

## Okanagan Basin Water Board Meeting Agenda



**DATE:** Tuesday, Oct. 7, 2025

**TIME:** 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

**PLACE:** Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen at 101 Martin St., Penticton, 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 tm̓x̓wúlaʔx̓w (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**

**3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

4.1 Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of Sept. 5, 2025 held at the Rotary Centre for the Arts, 421 Cawston Ave, Kelowna, B.C.

P. 2

**5. BOARD CHAIR REMARKS**

**6. DELEGATION/PRESENTATIONS**

6.1 Delegation from Danielle Paydli, Executive Director of the Cowichan Watershed Board.

**7. STAFF REPORTS**

7.1 Executive Director Report

P. 6

7.2 UBCM Strategic Priorities Fund Grant Application Memo

P. 8

7.3 Chief Operating Officer Report

P. 10

7.4 Water Stewardship Director Report

P. 14

7.5 Communications Manager Report

P. 15

7.6 Water Science Specialist Report

P. 20

**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, Nov. 4, 2025, online.

**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](mailto:communications@obwb.ca) for further details.



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OKANAGAN BASIN WATER BOARD  
HELD SEPT. 5, 2025, AT THE ROTARY CENTRE FOR THE ARTS, 421 Cawston Ave, Kelowna, B.C.  
V1Y 6Z1**

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**PRESENT**

Chair Blair Ireland  
Vice Chair Doug Holmes  
Alternate Director Shirley Fowler  
Director Victor Cumming  
Director Bob Fleming  
Director Wayne Carson  
Alternate Director Kevin Kraft  
Director Sue McKortoff  
Director Subrina Monteith  
Alternate Director Jeremy Fyke  
Director Bob Hrasko  
Director Tim Lezard

Regional District Central Okanagan  
Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen  
Regional District North Okanagan  
Regional District North Okanagan  
Regional District North Okanagan  
Regional District Central Okanagan  
Regional District Central Okanagan  
Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen  
Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen  
Okanagan Water Stewardship Council (OWSC)  
Water Supply Association of B.C.  
Okanagan Nation Alliance

**REGRETS**

Director Rick Fairbairn

Regional District North Okanagan

**STAFF**

Melissa Tesche  
James Littley  
Nelson Jatel  
Carolina Restrepo-Tamayo  
Carmen Weld  
Christina White  
Sandra Schira  
Amanda Burnett

Executive Director  
Chief Operating Officer  
Water Stewardship Director  
Office and Grants Manager  
Communications Manager  
Water Quality Project Manager  
Water Science Specialist  
Communications Coordinator

**GUESTS**

Sarah Sandholm  
Dr. Michael Russello

UBCO – Associate Director of Development  
UBCO – Researcher, Ecological and Conservation  
Genomics Lab

**1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

Chair Ireland called the meeting to order at 12:34 p.m.

He respectfully acknowledged 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 siwłk (water) which flows through the valley and connects us all.

**2. INTRODUCTION OF LATE ITEMS**

No late items.

**3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

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

**CARRIED**

**4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

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

***“THAT the minutes of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board on August 5, 2024, held at the offices of the RDNO, at 9848 Aberdeen Road, Coldstream, B.C., be approved.”***

**CARRIED**

**5. BOARD CHAIR REMARKS**

There were no remarks.

**6. DELEGATION/PRESENTATIONS**

Dr. Michael Russello, Professor of Population & Conservation Genomics at UBC Okanagan, presented a proposal to create a rapid environmental DNA (eDNA) test for zebra, quagga, and golden mussels. eDNA refers to genetic material that organisms leave behind in their environment through skin, waste, or reproductive cells. The new tool would make it possible to test boats and water samples on-site, providing accurate results within minutes at low cost.

The project would involve UBC Okanagan, the University of California Davis, and Queen's University. At UC Davis, Dr. Andrea Schreier and her team have already shown that a genomic tool called SHERLOCK can detect fish species from eDNA in water. They are now adapting this same approach to target invasive mussels.

Queen's University, in Dr. Shelley Arnott's lab, would test how sensitive the tool is—specifically, how well it can detect very small amounts of mussel DNA. Because her lab raises invasive mussels under controlled conditions, they can carefully measure DNA levels to see how reliably the tool works.

The second phase of the project would focus on collecting samples from boats and watercraft, using methods such as vacuum filtration or surface swabs (similar to DNA testing at crime scenes). The goal is to find the quickest, most reliable method that avoids false negatives—results that mistakenly shows boats as mussel-free.

The combined eDNA test and sampling method would then be compared with the current gold standard: trained mussel detection dogs.

Dr. Russello presented a draft two-year budget of about \$500,000. This would cover a post-doctoral researcher, equipment, and travel between California, Ontario, and B.C.

The Board noted the potential for the project to transform boat inspections. If successful, this approach could provide inspections that are just as reliable as canine detection but at a fraction of the cost.

The Board also raised questions about commercialization, intellectual property, and funding, and directed staff to explore these issues further and report back at the next meeting.

***“THAT staff be directed to explore a partnership with UBCO Conservation Genomics Lab to support this project, to explore other potential partnerships, and to return to the Board with recommendations.”***

**CARRIED**

The Board thanked Dr. Russello for his presentation, and he exited the meeting.

**7. STAFF REPORTS****7.1 Executive Director Report – Melissa Tesche**

Ms. Tesche provided a brief update to the Board. She noted that the Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) had submitted a letter to the Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, expressing concerns about the province's new method for setting regional drought levels. The Board shared these concerns and expressed support for the ONA's position.

Ms. Tesche informed the Board that staff are preparing a submission to the Strategic Priorities Fund, formerly known as the gas tax grant program. The proposed project, developed in consultation with the University of Waterloo and the Okanagan Nation Alliance, aims to modernize and apply the Hydrology Model across all 18 Okanagan sub-basins, beginning with a pilot in Mission Creek, to support future water use planning. The submission will require a Board motion of support, which will be circulated to Directors for the October meeting.

***"THAT the Executive Director's Report, dated Aug. 27, 2025, be received."***

**CARRIED****7.2 Chief Operating Officer Report - James Littlely**

Mr. Littlely provided the Board with an update on invasive mussel prevention efforts. He reviewed recent amendments to the Wildlife Act and noted that the changes offer flexibility for developing mandatory watercraft inspection regulations. However, he cautioned that provincial staff are currently facing financial and staffing capacity challenges that could delay implementation. He and Ms. Tesche are scheduled to meet with provincial officials later in the month to advocate for progress on this file.

He also informed the Board that the new milfoil harvester, a custom-built Aquarius HM620, is scheduled to arrive on Monday. The final cost of the machine is approximately \$422,500, which will be drawn from the milfoil reserve fund.

***"THAT the Deputy Administrator's Report, dated Aug. 25, 2025, be received."***

**CARRIED****7.3 Communications Manager Report – Carmen Weld**

Ms. Weld provided a brief update to the Board, noting that the standings in the Make Water Work Community contest had changed significantly since her memo was issued. Osoyoos overtook Armstrong in the final week of the contest to claim the title of Make Water Work Community Champion.

She also reported that she and Ms. Schira had been working closely on drought bulletins throughout the summer, and that another bulletin had been released earlier in the week.

The Board asked for staff to prepare a briefing note ahead of the upcoming UBCM so they can be prepared to discuss the OBWB's concerns with the new regional drought rating system, should the opportunity arise.

***"THAT OBWB staff be directed to prepare a briefing note for Board Directors attending the upcoming UBCM conference, outlining key talking points regarding the Province's new drought level system and its disconnect from on-the-ground conditions."***

**CARRIED**

***"THAT the Communication Manager's Report, dated Aug. 26, 2025, be received."***  
**CARRIED.**

#### **7.4 Water Science Specialist Report – Sandra Schira**

Ms. Schira reported to the Board that the end of August experienced a heat wave, with August temperatures warmer overall, though still varied. The heatwave over Labour Day weekend was significant, with Lytton, B.C. experiencing the hottest recorded temperature in Canada this year.

Regarding drought, precipitation was within the normal range for the month. However, a year-to-date analysis reveals a relatively dry year. Intermittent rainfall has prevented the drought from becoming as severe as in previous years, but conditions remain dry. As a result, the province raised the drought level in the Okanagan from 0 to 2.

According to Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), warm weather is likely to continue, although their models remain inconclusive. Okanagan Lake models indicate low water levels, which could be a normal seasonal pattern that has shifted earlier than usual.

***"THAT the Water Science Specialist Report, dated Aug. 25, 2025, be received."***  
**CARRIED.**

#### **8. NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

No new items.

#### **9. CORRESPONDANCE**

No correspondence attached.

#### **10. IN CAMERA**

No in-camera session held.

#### **11. NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board will be Tuesday, Oct.7, 2025 at 10:00 a.m., at the offices of the Regional District of the Okanagan Similkameen.

**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](mailto:Communications@obwb.ca) for further details.

#### **12. ADJOURNMENT**

***"THAT there being no further business, the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of Sept. 5, 2025 be adjourned at 1:35 p.m."***  
**CARRIED**

Certified Correct:		
Chair		Executive Director



## MEMORANDUM

To: OBWB Directors  
From: Melissa Tesche  
Date: Oct. 1, 2025  
Subject: Executive Director Report

Okanagan Basin Water Board  
Regular meeting  
Oct. 7, 2025  
Agenda No: 7.1

### UBCM

I attended the Union of BC Municipalities annual convention in Victoria last week, alongside Dr. Anna Warwick Sears in her as-needed capacity as OBWB Senior Advisor. The conference proved to be a highly valuable experience at this early stage in my role. While I gained useful insights from policy clinics and workshops, the greatest benefit came from the introductions facilitated by my predecessor. These connections will accelerate my ability to build relationships with provincial officials, local government leaders, and partner organizations. The networking and visibility achieved at UBCM laid an important foundation for strengthening OBWB's influence and advancing Okanagan water priorities in the months ahead.

### Budget Preparations Continue

I am continuing to work with the OBWB team and RDCO finance staff on preparation of the 2026-27 budget. I will be presenting a draft budget to the board at our regular meeting in November, and it can either be adopted at that time, or sent back for revision and adopted when we meet in December for the Strategic Planning Session. Our legislation requires that our budget is passed no later than December each year.

Looking ahead to next year, with the municipal election scheduled for Oct. 17, 2026, we will present the initial budget for adoption at September's meeting, with the ability to bring back any required revisions in early October.

### Director Interviews for Strategic Plan

As part of the strategic planning process, Allan Neilson (Neilson Strategies Inc.) and I will be conducting individual interviews with each Board Director and selected key leaders during October. These conversations will provide important insights into the priorities and perspectives shaping our work. A one-hour virtual session is scheduled to follow the November Board meeting, where Allan will share key themes from the interviews and preview the process leading into the December full-day planning workshop.

## **OBWB Support for Community Water Infrastructure Needs**

Over the past five months, I have met with many Board Directors, municipal staff, and colleagues across the water sector. A primary recurring theme in these conversations has been concern about looming water infrastructure challenges. Communities are facing the combined challenges of aging infrastructure, escalating costs, and limited capacity. Staff turnover and the difficulty of sustaining institutional knowledge add to the challenge, as do communication hurdles in engaging the public around infrastructure spending.

I have been giving considerable thought as to how the OBWB can best support our communities as they face these challenges. We will continue to explore how OBWB might leverage our convening power and access to technical expertise to support conversations on best practices, coordinate advocacy for increased senior government investment, and provide science-based tools and data to support decision making.





## MEMORANDUM

To: OBWB Directors  
From: Melissa Tesche, Executive Director, and  
Dr. Nelson Jatel, Water Stewardship Director  
Date: Oct. 1, 2025  
Subject: **UBCM Strategic Priorities Fund Grant Application**

Okanagan Basin Water Board Regular meeting Oct. 7, 2025 Agenda No: 7.2
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### Recommended motion:

*THAT OBWB Board of Directors support the OBWB application to the Strategic Priorities Fund Capacity Building Stream for the project 'Updating the necessary science required to modernize Okanagan Water Use Plans to promote resilience and reduce conflicts.'*

*AND THAT OBWB commit to adjusting future financial plans as necessary to reflect grant funding and ensure successful project completion.*

*AND FURTHER THAT the OBWB authorize the Executive Director to execute any necessary contribution agreements in the case of a successful application.*

### Background:

The Strategic Priorities Fund (SPF) provides support for large-scale, innovative projects with regional impact that advance economic growth, environmental sustainability, and community resilience. OBWB is a qualified recipient and has successfully secured SPF funding in the past. A Board Resolution is required to accompany the current application, confirming support for the proposed project, commitment to project management, and willingness to address any cost overruns.

### Project Overview:

The Okanagan Basin Water Board will modernize and apply the Hydrology Model across all 18 Okanagan sub-basins to provide the most accurate water and climate data ever produced. By integrating updated land use, groundwater interactions, advanced evapotranspiration science, reservoir operations, and high-resolution climate projections, the project will provide transparent, defensible tools for water use planning, asset management, and housing approvals. This work will directly strengthen community resilience, reduce water conflicts, and support evidence-based decision-making for decades to come.



This project will also include a demonstration of scenario development in one of the sub-basins, Mission Creek, to serve as a model for how the tool can be used.

In 2023, a Mission Creek Planning Workshop confirmed strong community readiness for a new Water Use Plan (WUP). More than 40 participants, including First Nations, local governments, utilities, NGOs, and residents, emphasized the urgent need for credible science to underpin water decisions. This proposal directly responds to that call, building on prior foundational work completed by the OBWB and partners, including the development of initial hydrology models for low-flows, flood analyses, and environmental flow need calculations.

Modernizing the Hydrology Model will set the stage for a new WUP for Mission Creek, a process that will be led by the Okanagan Nation Alliance. This approach will also establish a replicable framework for all Okanagan sub-basins.

**Project Timeline:**

Work on this project is proposed to span two years, beginning April 1, 2026 and finishing by March 31, 2028.

**Project Budget:**

The total project cost is estimated to be \$540,000, with \$390,000 requested from the SPF. OBWB will provide \$50,000 of in-kind contributions (project management, coordination with First Nations and local governments, and financial oversight) and \$100,000 in cash contributions. This 3:1 leverage of external to internal funding demonstrates strong regional commitment and efficient use of local resources.

## MEMORANDUM

To: OBWB Directors  
From: James Littley, Chief Operating Officer  
Date: Sep. 29, 2025  
Subject: Chief Operating Officer Report

Okanagan Basin Water Board  
Regular meeting  
Oct. 7, 2025  
Agenda No: 7.3

### **UBCO: Rapid eDNA Detection Tool for Invasive Mussel Biosecurity - Update**

In September, the Board heard from Dr. Michael Russello (UBC Okanagan) on a project to develop a rapid in-field tool to detect invasive mussel DNA on watercraft before mussels can establish in B.C. lakes. The project will create a protocol to collect samples at inspection stations, process them in a mobile lab, and identify mussel DNA exposure within minutes.

The concept was first raised at the Okanagan-Interior Invasive Mussel Working Group as an “artificial dog’s nose” for invasive species detection. Beyond mussels, this technology could potentially expand to other invasive species and even pathogens such as whirling disease.

#### **Budget (2 years, total \$460,000):**

- \$204,000 – Researcher and student salaries
- \$152,000 – Equipment and consumables
- \$44,000 – Travel, training, field trials
- \$60,000 – UBC administration fee (15%)

#### **Funding Status:**

- \$60,000 salary support, contingent on matching funds.
- Remaining gap: \$400,000 (\$200,000/year)

#### **Funding Rationale**

The cost of an invasive mussel infestation in B.C. would be measured in billions of dollars in damages to infrastructure, ecosystems, and the economy. This project represents a unique opportunity to transform invasive mussel prevention by providing real-time results at inspection stations, not just in B.C., but throughout the Pacific Northwest, providing a more effective buffer zone outside our borders. Contributing 50 per cent of the funding gap (\$200,000 over two years) strikes an effective balance:

- It secures the already committed \$60,000 and demonstrates OBWB’s leadership in advancing innovative biosecurity.

- It signals confidence in the project and provides a strong incentive for provincial, federal, and industry partners to contribute the remaining funds.
- It ensures OBWB plays a catalytic role in developing technology that could dramatically improve B.C.'s early detection capacity, while not bearing the full financial responsibility.

**Recommended Motion: *THAT OBWB provide \$200,000 (\$100,000 per year, starting April 2026) to UBC-O for the Rapid eDNA Detection Tool for Invasive Mussel Biosecurity Project pending full project funding commitments from other sources.***

***AND THAT OBWB support fundraising efforts to secure the remaining project funding.***

### **Invasive Mussel Annual Update**

#### **Progress Made**

Each year I bring forward recommendations to address gaps in invasive mussel prevention. Over the past year, working with partners at regional and provincial levels, we've helped secure the following progress:

- Finance Committee Presentation – Led to a provincial recommendation for increased mussel prevention funding in 2026.
- Mandatory Inspections – Supported Wildlife Act amendments enabling future regulations.
- Pull-the-Plug Legislation – Achieved Wildlife Act amendments making this practice mandatory.
- Innovative Detection – Advanced research toward an “artificial dog’s nose” for mussel detection.

We've also expanded capacity by hiring a water quality project manager, developing a menu of options for a provincial watercraft inspection program, and starting to develop a regional appendix to strengthen early detection and rapid response. This work means potential action could be taken weeks earlier in the event of detection, and we're preparing a “how-to guide” so other regions can replicate this approach.

#### **Gaps Remain**

In 2025, the province budgeted \$3.6 million for the Invasive Mussel Defence Program, including \$1.75 million provided by partners. According to the Ministry's Estimates Notes, this total included \$1 million identified as “Ministry Risk Managed,” meaning funds were reallocated from other stewardship priorities to sustain the program. The notes also acknowledge that inspections at the Canada–U.S. border are a federal responsibility and confirm that B.C. has had to absorb those costs in the absence of federal contributions.

#### **Calls to Action – Federal Government**

1. Match provincial investments in invasive mussel defence.

The federal government should provide matching funding to western provinces, at minimum offsetting the \$1M+ that B.C. reallocates each year to cover border inspection costs. This support should not come at the expense of existing invasive species program funding but instead be drawn from either DFO's enforcement budget or the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) enforcement budget,

reflecting that watercraft inspections at international borders are a federal responsibility and restoring balance to provincial conservation budgets.

2. Invest in research and innovation to strengthen prevention.

Expanded federal funding is needed for early detection technologies such as eDNA tools and mobile in-field labs, as well as for watercraft tracking systems like QR-tagged permits. Enhanced water body monitoring at high-risk sites will provide the science and enforcement backbone to keep invasive mussels out.

3. Update national risk mapping to include golden mussels.

Risk assessments must be redone to account for *Limnoperna fortunei*, which can thrive at lower calcium levels than zebra or quagga mussels. Golden mussels now represent a credible threat not only to western waters but to uninfested areas of the Great Lakes and other Canadian water bodies.

4. Establish public accountability for invasive mussel prevention.

Commit to issuing annual public progress reports on funding and program outcomes, similar to B.C.'s IMDP status reports, so Canadians can track national readiness and see where improvements are being made.

#### Calls to Action – Provincial Government

1. Deliver regulations for mandatory watercraft inspections.

B.C. should budget sufficient funds and staff to implement robust regulations as soon as possible, aiming for a pilot region in summer 2026. Strong regulations are critical to closing gaps in enforcement and compliance.

2. Adopt interim safeguards until regulations are in place.

The province should consider a temporary moratorium on all out-of-province watercraft, or at minimum restrict access from high-risk jurisdictions, to limit pathways of introduction during this critical transition period.

3. Pursue a Western Canada Mussel-Free Zone.

Work with Alberta and Saskatchewan to establish a political-level task force coordinating inspection standards, penalties, and rapid response protocols. A regional approach will ensure consistency and strengthen Canada's perimeter defence.

**Recommended Motion: *THAT OBWB send letters to appropriate federal and provincial ministers calling for the actions outlined above.***

#### Invasive Mussel Working Group

We are preparing to hold the second meeting of the Okanagan-Interior Invasive Mussel Working Group in Kelowna in late October or November, co-hosted with the Okanagan Nation Alliance. The session will focus on developing clear recommendations for provincial regulations requiring mandatory watercraft inspections, drawing on a "menu of options" already prepared and the diverse expertise of more than 50 participating organizations.

The meeting is intended to build consensus on how inspections should operate, how compliance can be enforced, and realistic timelines for implementation. Outcomes will include draft recommendations for the Province, strategies for regional rapid response planning, and guidance on preparing for potential “living with mussels” scenarios. Staff will be reaching out to working group members over the next couple of weeks to confirm details.

#### **Milfoil Control Program Safety Update**

Over the past 18 months I have been working with a contractor to significantly enhance and modernize our Occupational Health and Safety Program, focussed on the milfoil control program (Office staff are covered by the RDCO OH&S Committee). As part of the program, we have updated the OBWB’s Health and Safety Policy Statement, and we are seeking the Board’s endorsement.

*“The Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) is committed to providing a safe and healthy work environment for all employees, contractors, and visitors. The health and safety of our workforce is our highest priority and integral to our operations. This policy aligns with the WorkSafeBC Occupational Health and Safety Regulations (2015-2022 and subsequent updates) and commits to continuous improvement in all aspects of health and safety management.”*

**Recommended Motion: *THAT the board endorses the OBWB milfoil control program Health and Safety Policy Statement.***

## MEMORANDUM

To: OBWB Directors  
From: Nelson Jatel  
Date: Sept. 29, 2025  
Subject: **Water Stewardship Director's Report**

Okanagan Basin Water Board  
Regular meeting  
October 7, 2025  
Agenda No: 7.4

### **Okanagan Water Stewardship Council (OWSC) – a technical advisory body to the OBWB September Council Meeting Summary**

At the Sept. 10 Council meeting, we heard from Scott Smith, Chair of the Policy Committee. Scott presented highlights from the previously developed report *“Review of the 2023 Provincial Drought Response in Selected BC Watersheds”* and introduced the Committee’s current task: preparing a discussion paper on the state of Okanagan sewage system reviews and professional reliance. This upcoming paper will focus on the respective roles of the province and local governments, including an assessment of potential legal liability exposure for local governments—an issue recently raised by the Regional District of North Okanagan.

### **October Council Meeting Preview**

The next Water Stewardship Council meeting will be held on **Thursday, Oct. 9, 2025**, from 12:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Coast Capri Hotel.

Our guest speaker will be Dr. Cassidy Rankine, Senior Account Executive with Planet Canada and a Remote Sensing Specialist. Cassidy’s presentation will focus on the application of remote sensing technologies to support water stewardship in the Okanagan. Two case studies of particular interest to Council members will be highlighted:

1. Blue-green algae detection – with applications for monitoring risks to drinking water intakes and public beach safety.
2. Weather-related data – with a focus on approaches for calculating evapotranspiration (ET) and temperature trends.

These topics connect directly with ongoing Council discussions around water quality, climate resilience, and innovative tools to support decision-making.

### **Looking Ahead**

In addition to the guest presentation, the Council will continue its committee updates and work planning. This will include discussions on ongoing priorities such as:

- Advancing hydrologic modelling in the basin.
- Strengthening climate adaptation strategies.
- Supporting reconciliation and Indigenous knowledge integration.
- Policy opportunities related to drought response and watershed protection.

Council meetings remain a key venue for collaboration across sectors, providing the Board with actionable recommendations that integrate science, management, and community needs. Board members are encouraged to attend and participate.



## MEMORANDUM

To: OBWB Directors  
From: Carmen Weld  
Date: Oct. 1, 2025  
Subject: **Communications Manager Report**

Okanagan Basin Water Board Regular meeting Oct. 7, 2025 Agenda No: 7.5
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### **Make Water Work**

The 2025 Make Water Work Campaign is wrapping up this month with record-setting numbers.

The Town of Osoyoos claimed the title of Make Water Work Community Champion at our Annual Meeting on Sept. 5 – the community’s first win! Osoyoos Mayor and OBWB Director Sue McKortoff gave a rousing speech on how Osoyoos came from behind in the final inning to claim the most pledges per capita.

As of Oct. 1, 2025, Osoyoos has 168 of the more than 660 pledges this year. While it has not surpassed the contest’s best year that saw 677 pledges in 2020, it is more than 300 pledges over the 318 received in 2024! 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.

Our Make Water Work digital campaign has seen more than 9.3M impressions and nearly 10,000 clicks to MakeWaterWork.ca pages. We witnessed significantly higher engagement on our Facebook and Instagram ads and will reevaluate the strategy next year to allocate funding to the platforms that perform best. Our ads are also seen and heard daily on Global Okanagan and local Vista Radio stations up and down the valley.

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





(L-R) OBWB Directors Bob Fleming, Tim Lezard, Victor Cumming and Kevin Kraft, OBWB Executive Director Melissa Tesche, Alt-Director Shirley Fowler, OBWB Chair Blair Ireland presents the Make Water Work 2025 Community Champion certificate to Osoyoos Mayor and OBWB Director Sue McKortoff, OBWB Director Wayne Carson, OBWB Vice Chair Doug Holmes, OBWB Directors Subrina Monteith and Bob Hrasko, and Okanagan Xeriscape Association Executive Director Sigrie Kendrick.

### **Don't Move a Mussel**

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

Our DMM digital campaign has reached more than 4.6 million impressions, and nearly 9,000 clicks on DMM ads.

Like Make Water Work, we witnessed significantly higher engagement on our Facebook and Instagram ads and will also reevaluate the strategy next year to allocate funding to the platforms that perform best.

### **Key communications since last report**

- [Sept. 4, 2025](#): Drought Bulletin 6
- [Sept. 5, 2025](#): OBWB Annual Report Highlights Progress and Future of Okanagan Water

- [Sept. 9, 2025](#): September Board Report
- [Sept. 11, 2025](#): Drought Bulletin 7
- Key social media posts in the last 30 days include:
  - [Annual Meeting](#)
  - [Protect spawning salmon](#)
  - [National Day for Truth and Reconciliation](#)
- Media of note:
  - OBWB Water Science Specialist Sandra Sheer did an excellent interview on [Global TV regarding drought conditions](#).
  - OBWB Chief Operating Officer James Littlely supplied a quote to the [B.C. Wildlife Federation supporting its submitted petition](#) to the Auditor General of Canada raising urgent concerns about the federal government's lack of funding for programs designed to prevent the spread of invasive mussels in British Columbia.

## Media Tracking

September saw a significant increase in media coverage mentioning OBWB in September compared to August. This was due to coverage of our ongoing lobbying for better invasive mussel protections for B.C., as well as our concerns with the new drought rating system and coverage of our Annual Meeting.

Please find monthly media tracking below, listing articles from Aug. 26 to Sept. 29, 2025, in reverse chronological order.

Date	Source	Headline	Link
September 24, 2025	Castanet	<b>Okanagan Xeriscape Association raising money to revamp gardens</b>	<a href="https://www.castanet.net/news/Gardening-with-nature/573993/Okanagan-Xeriscape-Association-raising-money-to-revamp-gardens">https://www.castanet.net/news/Gardening-with-nature/573993/Okanagan-Xeriscape-Association-raising-money-to-revamp-gardens</a>
September 24, 2025	Kelowna Daily Courier and Penticton Herald	<b>It all happened Sept. 24</b>	Print editions
September 23, 2025	Summerland Review and 60 other Black Press publications	<b>BC Wildlife Federation petitions federal government to step up against invasive mussels</b>	<a href="https://www.summerlandreview.com/local-news/bc-wildlife-federation-petitions-federal-government-to-step-up-against-invasive-mussels-8269962">https://www.summerlandreview.com/local-news/bc-wildlife-federation-petitions-federal-government-to-step-up-against-invasive-mussels-8269962</a>
September 19, 2025	Summerland Review and 6 other Black Press publications	<b>Kelowna's Xeriscape demonstration garden due for an update</b>	<a href="https://www.summerlandreview.com/news/kelownas-xeriscape-demonstration-garden-due-for-an-update-8262067">https://www.summerlandreview.com/news/kelownas-xeriscape-demonstration-garden-due-for-an-update-8262067</a>
September 15, 2025	Global News and the Daily Guardian	<b>Drought level in the Okanagan increases</b>	<a href="https://globalnews.ca/news/11429548/drought-level-">https://globalnews.ca/news/11429548/drought-level-</a>

		<b>under new provincial system</b>	<a href="#">okanagan-increases-new-provincial-system/</a>
September 11, 2025	Castanet	<b>Drought rating rises in the Okanagan</b>	<a href="https://www.castanet.net/news/Kelowna/571799/Drought-rating-rises-in-the-Okanagan">https://www.castanet.net/news/Kelowna/571799/Drought-rating-rises-in-the-Okanagan</a>
September 11, 2025	KelownaNow	<b>Okanagan faces worsening drought, water board urges conservation</b>	<a href="https://www.kelownanow.com/watercooler/news/news/Okanagan/Okanagan_faces_worsening_drought_water_board_urgues_conservation/">https://www.kelownanow.com/watercooler/news/news/Okanagan/Okanagan_faces_worsening_drought_water_board_urgues_conservation/</a>
September 10, 2025	Castanet	<b>Osoyoos reigns Make Water Work champion, beating out Armstrong</b>	<a href="https://www.castanet.net/news/Oliver-Osoyoos/571539/Osoyoos-reigns-Make-Water-Work-champion-beating-out-Armstrong">https://www.castanet.net/news/Oliver-Osoyoos/571539/Osoyoos-reigns-Make-Water-Work-champion-beating-out-Armstrong</a>
September 3, 2025	Ground Water Canada	<b>News Operations Water Issues ONA at odds with B.C. water ministry over method of drought monitoring</b>	<a href="https://www.groundwatercanada.com/ona-at-odds-with-b-c-water-ministry-over-method-of-drought-monitoring/">https://www.groundwatercanada.com/ona-at-odds-with-b-c-water-ministry-over-method-of-drought-monitoring/</a>
September 2, 2025	Summerland Review and 6 other Black Press publications	<b>Okanagan Nation Alliance, water board challenge drought monitoring changes</b>	<a href="https://www.summerlandreview.com/home/okanagan-nation-alliance-water-board-challenge-drought-monitoring-changes-8227213">https://www.summerlandreview.com/home/okanagan-nation-alliance-water-board-challenge-drought-monitoring-changes-8227213</a>
September 1, 2025	Kelowna Daily Courier and Penticton Herald	<b>New waterweed-whacker comes from the States</b>	Print editions and <a href="https://www.pentictonherald.ca/news/article_cd7ef009-ec59-414e-9ea3-3f3812d8a8e8.html">https://www.pentictonherald.ca/news/article_cd7ef009-ec59-414e-9ea3-3f3812d8a8e8.html</a>
August 29, 2025	Summerland Review and 6 other Black Press publications	<b>Okanagan water briefs: Reducing false milfoil reports</b>	<a href="https://www.summerlandreview.com/home/okanagan-water-briefs-reducing-false-milfoil-reports-8220515">https://www.summerlandreview.com/home/okanagan-water-briefs-reducing-false-milfoil-reports-8220515</a>
August 28, 2025	Castanet	<b>Coldstream council gets update on numerous projects</b>	<a href="https://www.castanet.net/news/Vernon/568985/Coldstream-council-gets-update-on-numerous-projects">https://www.castanet.net/news/Vernon/568985/Coldstream-council-gets-update-on-numerous-projects</a>
August 28, 2025	Kelowna Daily Courier	<b>Valley's new \$400K water weed-whacker comes from U.S.</b>	<a href="https://www.kelownadailycourier.ca/news/article_347999a3-5fbf-4160-b812-b6c09a035054.html">https://www.kelownadailycourier.ca/news/article_347999a3-5fbf-4160-b812-b6c09a035054.html</a>
August 27, 2025	Castanet	<b>Leave dead flowers for a winter garden</b>	<a href="https://www.castanet.net/news/Gardening-with-nature/568713/Leave-dead-flowers-for-a-winter-garden">https://www.castanet.net/news/Gardening-with-nature/568713/Leave-dead-flowers-for-a-winter-garden</a>

August 25, 2025	Vernon Matters	Flood mitigation work being planned for Lavington Wetland	<a href="https://vernonmatters.ca/2025/08/25/flood-mitigation-work-being-planned-for-lavington-wetland/">https://vernonmatters.ca/2025/08/25/flood-mitigation-work-being-planned-for-lavington-wetland/</a>
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#### The Stats: Aug. 26 – Sept. 29, 2025

<i>Total individual articles mentioning OBWB work, projects etc. (includes multiple listings of the same article)</i>	<i>Total Reach*</i>
<b>104</b>	<b>18.8M</b>

**\*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

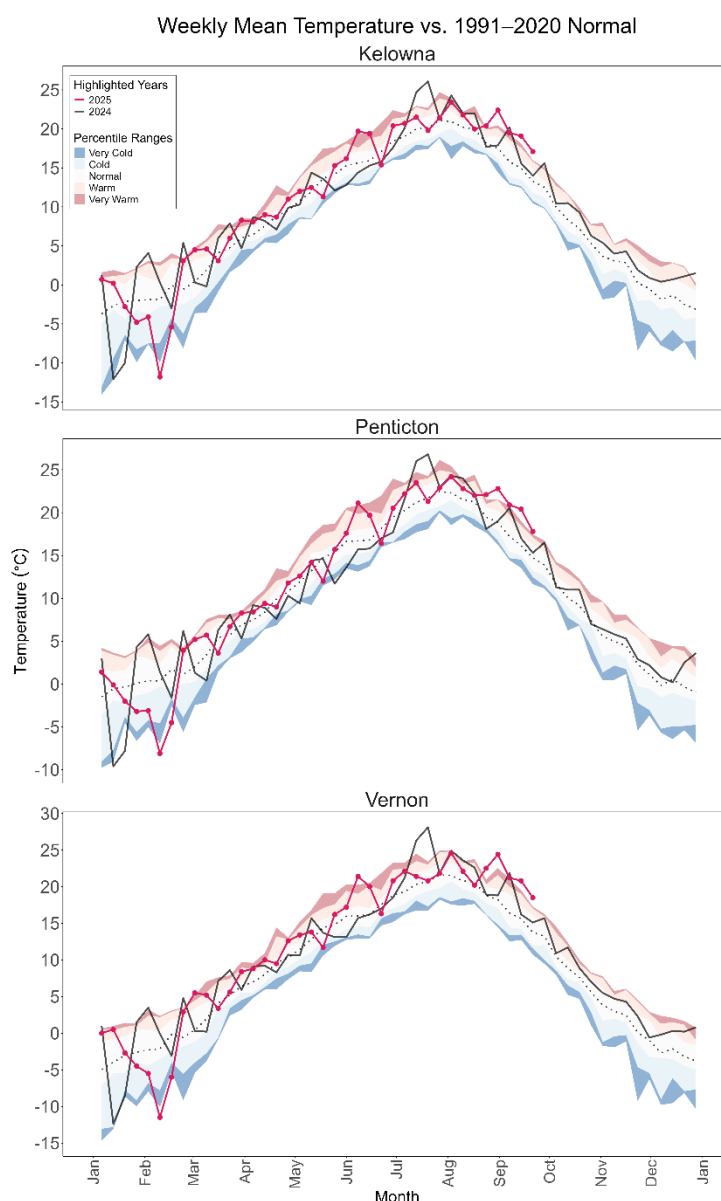
To: OBWB Directors  
From: Sandra Schira, Water Science Specialist  
Date: Sept. 29, 2025  
Subject: Weather Update

Okanagan Basin Water Board  
Regular meeting  
Oct. 7, 2025  
Agenda No: 7.6

### Temperature

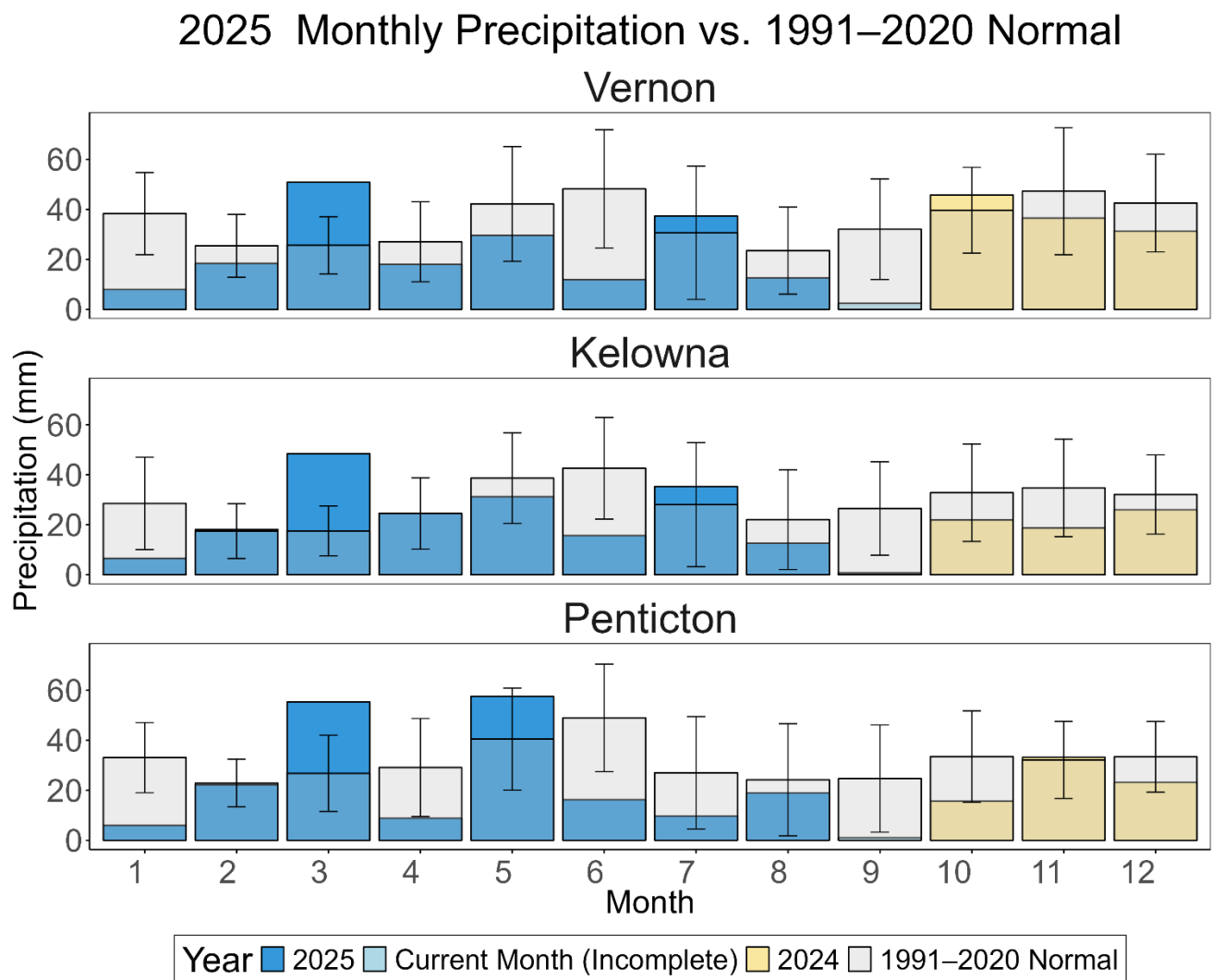
September saw a significant heatwave with temperatures much warmer than the 1991-2020 average. The Okanagan experienced weather more typical of summer, with some locations possibly recording the hottest temperatures on record for September (Figure 1). Extremely hot days were also high, with about five days with a maximum temperature over 30°C, across the Okanagan. Vernon and Kelowna reported two days over 35°C, which is very rare for this time of year. The heatwave also resulted in much warmer-than-normal evening temperatures.

**Figure 1:** Weekly average temperature across the Okanagan as of Sept. 28, 2025, compared to 1991 to 2020 range. Data retrieved from Environment and Climate Change Canada.



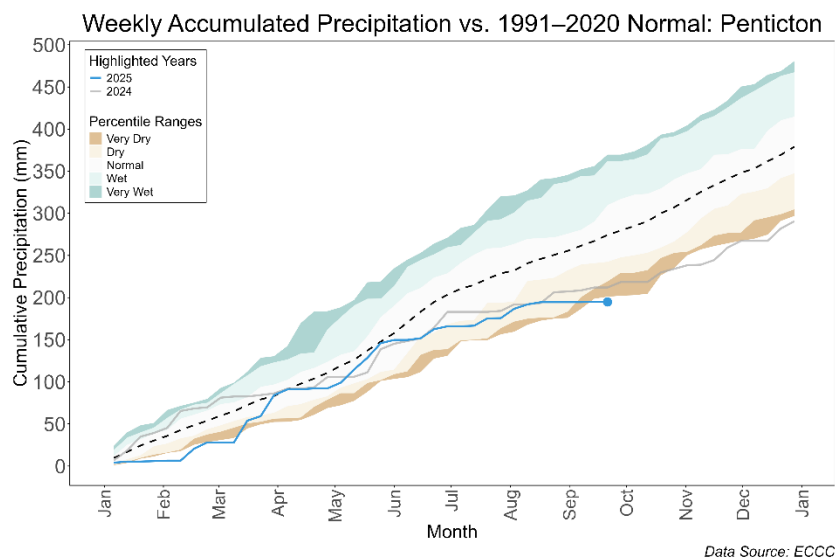
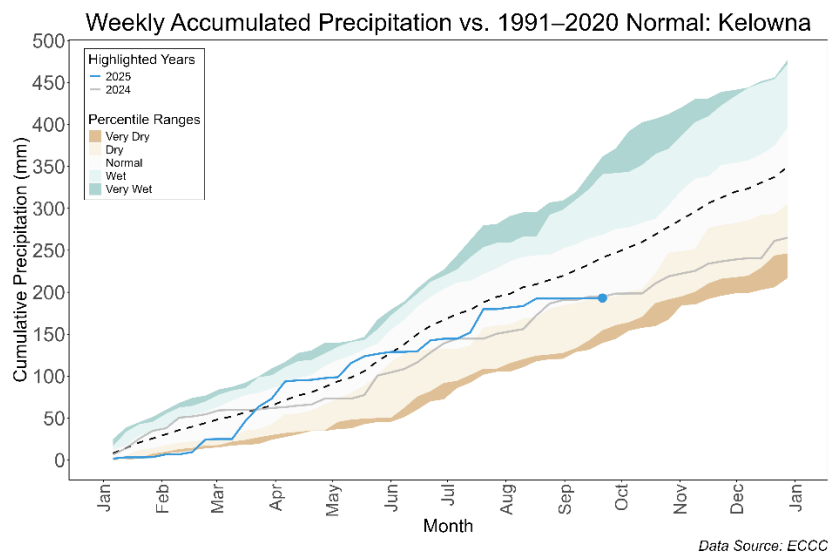
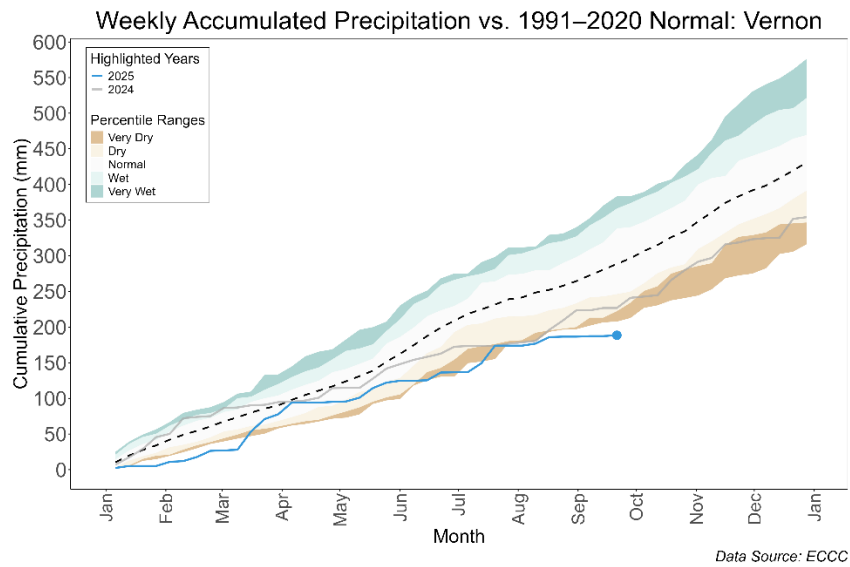
## Precipitation

As of Sept. 28, the monthly precipitation for September was well below the 1991-2020 average (Figure 2). In fact, all three cities had almost no rain in September. The consistently below-normal rainfall over the summer has contributed to the ongoing drought conditions across the valley. The deficit in total accumulated precipitation so far this year is outside the 1991-2020 range for both Vernon and Penticton (Figure 3).



**Figure 2:** Monthly Precipitation in the Okanagan as of Sept. 28, 2025 compared to 1991 to 2020 range. Data retrieved from Environment and Climate Change Canada.





**Figure 3:** Cumulative weekly precipitation in the Okanagan as of Sept. 28, 2025 compared to the 1991 to 2020 range. Data retrieved from Environment and Climate Change Canada.



**Seasonal forecasts indicate that September through November is likely to be warm and wet.** The Environment and Climate Change Canada<sup>1</sup> long-term seasonal forecast indicates a medium likelihood of above-normal temperatures in the Okanagan over the next three months. Precipitation forecasts also show a medium likelihood for above-normal precipitation (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.

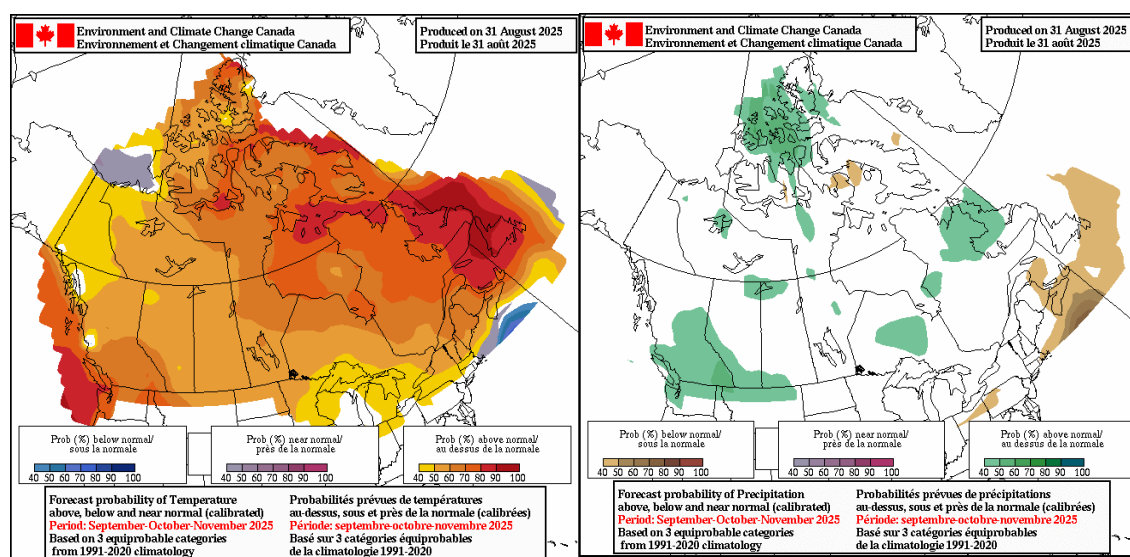
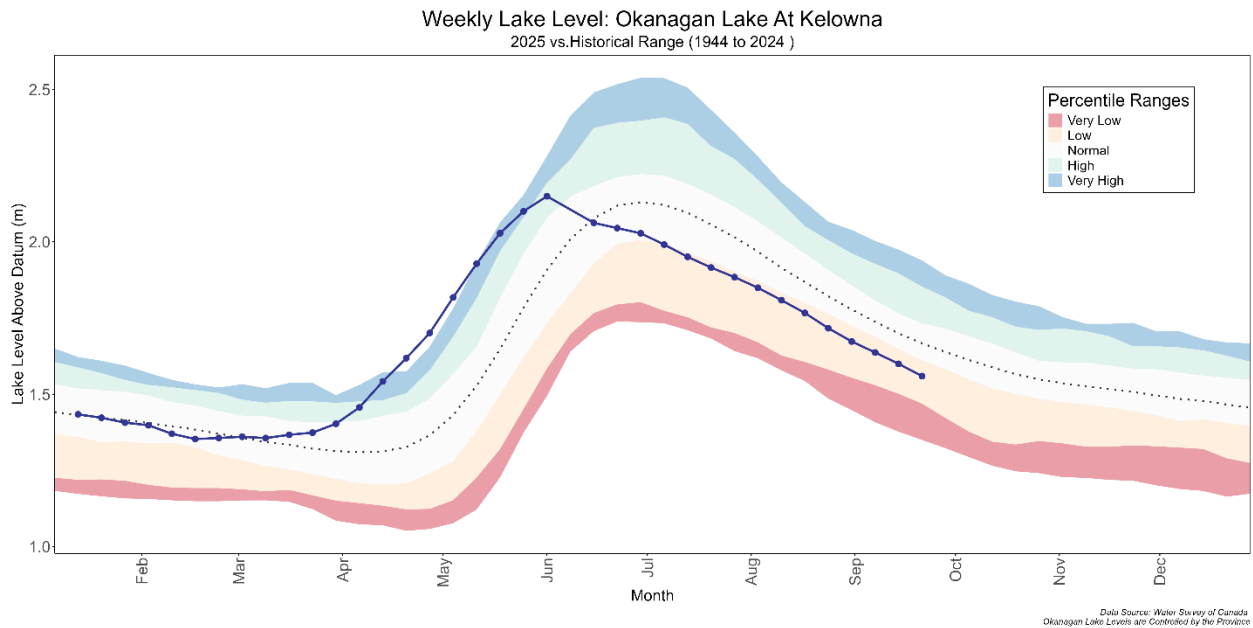


Figure 4: Three-Month Seasonal Forecast from ECCC<sup>1</sup> (Sep-Nov).

<sup>1</sup> ECCC Seasonal forecasts. <https://climate-scenarios.canada.ca/?page=cansips-prob> (Accessed 29.09.2025)

## Hydrology

Streamflow was variable across the valley, but many systems are low, and water temperatures are warm. Flows are low in many unregulated streams that are important for fish spawning. Okanagan Lake levels are low for this time of year, in part due to the early freshet this spring and likely because of the low precipitation over the summer (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, and the Nicola is also experiencing extremely low flows.



**Figure 5:** Weekly lake levels for Okanagan Lake at Kelowna compared to the 1944 – 2023 range as of Sept. 28, 2025. Data was retrieved from the Water Survey of Canada.