provided a summary of the meeting between OBWB and the Canada Water Agency. The Board discussed possible next steps for advocacy on the issue of the Okanagan's exclusion from funding under the current funding model.

“THAT the Water Stewardship Director's Report, dated July 27, 2025, be received.”
CARRIED

7.4 Communications Manager Report – Carmen Weld

On behalf of Communications Manager Carmen Weld, Amanda Burnett, Communications Coordinator, presented the Communications Manager Report and updated to the Board about progress on the Make Water Work and Don't Move a Mussel summer public outreach campaigns. Ms. Burnett highlighted this year's increased public participation in the annual Take the Pledge contest.

“THAT the Communications Manager's Report, dated July 30, 2025, be received.”
CARRIED

7.5 Water Science Specialist Report – Sandra Schira

Ms. Schira provided the Board with a detailed weather and hydrology update for the Okanagan Basin as of late July 2025, noting that the key takeaway is that despite some recent rainfall, the valley remains in a drought due to low snowpack, an early melt, and residual dryness from previous years.

“THAT the Water Science Specialist Report, dated July 28, 2025, be received.”
CARRIED.

8. NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

8.1 Memo from Melissa Tesche, Executive Director, Re: Bank of Montreal Authorizing Resolution.

“THAT the OBWB Board of Directors enter into a credit card agreement with the Bank of Montreal and hereby pass the required Authorizing Resolution naming the OBWB Executive Director as the authorized signing authority for this agreement and any future modifications to this agreement, as outlined in Schedule A.”
CARRIED

9. CORRESPONDENCE

9.1 Letter from Lori Halls, Deputy Minister of Ministry of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship regarding our letter to them asking for urgency in bringing the Wildlife Acts into force to prevent invasive mussels.

- 9.2 Letter to Honourable Stephen Fuhr, Member of Parliament for Kelowna informing him that the OBWB submitted two project proposals to the Canada Water Agency's EcoAction Stream 2 program, designed to enhance freshwater sustainability and innovation across Canada.

"THAT correspondences to and from the OBWB, dated June 5 and July 7, 2025, be received."

CARRIED.

10. IN CAMERA

The Board entered an in-camera session (under sec. 90(1)(a) and 90(2)(b) of the Community Charter) at 12:54 p.m.

"THAT the Okanagan Basin Water Board enter into an in-camera session."

CARRIED.

The board exited the in-camera session at 1:19p.m.

11. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board will be held following our Annual Meeting on Friday, September 5, 2025, at 12 p.m. at the Mary Irwin Theatre, Rotary Centre for the Arts, 421 Cawston Ave, Kelowna, B.C.

NOTE: Meetings of the Okanagan Basin Water Board are open to the public, and only closed for in-camera sessions as set out in the B.C. Community Charter. From time-to-time, the board will be holding its meeting online. If you are interested in attending an online meeting, please contact Communications@obwb.ca for further details.

12. ADJOURNMENT

"THAT there being no further business, the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of August 5, 2025 be adjourned at 1:20 p.m."

CARRIED

Certified Correct:		
Chair		Executive Director



MEMORANDUM

To: OBWB Directors
From: Melissa Tesche
Date: Aug. 27, 2025
Subject: Executive Director Report

Okanagan Basin Water Board Regular meeting Sept. 5, 2025 Agenda No: 7.1
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September OBWB Meeting Abbreviated to Accommodate Public Annual Meeting

Each September, we hold an abbreviated regular meeting following the public Annual Meeting. To accommodate time constraints, staff reports have been limited to urgent updates. Full reports will resume at the October meeting.

Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) Raises Alarm on Ministry's New Method for Setting Drought Levels

The ONA has written to Minister Randene Neill (Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, WLRS) requesting an urgent meeting regarding drought levels in the Okanagan and Similkameen (attached). The ONA argues that the Province's new method—shifting from collaborative, catchment-scale assessments to a basin-scale, top-down approach—fails to reflect on-the-ground realities. Nation monitoring shows critically low flows, persistently high water temperatures, and declining groundwater, yet provincial drought classifications do not reflect these conditions. The Province has asserted that drought levels are not tied to management actions, while the ONA maintains that drought and water management are explicitly connected and that separating them is disingenuous.

OBWB Agrees That New Method for Drought Level Does Not Reflect Conditions

As discussed during recent Weather Updates at OBWB board meetings, staff agree the new provincial method for determining drought levels is not appropriate for the Okanagan. In addition to the sound arguments presented by the ONA, drought levels disconnected from management actions risk undermining water conservation messaging and the efforts of utilities that have enacted watering restrictions. OBWB staff have shared these concerns with WLRS technical staff throughout the summer.

OBWB Preparing Submission to Strategic Priority Fund for Technical Work that Will Support Future Water Use Plans

The Strategic Priorities Fund is an application-based program available to local governments and other recipients outside Metro Vancouver. OBWB is a qualified recipient and has been successful in previous applications. The program supports infrastructure and capacity-building projects that are large in scale, regional in impact, or innovative, and that align with its objectives of fostering productivity and economic growth, a clean environment, and strong communities.

The OBWB application will focus on developing and upgrading the Okanagan Hydrology Model, a project identified as a priority and discussed in workshops and committee meetings since April 2024. The project would build on long-standing investments in Raven modelling, as well as advance ground water science by working together with the ONA's fisheries team. The proposal includes the 18 sub-basin Raven model used to simulate low flows for Environmental Flow Needs (EFNs), as well as the basin-wide Raven flood model used for flood risk assessment. Together, these will provide a scientific foundation for better informed water management in the valley.

OBWB Budget Preparations underway for 2026-27

I am beginning to prepare the OBWB's 2027 Budget for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2027. This will be presented to the Board for review and approval at our Nov. 4, 2025 meeting. Per our Supplementary Letters Patent, the OBWB's final budget must be approved by the Board no later than our Dec. 2, 2025 regular meeting.

Okanagan Water Stewardship Council (OWSC) Summer Updates

Traditionally, the OWSC does not have a formal meeting in August but rather convenes informally to celebrate the work of the previous year. Thank you to OWSC Chair, Dr. Sheena Spencer, who hosted the annual OWSC summer get-together at her home last weekend.

The next council meeting is set for Sept. 11th, from 12 – 4 p.m.



OKANAGAN NATION ALLIANCE

101 - 3535 Old Okanagan Hwy, Westbank, BC V4T 3L7
Phone 250-707-0095 Toll Free 1-866-662-9609 Fax 250-707-0166 www.syilx.org

August 22, 2025

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
PO Box 9012 STN PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC V8W 9L6
WLRS.Minister@gov.bc.ca

**Attention: Honourable Randene Neill
Minister of Water, Land and
Resource Stewardship**

Re: Urgent Meeting Requested About Drought Levels in the Okanagan and Similkameen

We are writing to you as drought levels in our syilx Okanagan Territory¹ are being set at 0 in the Okanagan basin by Water, Lands and Resource Stewardship even as Nation monitoring shows low flows in many of our creeks and streams, fish are being impacted, and the forecast continues for hot dry weather. The Similkameen watershed, currently experiencing the most severe drought in the province and classified at Level 4, should be considered Level 5. Record-low flows, persistently high water temperatures throughout the summer, and continuously declining groundwater levels support this assessment. We are concerned that your Ministry's new method for setting drought levels has created this situation where worsening conditions in our Territory are not reflected in the drought levels set by the Province.

Until 2025, drought levels were set collaboratively based on information including on-the-ground observations by First Nations, local, regional, provincial and federal staff. Drought levels were set at the catchment-scale rather than the basin-scale, which supported responsive water management decision-making. The new revised method removed the consensus approach and the ability to include site-specific data. This has produced a troubling disconnect between the Province's assigned drought levels and the reality in our Territory where streams and wetlands are drying up.

As you know, the Crown has a constitutional duty to consult when it contemplates decisions that may have an adverse impact on Aboriginal or Treaty Rights. The 2016 *Water Sustainability Act* (WSA) was passed without adequate consultation with Syilx People despite having high potential for significant impact. Under DRIPA, the Province has a duty to take a collaborative approach to the development of mechanisms for resource management. Despite this, since 2016, the Province has continued with WSA phased implementation and developed key regulations—including the revised framework for setting drought levels—without consulting Syilx People.

¹ Syilx territory is located in the South Thompson, Lower Thompson, Nicola, Okanagan, and Similkameen basins of the Thompson Okanagan Region defined by the Province of BC.



Currently, the Province states that drought levels are not tied to water management actions. The position of ONA is that drought and water management are explicitly connected, and that the separation of drought levels and management actions by the Province is disingenuous.

Maintaining the integrity of our relative *siwłkʷ* (water) is essential to our identity as Syilx People and survival is entrenched in our responsibility to our homelands and “for the people to be”. Therefore, the Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) will continue to take an active approach to exercising our jurisdiction and fulfilling our sacred responsibility for the sustainability of *siwłkʷ* in our territory, working in collaboration with stakeholders and governments at every level. This work confirms that the reality in our streams, wetlands, and groundwater is not being captured in the limited metrics now being used by the Province to define drought levels.²

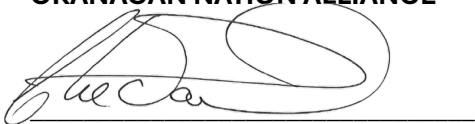
At the local level, our Nation has spearheaded the development of the historic Okanagan Similkameen Collaborative Leadership Table bringing elected leaders from our Nation together with 17 local governments, all committed to working together on shared water challenges. As stewards of our communities and lands, we recognize the importance of evolving our relationships and moving forward in the spirit of cooperation and collaboration.

It is for this purpose the ONA is respectfully requesting an urgent meeting with yourself and Deputy Minister Lori Halls to explore how we can work together more effectively on drought planning and response in the Okanagan and Similkameen where present conditions have the potential to create serious immediate and long-term consequences. Please have your office contact Pauline Terbasket, Executive Director at (250) 707-0095 or by email at director@syilx.org at your earliest convenience to arrange this important meeting.

We trust that you share our commitment to fostering a collaborative and effective relationship in exercising our shared stewardship of *siwłkʷ*. We look forward to hearing from you and discussing this important matter.

Sincerely,

OKANAGAN NATION ALLIANCE



ki law na yil'mixʷm Clarence Louie
xaʔtus, Tribal Chair, Chiefs Executive Council
Syilx Okanagan Nation

cc: Chiefs Executive Council, Okanagan Nation Alliance
Lori Halls, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Water Lands and Resource Stewardship
Natural Resources Committee, Okanagan Nation Alliance

² See attached Appendix for an overview of current conditions in our Territory.

Appendix 1: CURRENT CONDITIONS IN SYILX TERRITORY

The Syilx Peoples are deeply concerned about the combined impacts of drought, climate change, cumulative pressures and over-allocated surface and groundwater systems across the territory which threaten ecosystems, communities, food security, and Syilx cultural practices. To address these challenges, the Province must work in true partnership with the Syilx Nation and communities by upholding Syilx Title and Rights, recognize Syilx leadership and authority, knowledge and technical expertise in watershed planning, restoration and governance.

Basin-scale assignment of drought levels does not support effective water management.

A stream watch list was developed for the region to focus attention on catchments at risk of water conflict in the region. Drought levels were set for each of these catchments. This approach was helpful in focusing attention on priority areas with extremely low or no flow such as Bessette Creek, Salmon River, Vaseux Creek and Shuttleworth Creek, among others, but has been discontinued.

The combination of over-allocation and drought routinely results in streamflows below collaboratively developed critical flow thresholds in Okanagan streams.

ONA, Okanagan Basin Water Board, and the Province invested significant effort in developing Environmental Flow Needs (EFNs) and Critical Environmental Flow Thresholds (CEFTs) for multiple species specific to 18 creeks in the Okanagan watershed. Ongoing monitoring of these creeks shows that flows are frequently below EFNs during the late spring to fall and routinely below CEFTs in several streams during summer and fall due to overallocation and/or overuse. Chronic low flows significantly and negatively impact fish populations such as ntytyix, salmon.

The WSC hydrometric stations used to assign the Okanagan drought level are limited to the headwaters and do not represent drought conditions on the valley bottom.

Site-specific data is critical. Conditions in the Okanagan basin vary between catchments, as well as between high and low elevation areas within each catchment. Few Water Survey Canada (WSC) stations appropriately represent unregulated flow conditions in Okanagan streams, particularly at lower elevations. Excluding non-WSC stations, such as those maintained by the ONA, limits the availability of suitable streamflow information needed to support assignment of drought levels.

Cumulative headwater impacts of wildfire, flood and drought together with mining and limited data in the Similkameen inhibits effective water management and degrades water quality.

Landscape-scale stressors and limited information in the Similkameen present challenges to effective drought setting and water management. Development of EFNs and CEFTs for the Similkameen is a priority. Currently, low groundwater levels and flows in the Similkameen River and tributaries are not adequately captured by the current monitoring network. Low flow impacts, including increased water temperature, reduced contaminant dilution, and reduced groundwater recharge, adversely affect surface and groundwater quality with short- and long-term consequences for the tmx^wulax^w, the land and the tmix^w, all living things. The consequences extend to Okanagan salmon populations that rely on cool Similkameen water as a thermal refuge during periods of temperature stress.



MEMORANDUM

To: OBWB Directors
From: James Littley, Chief Operating Officer
Date: Aug. 25, 2025
Subject: Chief Operating Officer Report

Okanagan Basin Water Board
Regular meeting
Sept. 5, 2025
Agenda No: 7.2

Delegation Dr. Michael Russello – UBCO: Rapid eDNA Detection Tool for Invasive Mussel Biosecurity

Working in collaboration with UC Davis and Queen's University, Dr. Michael Russello, a Professor in UBC Okanagan's Department of Biology, is leading the development of a revolutionary tool to detect invasive mussel species before they can take hold in B.C.'s freshwater ecosystems.

All organisms shed genetic material into their environment. This material accumulates into environmental DNA (eDNA), creating an avenue for a non-invasive and cost-effective way to detect invasive species. Conventional eDNA sampling and analysis involve collecting samples from the field and transporting them to a lab for analysis, which is not practical for field-based watercraft inspections. However, new technology is creating a promising pathway to bring the lab to the field.

Dr. Russello and his colleagues are exploring how SHERLOCK (Specific High-Sensitivity Enzymatic Reporter Unlocking)—a CRISPR (Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats) - Cas system—can be adapted for a rapid eDNA detection tool that will detect invasive mussels on site within a matter of minutes. Though initially developed for medical diagnostics, SHERLOCK has shown great promise for ecological studies and has been successfully applied to monitor and detect fish species.

B.C. Budget 2026 – Water Related Recommendations

In June, I presented to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services to advocate for additional funding for defense against invasive mussels. The Committee has now released its [report on the 2026 budget consultations](#). I have reviewed the report and provided a listing of all water-related recommendations below.

Of particular note, however, is recommendation 14: ***"Dedicate additional funding to prevent the introduction of invasive mussels into the province."*** While the recommendation does not include a specific amount, it directly reflects our ask.

While there was a significant push from other water-related organizations to provide funding to support local watershed boards and increase the Water Security Fund, this did not appear to make the recommendations list.

Economic Development:

8. Seek out and invest in opportunities that promote value-addition and unlock unrealized economic activity, including:

- a. investments toward strengthening provincial food production, processing, and distribution capacity and supportive agricultural water infrastructure.

Environment:

14. Dedicate additional funding to prevent the introduction of invasive mussels into the province.

16. Review the following provincial changes to ensure alignment with other provinces:

- c. water rental rates and the portion of these rates being dedicated to strengthening water management, including drinking water protection and watershed monitoring.

Housing:

47. Maintain programs supporting municipal infrastructure and regional planning and review development cost structures to allow for reduced or flexible fees, including exempting undeveloped residential land with active rezoning, development, or building permit applications from the additional school tax.

Public Safety and Justice:

71. Invest in enhanced communication and coordination between ministries, municipalities, and non-profit organizations working with underground infrastructure to protect provincial and municipal assets.

72. Expand support for responding to natural disasters and emergencies, including wildfires and flooding, such as launching a quantum and AI wildfire detection, preparedness, and emergency response pilot program.

Quotes:

“The Committee acknowledged that investment in invasive species prevention and enforcement, particularly invasive mussels, is cost-effective when compared to the expenses associated with mitigation and removal efforts.”

“The Committee discussed potential increases to the province’s water rental rates and strengthening water management and watershed health. Members deliberated on strategies to regulate groundwater and protect drinking water, respond to droughts and floods, and implement watershed monitoring and information systems. The Committee agreed that water rental rates should be reviewed to ensure that British Columbia is in line with other provinces and is effectively managing its water resources.”

Invasive Mussel Prevention

We have several meetings planned with partners over the next few weeks to develop updated calls to action for invasive mussel prevention. I will provide a further verbal update to the board on invasive mussel prevention work during the meeting.

New Public Resource for Invasive Milfoil Identification

One of the ongoing challenges for the milfoil control program is that native aquatic plants are often mistaken for invasive milfoil. This year, we received more false reports than usual, each requiring staff time to investigate.

Public reporting remains an important and welcome part of our work. Many times, we learn about new milfoil growth from residents who take the time to report what they see. To help balance the value of this reporting while reducing the time spent on misidentifications, our Communications Coordinator, Amanda Burnett, has developed a new resource: a poster titled *"Is it Invasive Milfoil?"*

The poster provides:

- Clear photos and descriptions of invasive milfoil.
- Information about the program and the harmful effects of milfoil.
- Side-by-side comparisons with several common native aquatic plants found in the Okanagan.

You can find the poster on our website at obwb.ca/milfoil.

While native plants may sometimes interfere with recreation, they play an important role in supporting water quality and aquatic habitat. Unlike invasive milfoil, they do not threaten public safety and may even be protected under provincial or federal legislation. For this reason, OBWB's program is not permitted to disturb native plants.

New Milfoil Harvester Delivery and Launch

Our new aquatic weed harvester, the custom-built 2025 Aquarius HM620, is scheduled for delivery on Friday Sept, 5, 2025 in Kelowna, pending any shipping or customs delays.

The new machine replaces an Aquarius harvester that had been in service since 1978, representing a major step forward for the milfoil control program. With a 19.4 cubic metre capacity, the HM620 is designed to significantly improve efficiency in removing invasive Eurasian watermilfoil from Okanagan lakes—helping protect both ecosystems and the regional economy. A custom-built adjustable operator platform will also allow the harvester to move freely between basins of Osoyoos Lake under the low-clearance highway bridge.

Since adopting its first Asset Management Plan in 2015, the OBWB has replaced two-thirds of its milfoil control fleet without significant tax increases, ensuring the program remains effective, safe, and reliable. The cost of the new harvester is approximately \$397,500 CAD, with a final cost to be reported to the board following final invoicing, exchange rate and tax calculations (and pending any tariffs).

Why an American Supplier?

The purchase followed a full Request for Proposals (RFP) process starting in September 2024. Canadian suppliers were notified directly, but none were able to design a harvester tailored to OBWB's program needs. Interprovincial trade barriers around wide-load transport also posed challenges.

Aquarius Systems of Wisconsin, OBWB's longest-standing supplier, offered a custom design that met program requirements, addressed transport issues, and provided the most competitive price. The new HM620 continues a partnership that has supported OBWB's milfoil control program for decades.

As this harvesting season will be completed by the time of delivery, OBWB will hold an official launch for the new machine in summer 2026, at the start of next harvesting season.



MEMORANDUM

To: OBWB Directors
From: Carmen Weld
Date: Aug. 26, 2025
Subject: **Communications Manager Report**

Okanagan Basin Water Board
Regular meeting
Sept. 5, 2025
Agenda No: 7.3

Make Water Work

Our Make Water Work Community Champion will be revealed at the Sept. 5 Annual Meeting.

As of Aug. 26, 2025, Armstrong holds the lead they took in July with 132 pledges. However, Oliver and Osoyoos remain close contenders with 102 and 87 pledges respectively.

The winning community will be celebrated at the annual meeting and will hold bragging rights for the year ahead. Will this be Armstrong's seventh win in the last decade? This final week of pledges will let us know.

This year continues to see record-setting pledges, sitting at 550 as of Aug. 26, 2025. While it has not surpassed the contest's best year that saw 677 pledges in 2020, it is more than 200 pledges over the 318 received in 2024.

Although the Community Champion is about to be crowned, the public is encouraged to continue to Take the Pledge until mid-October. The contest to 🎉 WIN one of two \$500 WaterWise yard upgrade closes Oct. 20, 2025.

The digital and physical campaign continued through August with Make Water Work promoted on billboards, buses, radio, social media, KelownaNow, Castanet, YouTube, Global TV and more.

OBWB and FireSmart™ have been in contact to confirm a mutual desire to continue the partnership next year. We will connect with them later this winter, ahead of the Spring 2026 launch.

All Make Water Work partner invoices have been sent to our amazing partners across the region. Their continued contribution helps us deliver a meaningful, professional, and impactful campaign across the Okanagan.

For example, with OBWB matching funds from local government and utility partners in 2024, we leveraged \$58,989 in funding to deliver a campaign valued at more than \$100,000, thanks to additional in-kind media support.

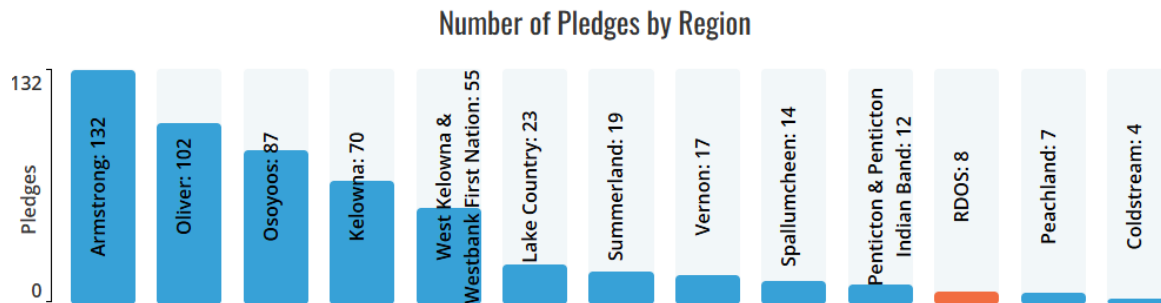


Figure 1 - Pledge totals as of Aug. 26, 2025

Don't Move a Mussel

The digital and physical Don't Move a Mussel campaign continues with Don't Move a Mussel promoted on billboards, radio, social media, local media, YouTube, Global TV and more.

According to our contractor, our digital campaign has reached more than 2.75 million impressions, and nearly 6,000 clicks on DMM ads so far this year.

Key communications since last report, and what's coming up

- Aug. 21, 2025: [Drought Bulletin 5](#)
- The OBWB team finalized the 2025 Annual Report, themed Flowing Forward, which will be printed and ready for our Annual Meeting on Sept. 5, 2025. It will be posted online that day as well.
- We're exploring a new communications strategy to communicate effectively with, and about, the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council. We will survey Council members to get feedback on what they would like to see from the OBWB going forward.

Media Tracking

Please find monthly media tracking below, listing articles from July 29 to Aug. 25, 2025, in reverse chronological order.

Date	Source	Headline	Link
August 25, 2025	Vernon Matters	Flood mitigation work being planned for Lavington Wetland	https://vernonmatters.ca/2025/08/25/flood-mitigation-work-being-planned-for-lavington-wetland/
August 22, 2025	Penticton Western News and other Black Press publications	Similkameen River reaches record low streamflow levels	https://www.pentictonwesternnews.com/local-news/similkameen-river-reaches-record-low-streamflow-levels-8207553
August 16, 2025	The Vernon Morning Star	LETTER: Turning the tap on Coldstream's water issues	https://www.vernonmorningstar.com/opinion/letter-turning-the-tap-on-coldstreams-water-issues-8190354

August 13, 2025	Castanet	Picking right plants yield best results due to Okanagan's hot dry summers and cold winters	https://www.castanet.net/news/Gardening-with-nature/566238/Picking-right-plants-yield-best-results-due-to-Okanagan-s-hot-dry-summer-and-cold-winters
August 8, 2025	Penticton Western News and other Black Press publications	Water briefs: Early start for Okanagan milfoil harvesting	https://www.pentictonwesternnews.com/home/water-briefs-early-start-for-okanagan-milfoil-harvesting-8180607
August 5, 2025	EurekaAlert!	Waterways—Past, Present and Future continues to teach	https://www.eurekaalert.org/news-releases/1093716
August 5, 2025	UBC Okanagan News	Waterways—Past, Present and Future continues to teach	https://news.ok.ubc.ca/2025/08/05/waterways-past-present-and-future-continues-to-teach/
August 5, 2025	Castanet	Enough milfoil extracted to cover a hockey rink: OBWB	https://www.castanet.net/news/Kelowna/564922/Enough-milfoil-extracted-to-cover-a-hockey-rink-OBWB
August 4, 2025	The Penticton Herald and print editions	Vaseux milfoil proliferates	https://www.pentictonherald.ca/life/article_34ed79fe-3263-46be-abe3-d35dcfab5395.html
July 30, 2025	Castanet	How to kill your traditional turf grass lawn	https://www.castanet.net/news/Gardening-with-nature/564005/How-to-kill-your-traditional-turf-grass-lawn

The Stats: July 29– Aug. 25, 2025

<i>Total individual articles mentioning OBWB work, projects etc.</i>	<i>Total Reach*</i>
19	62.4K

***Total Reach** is pulled from our media monitoring service Meltwater. It's important to note that in Meltwater, "reach" is inflated as it represents the potential number of unique visitors who could have seen a specific article or piece of content. It's calculated based on the monthly unique visitors to the source publication, not the number of times the content was displayed. This metric helps organizations understand the potential audience size and reach of their content across various platforms.



MEMORANDUM

To: OBWB Directors
From: Sandra Schira, Water Science Specialist
Date: Aug. 25, 2025
Subject: **Weather Update**

Okanagan Basin Water Board
Regular meeting
Sep. 5, 2025
Agenda No: 7.4

Temperature

August temperatures were variable but generally warmer than normal compared to the 1991-2020 average. The first week of August was very warm, with average temperatures for that week sitting between 23°C and 24°C across the Okanagan (Figure 1). Temperatures returned closer to normal conditions for the rest of August but were still slightly warm.

Precipitation

As of Aug. 25, the monthly precipitation for August was within the normal range but below the 1991-2020 average (Figure 2). By August, most cities in the Okanagan had received about 200 mm of precipitation. So far this year, only Kelowna was close to the normal value; conversely, the weather stations in Vernon (at Coldstream Ranch) and Penticton had both received less total precipitation than normal. Since precipitation varies significantly by location, it is essential to consider local conditions and consult local water suppliers and experts to understand the current conditions in your area.

The Okanagan experienced sufficient rainfall in late August to lower the Provincial drought level to 0 during the week of August 21, according to the province's new method for setting drought levels. However, despite the average improvement across the whole region, local conditions vary significantly across the valley. Many catchments are still experiencing significant drought impacts, including very warm water temperatures and low stream flows. Additionally, the new drought level rubric from the province is calibrated to reflect weekly conditions and is therefore likely to change from one week to the next. It is likely that with the warm weather forecast, the level will rise.

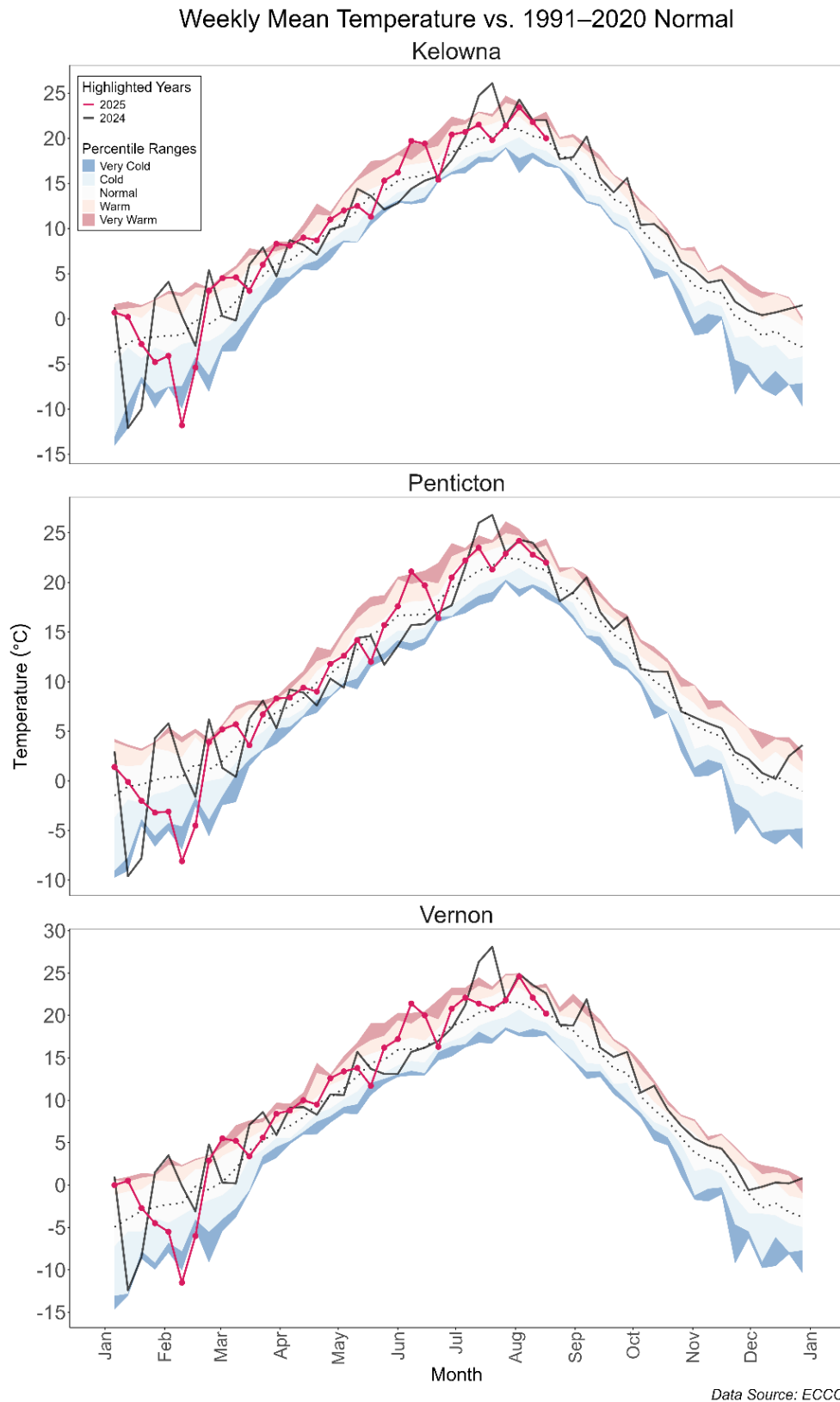


Figure 1: Weekly mean temperatures in the Okanagan as of Aug. 25, 2025 compared to 1991 to 2020 range. Data retrieved from Environment and Climate Change Canada

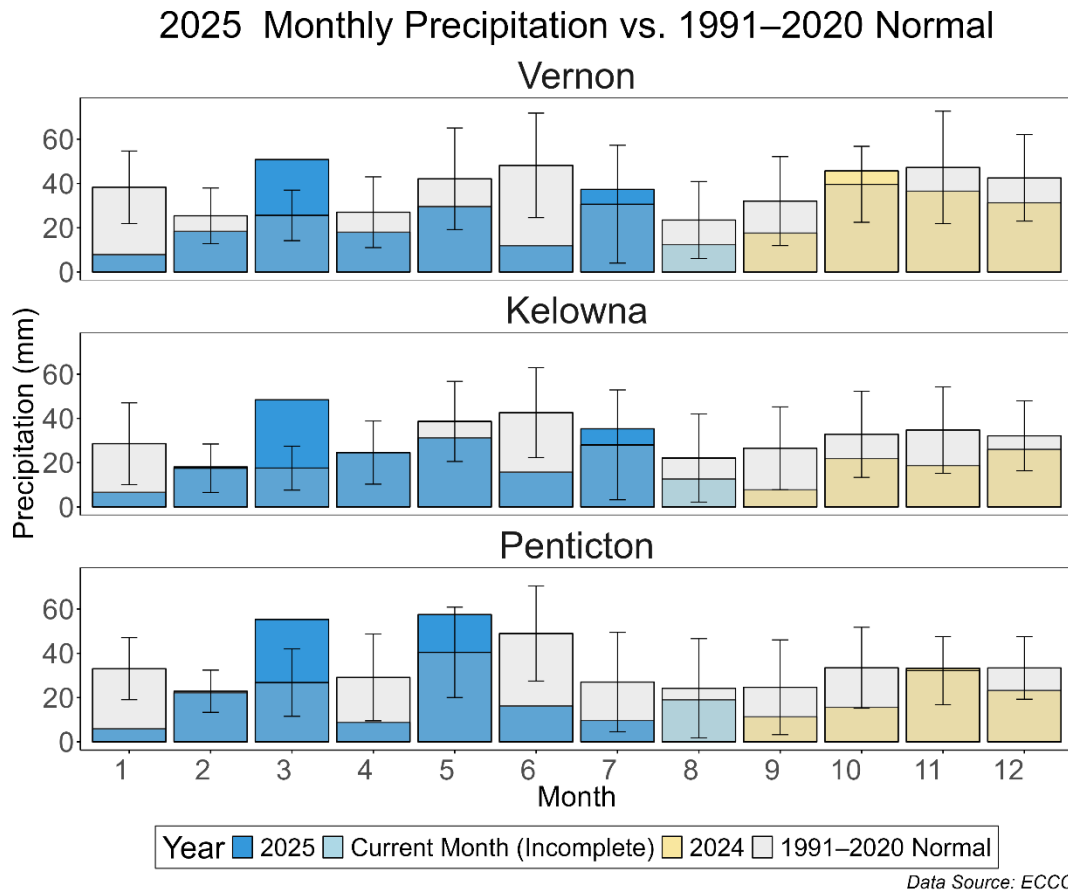
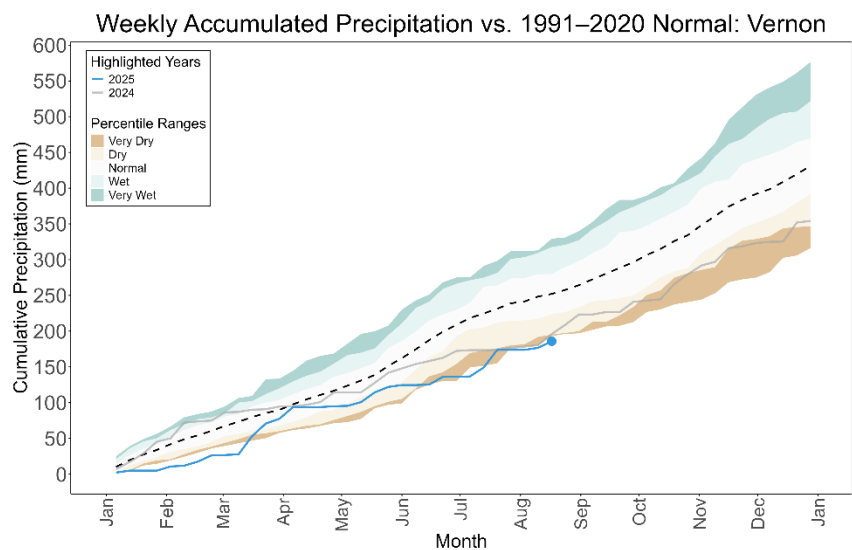


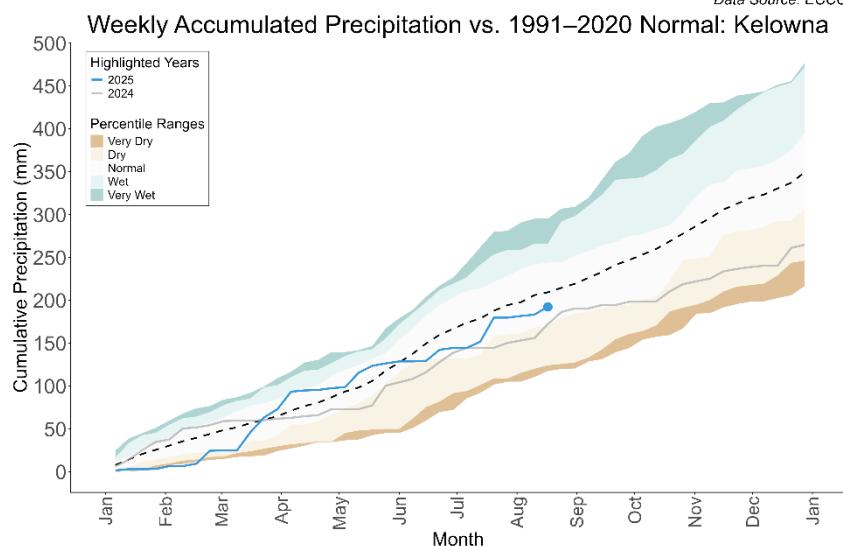
Figure 2: Monthly Precipitation in the Okanagan as of Aug. 25, 2025 compared to 1991 to 2020 range. Data retrieved from Environment and Climate Change Canada

Seasonal forecasts indicate that August through October is likely to be warm. The Environment and Climate Change Canada¹ long-term seasonal forecast indicates a medium likelihood of above-normal temperatures in the Okanagan over the next three months. Precipitation forecasts show no clear trend for the Okanagan region during that period (Figure 4). Seasonal forecasting is highly challenging, so disagreement between models or variations from projections is not uncommon. The forecasts show the likelihood of above or below normal conditions and do not show by how much those conditions vary. Seasonal forecasts can be used to provide a sense of likely future conditions, but they should not be taken as 100 per cent certain.

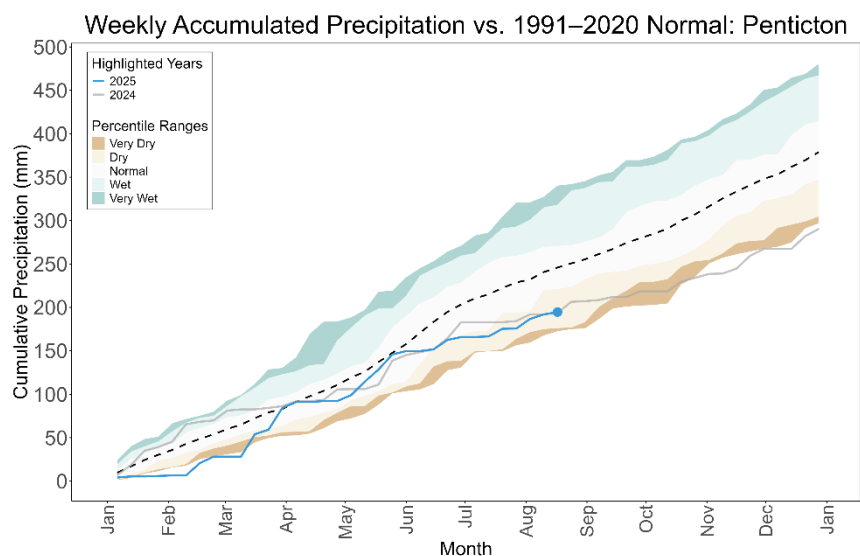
¹ ECCC Seasonal forecasts. <https://climate-scenarios.canada.ca/?page=cansips-prob> (Accessed 25.07.2025)



Data Source: ECCC



Data Source: ECCC



Data Source: ECCC

Figure 3: Cumulative weekly precipitation in the Okanagan as of Aug. 25, 2025 compared to the 1991 to 2020 range. Data retrieved from Environment and Climate Change Canada

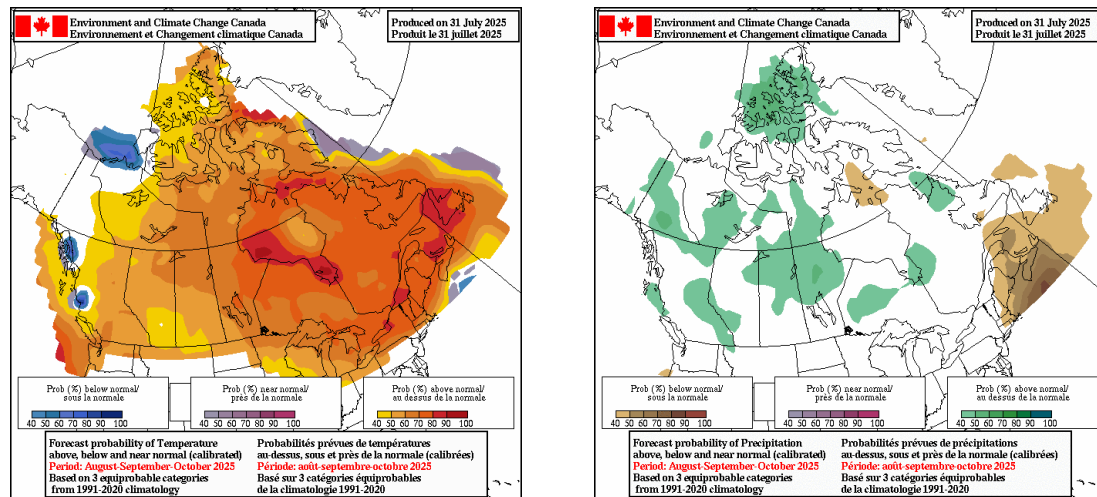


Figure 4: Three-Month Seasonal Forecast from ECCC¹ (Aug-Oct).

Hydrology

Streamflow was variable across the valley, but many systems are low, and water temperatures are warm. Okanagan Lake levels are low for this time of year in part due to the early freshet seen this spring (Figure 5). Water supplies vary across the valley, with many reservoirs around normal, but many unregulated systems remain low, especially in the south. Warm waters are creating thermal barriers that make fish passage difficult. As a note, the Similkameen River remains alarmingly low.

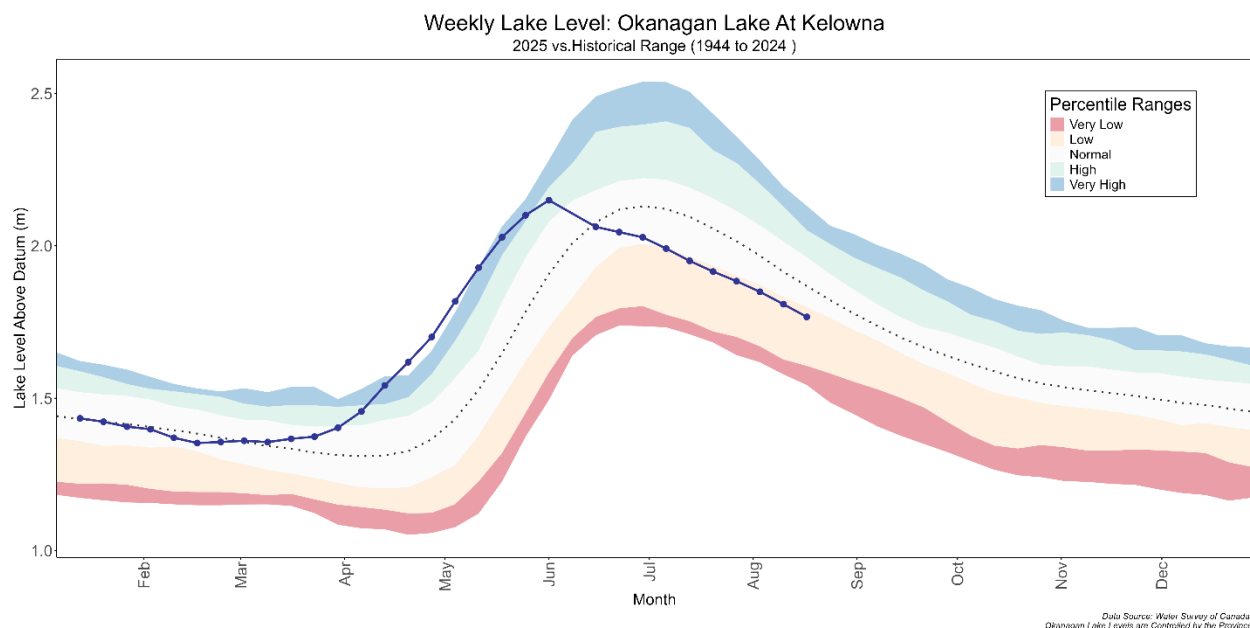


Figure 5: Weekly lake levels for Okanagan Lake at Kelowna compared to the 1944 – 2023 range as of Aug. 25, 2025. Data is retrieved from the Water Survey of Canada.