

Okanagan Basin Water Board Meeting Agenda



Okanagan Basin
WATER BOARD

DATE: Tuesday, April 7, 2026

TIME: Immediately following closed 10:00 a.m.
Board workshop

PLACE: Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen
office, 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 tm̓x̓w̓úlaʔx̓w̓ land of the syilx Okanagan people who have resided here since time immemorial. We honour and respect this land and the siw̓lk̓ water which flows through the valley and connects us all.

2. INTRODUCTION OF LATE ITEMS

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Recommendation:

THAT the agenda of the meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of April 7, 2026, be approved.

4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

- 4.1 Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of March 3, 2026, held online.

Recommendation:

THAT the minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of March 3, 2026 held online be approved.

P. 3

5. BOARD CHAIR REMARKS

6. DELEGATION

7. STAFF REPORTS

- 7.1 Executive Director Report P. 7

Recommendation:

THAT the Executive Director Report, dated March 31, 2026, be received.

- 7.2 Chief Operating Officer Report P. 9

Recommendation:

THAT the Chief Operating Officer Report, dated March 30, 2026, be received.

- 7.3 Water Stewardship Director Report P. 12

Recommendation:

THAT the Water Stewardship Director's Report, dated March 31, 2026, be received.

- 7.4 Communication Manager Report P. 15

Recommendation:

THAT the Communications Manager's Report, dated March 30, 2026, be received.

Recommendation:

THAT the Water Science Specialist's report dated March 30, 2026, be received.

8. **NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

9. **IN-CAMERA**

9.1 In-camera session (under sec. 90(1)(m) and 90(1)(c) of the Community Charter)

10. **CORRESPONDENCE**

11. **NEXT MEETING**

11.1 The next meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board will be an abbreviated meeting on Tuesday, May 5, 2026 at 9 a.m. at the Manteo at Eldorado Resort, 3762 Lakeshore Rd, Kelowna, B.C., followed by a joint Board-Okanagan Water Stewardship Council meeting.

12. **ADJOURNMENT**

Recommendation:

THAT there being no further business, the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of April 7, 2026 be adjourned at ____.

* **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 MARCH 3, 2026, ONLINE**

PRESENT

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Chair Blair Ireland | Regional District of Central Okanagan |
| Vice Chair Doug Holmes | Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen |
| Director Brian Guy | Regional District of North Okanagan |
| Director Bob Fleming | Regional District of North Okanagan |
| Director Rick Fairbairn | Regional District of North Okanagan |
| Director Kevin Kraft | Regional District of Central Okanagan |
| Director Ron Cannan | Regional District of Central Okanagan |
| Director Sue McKortoff | Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen |
| Director Subrina Monteith | Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen |
| Director Sheena Spencer | Okanagan Water Stewardship Council |
| Director Bob Hrasko | Water Supply Association of B.C. |

REGRETS

| | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Director Tim Lezard | Okanagan Nation Alliance |
|---------------------|--------------------------|

STAFF

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Melissa Tesche | Executive Director |
| James Littlely | Chief Operating Officer |
| Nelson Jatel | Water Stewardship Director |
| Carolina Restrepo Tamayo | Office and Grants Manager |
| Carmen Weld | Communications 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 10:00 a.m.

- 1.1 He respectfully acknowledged 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

No late items.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

“ THAT the agenda of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of March 3, 2026, be approved. ”

CARRIED

4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

- 4.1 Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of Feb. 3, 2026, held online.

“THAT the minutes of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board on Feb. 3, 2026, held online, be approved.”

CARRIED

5. **BOARD CHAIR REMARKS**

No Board Chair remarks.

6. **DELEGATION/PRESENTATION**

- 6.1 James Telford, Senior Authorizations Specialist – Water, BC Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship presented on the importance of hydrometric data for decision making in times of drought. These real-time measurements of water flowing through rivers and creeks help provincial staff prepare for drought and guide difficult water management decisions, including the potential enforcement of water restrictions.

Mr. Telford outlined how continuous hydrometric record monitoring underpins provincial water licensing, drought and flood response, and environmental flow needs (EFN) decisions. He thanked the OBWB for its leadership in strengthening the region’s hydrometric monitoring network. For many years, the OBWB has partnered with the Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) and Water Survey of Canada to install and maintain monitoring stations across the basin, providing data that supports drought and flood preparedness, water management decisions, and infrastructure planning.

Following Mr. Telford’s presentation, staff noted that with provincial budget cuts, there was a possibility that the number of hydrometric stations in the region could be reduced. Director Guy referenced previous economic research that had identified a very high benefit-to-cost ratio for hydrometric data programs. The Board asked staff to prepare a letter to the Province to remind them of the economic return on the hydrometric programs and to consider the potential for further UBCM advocacy on the issue.

“That the OBWB send a letter to the Province outlining the economic benefits of hydrometric data, pressing for the preservation of the Okanagan hydrometric network.”

CARRIED

The Board thanked Mr. Telford for his presentation and he exited the meeting.

- 6.2 Mario Piroddi, CISA, CPA, CA, Partner, BDO, presented the Audit Planning Report for OBWB’s 2025-26 Financial Year.

Mr. Piroddi presented the annual audit plan for the 2025–2026 financial year and outlined audit timelines, responsibilities, and key focus areas. He defined materiality and explained how the level of materiality is determined for organizations.

The Board thanked Mr. Piroddi for his presentation and he exited the meeting.

7. **STAFF REPORTS**

- 7.1 Executive Director Report – Melissa Tesche

Ms. Tesche reviewed her report, concluding by reminding the board about the upcoming Okanagan Nation Alliance’s upcoming siwłkʷ Water and Climate Forum in Collaboration with the Collaborative Leadership Table, March 23-24, 2026. She shared the most recent agenda and noted OBWB staff would be happy to register any directors who would like to attend.

“THAT the Executive Director Report, dated Feb. 25, 2026, be received.”
CARRIED

7.2 Chief Operating Officer Report – James Littlely

Mr. Littlely provided a brief update on the second volume of the *Preparing for Invasive Mussels: Vulnerability Assessment Guide for Raw Water Infrastructure*, noting its publication and expanded coverage of golden mussels. He also provided updates on UBCO capstone projects and milfoil rototilling progress for the year. Mr. Littlely concluded by informing the Board that the eDNA early-detection project has now secured matching funding through The Colin & Lois Pritchard Foundation, noting that related media coverage is expected soon.

“THAT the Chief Operating Officer Report, dated Feb. 23, 2026, be received.”
CARRIED

7.3 Water Stewardship Director Report – Dr. Nelson Jatel

Dr. Jatel provided a brief update on the Feb. 12, 2026 Okanagan Water Stewardship Council (OWSC) meeting, noting that the panel on beaver-based wetland restoration was well-received. He noted the next meeting on March 12, 2026, would feature Dr. Sheena Spencer speaking on forestry hydrology, including how land-use change and forest regrowth affect water movement and summertime low flows. He also highlighted progress on the hydrometric program, now in its fifth year, noting that OBWB funds the operation of approximately 24 stations in the Okanagan and continues to work closely with the ONA and Water Survey of Canada. He referenced ongoing technical-capacity building through upcoming hydrometric-training workshops. OWSC Chair Spencer shared an update on the OWSC’s Ethical Space Committee, noting that it is restarting its Truth and Reconciliation reading journey for the new term. She invited interested directors to participate.

“THAT the Water Stewardship Director Report, dated Feb. 25, 2026, be received.”
CARRIED.

7.4 Office and Grants Manager Report – Carolina Restrepo Tamayo

Ms. Restrepo Tamayo provided a brief update on planning for the Environmental Flows Conference, scheduled for Oct. 7–9, 2026 in Kelowna, noting that early-bird registration would open the following week. She reported that the Water Conservation and Quality Improvement (WCQI) grant call for applications closed on Feb. 20, 2026 with a record 34 applications received, an increase of 14 from the previous year. Applications requested a total of \$882,293 against the program’s \$350,000 available funding and with an estimated \$5.25 million in leveraged contributions proposed between the 34 projects. During discussion, Directors asked whether the Board should consider increasing the annual WCQI allocation; staff noted it had been some time since the last adjustment and suggested this could be reviewed during the next budget cycle.

“THAT the Office and Grant Manager Report, dated Feb. 23, 2026, be received.”
CARRIED.

7.5 Communications Manager Report – Carmen Weld

Ms. Weld provided a brief update on current communications activities, including preparation for the World Water Day screening of *All Too Clear*. She also noted a series of upcoming outreach events and reviewed recent key media coverage featuring OBWB staff discussing snowpack conditions, drought, and invasive mussels. During discussion, the Board briefly inquired about the status of Bill M216, with staff noting that the bill remains active at committee and that professional associations have raised concerns in correspondence.

“THAT the Communications Manager Report, dated Feb. 23, 2026, be received.”
CARRIED.

7.6 Water Science Specialist Report – Sandra Schira

Ms. Schira provided a brief update on current weather and hydrologic conditions, noting that temperatures through mid-February were warmer than historical norms and that precipitation remained low across the valley. She highlighted that snowpack levels were averaging 62% of normal. Director Guy noted that the snowpack data is the lowest ever recorded at the Brenda Mines station. Ms. Schira also reported that Osoyoos Lake levels were at historic lows and that several creeks continued to run below normal for this time of year. Director McKortoff noted that Osoyoos Lake is so low that the Town of Osoyoos is concerned about damage to infrastructure and they have closed the public boat launches due to their concerns.

“THAT the Water Science Specialist Report, dated Feb. 20, 2026, be received.”
CARRIED.

8. **NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

8.1 Potential Date Change for OBWB’s Water Management Program 20th Anniversary Celebration.

“THAT the OBWB reschedule the 20th Anniversary Event from June 5, 2026 to Sept. 11, 2026.”

CARRIED

9. **CORRESPONDENCE**

9.1 Water Supply Association of BC’s 2026 appointments for the OBWB, dated Feb. 13, 2026.

“THAT correspondence to the OBWB, dated Feb. 13, 2026, 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 11:57 a.m.

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

CARRIED.

The board exited the in-camera session at 12:19 p.m.

11. **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board will be April 7, 2026, held at the offices of the Regional District of the Okanagan Similkameen.

12. **ADJOURNMENT**

“THAT there being no further business, the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of March 3, 2026, be adjourned at 12:24 p.m.”

CARRIED

***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.



MEMORANDUM

To: OBWB Directors
From: Melissa Tesche
Date: March 31, 2026
Subject: Executive Director's Report

| |
|--|
| Okanagan Basin Water Board Regular meeting April 7, 2026 Agenda No: 7.1 |
|--|

OBWB Invited to Present to Committee on Bill M216

We have been invited to present to the Select Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Bills (SSCPB) on April 15, 2026.

The committee heard from the sponsor of Bill M216, MLA George Anderson (Nanaimo-Lantzville), on March 4, 2026. MLA Anderson presented his rationale for the bill and outlined several proposed amendments for the committee's consideration.

MLA Anderson was questioned on the extent of consultation undertaken prior to introducing the bill, including whether municipalities, First Nations, and provincial ministries had been engaged. The Union of BC Municipalities later reported that Bill M216 was developed without technical input from the Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs (MHMA), even though oversight would fall to MHMA should the bill become law.

The SSCPB noted that of the 484 submissions received through the portal, 88% were opposed. It was also noted that 100% of the municipalities and First Nations that submitted comments were opposed.

Additional questions posed to MLA Anderson included how the bill might affect municipal authority over planning and permitting decisions, and whether it could reduce the ability of local governments to apply local knowledge when evaluating development proposals.

Committee members also raised concerns about potential environmental risks, particularly where site-specific conditions may not be fully understood by external professionals.

The committee also questioned MLA Anderson on the liability framework proposed in the bill, including whether responsibility would shift to professionals regulated under the *Professional Governance Act* and whether those professionals carry sufficient insurance coverage for large projects.

The March 4, 2026 question period was ended due to time constraints. The SSCPB has scheduled invited presentations on Bill M216 at two upcoming meetings, April 1 and April 15, 2026.

OBWB Will Apply to Speak at Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government (SSCFG) Services for 2027 Provincial Budget Consultation

The committee, which includes both government and opposition MLAs, holds annual public consultations on the upcoming provincial budget. An in-person hearing is expected to be held in Kelowna in June. Following its consultations, the committee issues a public report outlining budget recommendations based on the input received.

Last year, James Littlely presented to the SSCFG on the importance of funding for invasive mussel prevention.

Final Workshop on New OBWB Strategic Direction Scheduled for Tuesday, March 3, 2026

Board members will have another opportunity for input and changes to the draft strategic plan at a brief workshop held before the start of next week's board meeting. The draft is expected to be brought forward to the May 5, 2026 Board meeting for further consideration and potential approval.

Valley-Wide OBWB Tour Planned for May and June

In anticipation of the adoption and release of the OBWB's new strategic direction, staff have submitted delegation requests to all municipal councils and regional boards for May and June. These delegations will provide an opportunity to showcase the new plan, share updates on key OBWB programs and initiatives, and extend an in-person invitation to the OBWB's 20th Anniversary Celebration, scheduled for Friday, September 11, 2026, at the Manteo Resort in Kelowna.



MEMORANDUM

To: OBWB Directors
From: James Littley
Date: March 30, 2026
Subject: Chief Operating Officer Memo

Okanagan Basin Water Board
Regular meeting
April 7, 2026
Agenda No: 7.2

Invasive Mussel Updates

UBCO Bachelor of Sustainability Capstone Looks at Lessons Learned from Snake River's Invasive Mussel Experience

On March 30, 2026, I attended the final student presentations for the Bachelor of Sustainability Capstone projects at UBCO. One of the groups working with OBWB conducted a case study on the Snake River mussel infestation, including lessons learned from interviews with people in Idaho. Their presentation highlighted four key points learned in Idaho:

1. Rapid response capacity is critical but was constrained by time and uncertainty.
2. Coordination works best when relationships exist in advance.
3. Monitoring systems are effective, but often incomplete; and
4. Prevention is more effective than post-detection escalation.

The students also identified gaps and opportunities relevant to B.C. and the Okanagan. They then did a GIS analysis of all existing boat launches on Okanagan Lake, introducing a risk score matrix that accounts for launch type, and proximity to major transportation routes.

This innovative student project can be extended to all Okanagan Lakes, once we ground-truth the GIS data. This is a major step forward in preparing any rapid response should invasive mussels be detected in the Okanagan.

OBWB Attends Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER) Aquatic Invasive Species Meeting

On March 27, 2026, I attended a meeting in Saskatoon hosted by PNWER and the Province of Saskatchewan and organized by the Co-Chairs of PNWER's Invasive Species Working Group, Martina Beck, Province of B.C., and Justin Bush, State of Washington. The meeting was focussed on coordinating and enhancing watercraft inspections across the northwest, and included representatives from B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Washington,

Idaho, Montana, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and several other non-government organizations.

Some of my key takeaways from the meeting include:

1. Inspections in Montana are shared with local government partners and the State, empowering any local or state enforcement agency to stop and inspect watercraft.
2. DFO, working with the CBSA are sharing responsibility for watercraft inspections at the Emerson Port of Entry in Manitoba. Watercraft travelling from the U.S. that do not pass a Clean, Drain, Dry inspection are barred from entry into Canada. There is a 38% failure rate at that border crossing, since most boats are coming directly from nearby infested waters. In 2025 that station intercepted 25 mussel-fouled boats.
3. Of the un-infested Canadian provinces, Alberta has the strongest regulations, including mandatory inspections for any watercraft entering the province from the east or south. B.C. and Saskatchewan require watercraft to stop at any open inspection station.
4. A presentation from Manitoba reinforced that we cannot count on within-waterbody containment once mussels are detected. This means that we can't simply use a curtain to close off a section of the lake and then apply chemicals to that section. It also reinforced the difficulty and increased complexity of trying to protect lakes once invasive mussels are in any part of a jurisdiction.
5. We also received an update from the Snake River treatments in Idaho. The State has now conducted three treatments, two with Chelated Copper, and one with Potassium Chloride (Potash). Surveys indicate that these treatments, over three years have reduced the detectable quagga mussel populations to 51% of the original detection. They are now concentrating on treatment in deep pools and complex parts of the river. This stresses the need to understand the hydrology of any waterbody that might be subject to chemical treatments.

I plan to attend the broader PNWER summit in June in Edmonton which includes sessions on AIS and water more broadly.

OBWB Invited to Present Updated Mussel Vulnerability Guide at Upcoming Pend Oreille Invasive Freshwater Prevention and Preparedness Summit

I have been invited to attend and present at the Pend Oreille Invasive Freshwater Prevention and Preparedness Summit in mid-April in Idaho. My presentation will focus on preparing municipal infrastructure for invasive mussels using our recently released Invasive Mussel Vulnerability Assessment Guide for Raw Water Infrastructure, Version 2. The summit should also provide more information about how to create prevention and preparedness plans for the Okanagan, similar to the PNWER summit in Saskatoon, but on a sub-regional scale. I will provide an update to this information to the board in May.

Milfoil Control Program Updates

Winter De-rooting Wrapping for the Season

The winter de-rooting is largely complete as many of our permitted work windows end on April 1, 2026. A few more areas will be treated until water temperatures hit 10°C. The program will go into Spring maintenance season until beginning harvesting operations in late June/early July, depending on conditions and milfoil growth. We anticipate early season harvesting in Duck/Ellison Lake, which has not been harvested since the 1980's. Significant milfoil blooms have been causing poor water quality and potentially obstructing flow into middle Vernon Creek. A final decision on treating Duck Lake will depend on machine availability, accessibility due to lake levels, and coordination with responsible agencies.



MEMORANDUM

To: OBWB Directors
From: Nelson Jatel
Date: March 31, 2026
Subject: **Water Stewardship Director's Report**

Okanagan Basin Water Board
Regular meeting
April 7, 2026
Agenda No: 7.3

Water Stewardship Updates

Town of Oliver Invites OBWB to Discuss Drought Trigger Approaches as They Modernize Drought Plan

On March 16, 2026, I presented to the Town of Oliver's Committee of the Whole on drought trigger approaches and drought management plan modernization. The OBWB provided the technical guidance that informed Oliver's 2017 Drought Management Plan, and the March 16 presentation was an opportunity to revisit that foundation considering updated science and recent operational experience.

The presentation examined the limitations of relying exclusively on groundwater observation wells as drought stage triggers. As I noted to Council, groundwater levels tend to respond after drought conditions have already developed, making a groundwater-only trigger inherently reactive. Because Oliver is situated further downstream in the system, reliance on observation wells that have limited correlation with the town's own production wells compounds this challenge. I presented the case for a hybrid, multi-indicator approach that would incorporate additional early warning signals alongside groundwater data to provide a more timely, defensible, and locally relevant basis for activating drought stages.

The presentation was well-received. Council members engaged substantively with the material, and there was clear recognition that a hybrid approach may represent a more effective path forward for the Town. Council member commentary reflected appreciation for having multiple indicators available to support decision-making, rather than relying on a single metric. The local media covered the presentation (Times Chronicle, March 25, 2026). Staff will follow up with Oliver as they advance their updated Drought Management Plan.

OBWB and ONA Host Regional Hydrometric Data Collection Workshop to Advance Regional Monitoring Capacity

OBWB and the Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) hosted a full-day Hydrometric Data Collection Workshop on March 26, 2026, at the ONA Westbank Office (9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.). The workshop was developed and delivered by Saskia Kowallik of the Provincial Hydrology Program (Thompson Okanagan Region) and coordinated through George Wang at ONA.

The workshop was a significant success, with excellent attendance from across the region. Notably, all Okanagan bands were represented, a milestone that reflects the depth of shared commitment to hydrometric capacity-building across Okanagan First Nations communities. The session covered the “science and art” of streamflow data collection, using real-world scenarios to illustrate how field observations are used to compute and review streamflow datasets, and how quality field work reduces uncertainty in the data that decision-makers rely upon.

The workshop was designed for water technicians seeking to sharpen their field skills, as well as band members interested in understanding how hydrometric data supports water management. Participation from all Okanagan bands is notable and reinforces the growing role of Indigenous communities in the Okanagan’s water monitoring network. OBWB and ONA continue to advance hydrometric capacity-building as a shared priority under our ongoing partnership.

Cyanobacteria Monitoring Project Advances: In Preparation for the 2026 Field Season

The two-year cyanobacteria monitoring project, supported by \$200,000 from Environment and Climate Change Canada through the EcoAction program, is advancing well. The project is co-chaired by representatives from the City of Kelowna and Westbank First Nation, in partnership with the OBWB, and aims to improve understanding of cyanobacteria risks in major Okanagan lakes, support local governments in managing emerging water quality challenges, and develop modelling tools with broader regional and national applicability.

The project team met last week and reported significant progress on two key operational fronts. Procurement of monitoring equipment is actively underway, with orders being placed for the field sampling gear required for the upcoming monitoring season. Simultaneously, the sampling schedule and methods are being finalized, with the team working to lock down field protocols before the season begins. This is a critical phase of the project, as a well-designed sampling program and timely equipment procurement are essential to generating the data needed to build and validate the cyanobacteria modelling tools central to the project’s objectives.

Updates from the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council, Technical Advisory Body to the OBWB

March OWSC Meeting Focuses on Forest Hydrology and Water Supply Implications

The March 12, 2026 Okanagan Water Stewardship Council meeting was held at the Coast Capri Hotel in Kelowna. The meeting theme was forest hydrology, with the feature presentation delivered by a Thompson River University graduate student under the supervision of Dr. Sheena Spencer. The presentation explored ongoing research and new initiatives relating to forest hydrology in the Okanagan Valley, with particular focus on how forest conditions influence water movement through the watershed.

Discussion highlighted the importance of understanding how wildfire, drought, pest impacts, and forest management practices affect snow accumulation and melt, runoff timing, erosion, stream temperatures, and groundwater recharge – all of which have direct implications for water supply, aquatic habitat, and flood and drought risk in the Okanagan. The session was well-received and generated substantive discussion among members on

the connections between upland watershed conditions and downstream water management decisions. In addition to the feature presentation, the meeting included committee reports, and member roundtable updates.

April OWSC Meeting to Examine Emerging Climate Modelling Tools for Water Planning

The feature presentation for the upcoming meeting will be delivered by Dr. Jeremy Fyke, a climate scientist appointed to the OWSC by Environment and Climate Change Canada and former OWSC Chair. Dr. Fyke will present on new approaches to climate modelling and their implications for Okanagan hydrology – a timely and critically relevant topic for long-term water management planning. His recent work explores methods that move beyond traditional scenario-based climate projections to offer improved tools for translating climate variability and change into altered hydrologic regimes. This session will provide Council members with valuable insight into the evolving science underpinning long-term water planning in the Okanagan Basin.

The next OWSC meeting will be held on Thursday, April 9, 2026, from 12:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Coast Capri Hotel in Kelowna (lunch 12:00–1:00 p.m., followed by the meeting).



MEMORANDUM

To: OBWB Directors
From: Carmen Weld
Date: March 30, 2026
Subject: **Communications Report**

Okanagan Basin Water Board
Regular meeting
April 7, 2026
Agenda No: 7.4

Engaged attendance at World Water Day screening of *All Too Clear*

In recognition of World Water Day, the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) and UBC Okanagan’s Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences hosted a screening of the award-winning freshwater documentary *All Too Clear* on Sunday, March 22, 2026.

Following the 90-minute film, guests engaged with a 60-minute expert panel and audience Q&A.

A heartfelt thank you to the Board members who joined us, moderator Dr. Nelson Jatel and our outstanding panelists:

- Eleanor Duifhuis | Okanagan Nation Alliance
- Derek Gratz | Innovation UBC Okanagan & Kelowna Chamber of Commerce
- Jesse Zeman | BC Wildlife Federation
- James Littlely | OBWB

Approximately 75 of the 100 registered for the event attended.

The event was additionally supported by the hard work of Carolina Restrepo Tamayo and Amanda Burnett.





Local Rotarians launch eDNA fundraiser

Rotarians across the Thompson/Okanagan region are stepping up in a major way to help safeguard the future of the B.C. Interior's lakes and rivers.

In partnership with OBWB and the University of British Columbia Okanagan, Rotary launched a community-wide fundraising campaign to raise \$100,000 in donations to accelerate groundbreaking eDNA mussel-detection technology research.

The campaign followed the leadership of a long-time Rotarian and community supporter Colin Pritchard whose family foundation, The Colin & Lois Pritchard Foundation, contributed \$100,000 toward the project.

Rotarians are now rallying together to match that gift and increase the funding needed to drive Dr. Michael Russello's critical research forward.

The chilly lakeside launch event was attended by GlobalBC, Castanet and the Kelowna Capital News. Thank you to Chair Ireland, James Littley, Colin Pritchard, Doug Gossoo and Dr. Michael Russello for attending and being interviewed.

Media coverage of the launch event included;

- Castanet: <https://www.castanet.net/news/Kelowna/603288/Rotary-launches-fundraiser-to-support-invasive-mussel-detection-research>
- GlobalBC: <https://globalnews.ca/news/11728200/fundraiser-launched-tech-invasive-mussels-bc/>
- The Kelowna Capital News: <https://kelownacapnews.com/2026/03/12/okanagan-basin-water-board-fundraising-for-new-tech-to-protect-b-c-lakes/> (which was also posted on Black Press' other B.C. papers)
- VernonMatters: <https://vernonmatters.ca/2026/03/12/rotary-clubs-fundraising-for-invasive-mussel-detection-system/>

Key communications since last report

- March 12, 2026: [Local Rotarians Launch Regional Fundraising Campaign to Protect Okanagan Lakes from Invasive Mussels](#)
- March 10, 2026: [When the Water Turns Too Clear: Free World Water Day Screening Shows What Invasive Mussels Would Mean for the Okanagan](#)
- March 5, 2026: [March 2026 OBWB Board Report](#)

- Key presentations;
 - March 5, 2026: James Littlely presented at the BC Tourism Industry Association annual conference
 - March 16, 2026: Dr. Nelson Jatel presented to the Town of Oliver Committee of the Whole meeting
 - May 16, 2026: Amanda Burnett presented at the First Things First event in Penticton
 - March 19, 2026: James Littlely presented to the Lake Windermere Ambassadors
 - March 21, 2026: Carmen Weld presented at the West Kelowna Okanagan Regional Library
 - March 22, 2026: World Water Day event as noted above
 - March 30, 2026: James Littlely presenting to BC Wildlife Federation
- Media of note:
 - James Littlely and Colin Pritchard did interviews regarding the eDNA project and fundraiser;
 - AM1150 on March 5, 2026.
 - MP Dan Albas' podcast - Conservative Solutions: Local Hands, Local Solutions to protect Okanagan Lake:
<https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1HcyLRC2VS/>
 - Sandra Schira spoke with Castanet regarding [snowpack levels and the season ahead](#).
- James Littlely on RogersTV: [Stop Invasive Mussels from Reaching Local Waters | Rogers tv](#)

- Key social media posts with the most engagement since the last report include:
 - The Great Lakes are a warning. The Okanagan is listening – posted [March 25, 2026](#).
 - Milfoil work on Osoyoos Lake, [posted March 23, 2026](#).
 - [Castanet picked this up](#).
 - Invasive mussels are closer than ever before and once they're in, the impacts are devastating – eDNA event – [posted March 12, 2026](#).
 - A full house for a more resilient Osoyoos! [Posted March 4, 2026](#).



Media Tracking

Please find monthly media tracking below, listing articles from Feb. 24, 2026 to March 30, 2026, in reverse chronological order.

| Date | Source | Headline | Link |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| March 26, 2026 | The Penticton Herald (and others) | Oliver pushes for refreshed plan to manage drought stages | https://www.pentictonherald.ca/spare_news/article_03ffe087-4a1c-598f-9383-a60d20713d00.html |
| March 25, 2026 | The Times Chronicle | Oliver works towards new drought stage plan | https://www.timeschronicle.ca/oliver-works-towards-new-drought-stage-plan/ |
| March 25, 2026 | Castanet and All for Gardening | Bambi-proof your yard with drought-tolerant plants | https://www.castanet.net/editon/news-story-605273-1152-.htm#605273 |
| March 24, 2026 | Rogers tv | Stop Invasive Mussels from Reaching Local Waters | https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJgXOZgTw4s |
| March 23, 2026 | Castanet | Video: Milfoil removed from 245 km of Osoyoos Lake | https://www.castanet.net/news/Oliver-Osoyoos/605043/Video-Milfoil-removed-from-245-km-of-Osoyoos-Lake#605043 |
| March 19, 2026 | Castanet | River of Voices lights up Kelowna ArtWalk | https://www.castanet.net/news/Kelowna/604338/River-of- |

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| | | | Voices-lights-up-Kelowna-ArtWalk#604338 |
| March 18, 2026 | The Penticton Herald and Daily Courier | Letters to the Editor (10): Wednesday, March 18, 2026 | https://www.kelownadailycourier.ca/opinion/article_cb5dbbec-57ab-4c26-99b6-96885bea6f01.html |
| March 15, 2026 | CFJC-TV | Thompson-Okanagan Rotary Clubs fundraising for invasive mussel detection system | https://cfjctoday.com/2026/03/15/thompson-okanagan-rotary-clubs-fundraising-for-invasive-mussel-detection-system/ |
| March 15, 2026 | Castanet | Low snowpack raises concerns about Okanagan water supply heading into summer | https://www.castanet.net/news/Kelowna/603319/Low-snowpack-raises-concerns-about-Okanagan-water-supply-heading-into-summer#603319 |
| March 14, 2026 | The Penticton Herald | Being on council brings joy to Tim Lezard | https://www.pentictonherald.ca/news/article_c6afa46e-0d5d-4aef-8815-2e2828d2d4c4.html |
| March 13, 2026 | The Penticton Herald | SPECIAL EVENTS: March 13, 19, 2026 | https://www.pentictonherald.ca/life/article_f24143cb-f4d9-4ce3-9f45-2639507e7852.html |
| March 12, 2026 | GlobalBC | Fundraiser launched for tech to keep invasive mussels from entering B.C. waters | https://globalnews.ca/news/11728200/fundraiser-launched-tech-invasive-mussels-bc/ |
| March 12, 2026 | Kelowna Capital News (and other interior publications) | Okanagan mussel invasion potential showcased in upcoming documentary | https://lakecountrycalendar.com/2026/03/12/okanagan-mussel-invasion-potential-showcased-in-upcoming-documentary/ |
| March 12, 2026 | Castanet | Rotary launches fundraiser to support invasive mussel detection research | https://www.castanet.net/news/Kelowna/603288/Rotary-launches-fundraiser-to-support-invasive-mussel-detection-research |
| March 12, 2026 | Kelowna Capital News (and 50+ other Black Press publications) | Okanagan Basin Water Board fundraising for new tech to protect B.C. lakes | https://kelownacapnews.com/2026/03/12/okanagan-basin-water-board-fundraising-for-new-tech-to-protect-b-c-lakes/ |
| March 12, 2026 | Vernon Matters | Rotary Clubs fundraising for invasive mussel detection system | https://vernonmatters.ca/2026/03/12/rotary-clubs- |

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| | | | fundraising-for-invasive-mussel-detection-system/ |
| March 12, 2026 | Castanet | Snowpack near Vernon only 55 per cent of normal | https://www.castanet.net/news/Vernon/603164/Snowpack-near-Vernon-only-55-per-cent-of-normal#603164 |
| March 11, 2026 | Castanet | Create a natural garden using native plants | https://www.castanet.net/editon/news-story-602936-1106-.htm#602936 |
| March 11, 2026 | Kelowna Daily Courier | The countdown is on for World Water Day on March 22 | (print edition) |
| March 10, 2026 | Kelowna Capital News (and other interior publications) | Summerland crews monitoring water supply | https://kelownacapnews.com/2026/03/10/summerland-crews-monitoring-water-supply/ |
| March 9, 2026 | The Times Chronicle | RDOS backs grant funding applications for Okanagan waterways | https://www.timeschronicle.ca/rdos-backs-grant-funding-applications-for-okanagan-waterways/ |
| March 9, 2026 | Castanet | Vernon expert talks snowpack | https://www.castanet.net/news/Vernon/602298/Vernon-expert-talks-snowpack#602298 |
| March 7, 2026 | Kelowna Capital News | Water briefs: Okanagan watershed snowpack levels reduced | https://kelownacapnews.com/2026/03/07/water-briefs-okanagan-watershed-snowpack-levels-reduced/ |
| March 6, 2026 | Penticton Western News | World Water Day events coming to Penticton | https://pentictonwesternnews.com/2026/03/07/world-water-day-events-coming-to-penticton/ |
| March 5, 2026 | The Kelowna Courier | Lake Country turns off hydro power plant to conserve water | https://www.kelownadailycourier.ca/news/article_238709b8-a31f-44d6-986e-0cf274c03bbe.html |
| March 4, 2026 | West K News | New public artwalk highlighting riparian Okanagan systems coming to Kelowna | https://westknews.com/2026/03/05/new-public-artwalk-highlighting-riparian-okanagan-systems-coming-to-kelowna/ |
| March 1, 2026 | The Penticton Herald and Daily Courier | Weed-whackers get fish-eye view of their slimy targets | https://www.pentictonherald.ca/life/article_92f09414-1565-49f4-9be1-f99c6f392179.html |
| Feb. 25, 2026 | Castanet | The Okanagan Valley is a gardening paradox | https://www.castanet.net/news/Gardening-with- |

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| | | | nature/600574/The-Okanagan-Valley-is-a-gardening-paradox-#600574 |
| Feb. 25, 2026 | The Penticton Herald and Daily Courier | Mussel threat shown in Kelowna film screening | (Print edition) |
| Feb. 24, 2026 | Castanet | Coldstream progressing with numerous District-wide projects | https://www.castanet.net/news/Vernon/600487/Coldstream-progressing-with-numerous-District-wide-projects#600487 |

The Stats: Feb. 24, 2026 – March 30, 2026

| <i>Total individual articles mentioning OBWB work, projects etc. (includes multiple listings of the same article)</i> | <i>Total Estimated Views*</i> | <i>Total Reach*</i> |
|---|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| 149 | 67,275 | 39,212,635 |

***Total Estimated Views** is pulled from our media monitoring service Meltwater. According to Meltwater, Estimated Views is a metric that approximates the number of times an average article from a publication has been viewed. This is accomplished by dividing a publication’s monthly page views by the number of articles it published in a given month.

***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
Date: March 30, 2026
Subject: **Weather Report**

Okanagan Basin Water Board
Regular meeting
April. 7, 2026
Agenda No: 7.5

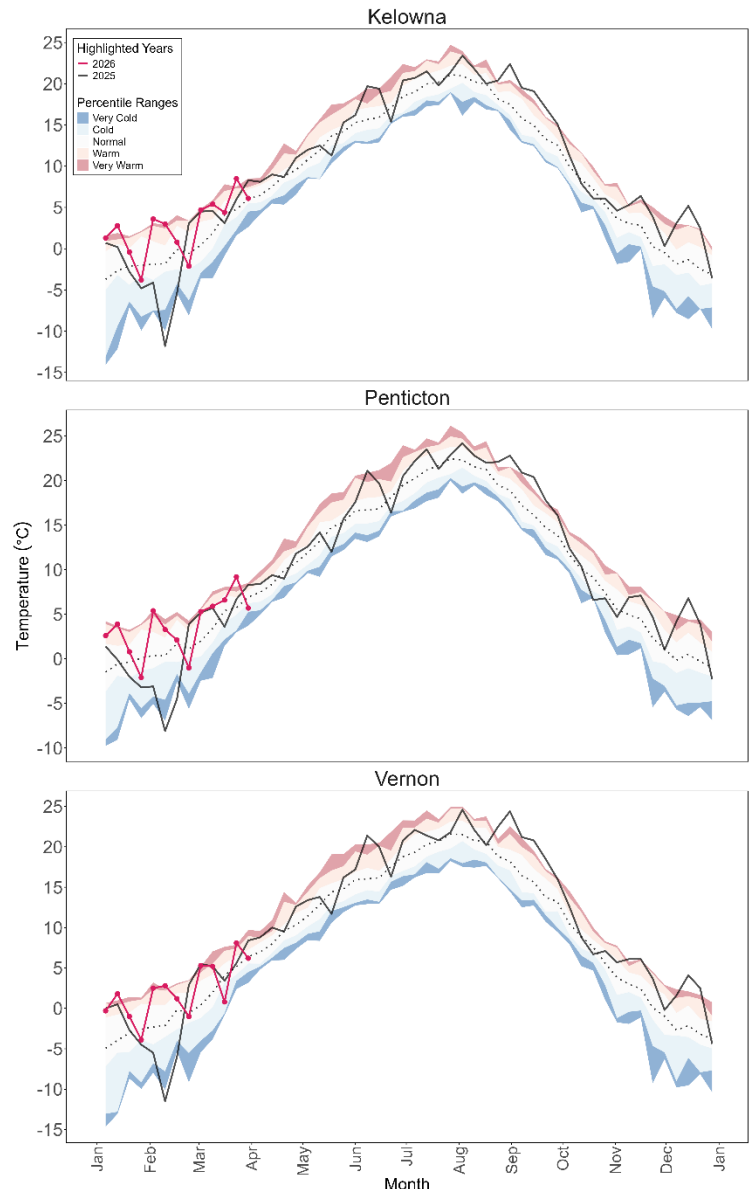
Temperature

March weekly average temperatures consistently exceeded the 1991-220 historical averages across the valley (Figure 1). Vernon, as measured at the Coldstream Ranch station, saw significant week-to-week variability, while Penticton and Kelowna had more consistent warm temperatures. In mid-March, all three cities had a spike in weekly average temperatures above the upper extreme of historical observations, followed by a return to more typical seasonal temperatures of about 4°C.

Warm spring temperatures can contribute to early snowmelt, increasing the risk of drought and early onset of wildfire season.

Figure 1: Weekly average temperature across the Okanagan as of March 30, 2026, shown relative to 1991-2020 range. Data retrieved from Environment and Climate Change Canada.

Weekly Mean Temperature vs. 1991–2020 Normal



Data Source: ECCC

Precipitation

Total precipitation in the valley was very low in January and February, with monthly averages in all three locations falling below the low end of the typical 1991-2020 range (Figure 2). March precipitation has been more varied, with Vernon seeing above normal precipitation for the month, Kelowna about normal, and Penticton again experiencing extremely low precipitation. Total annual accumulated precipitation is low for all cities (Figure 3), and “off the charts” low for Penticton. As of March 30, 2026, Penticton recorded only 12.8 mm of precipitation in 2026 – the historical average is more than 75 mm.

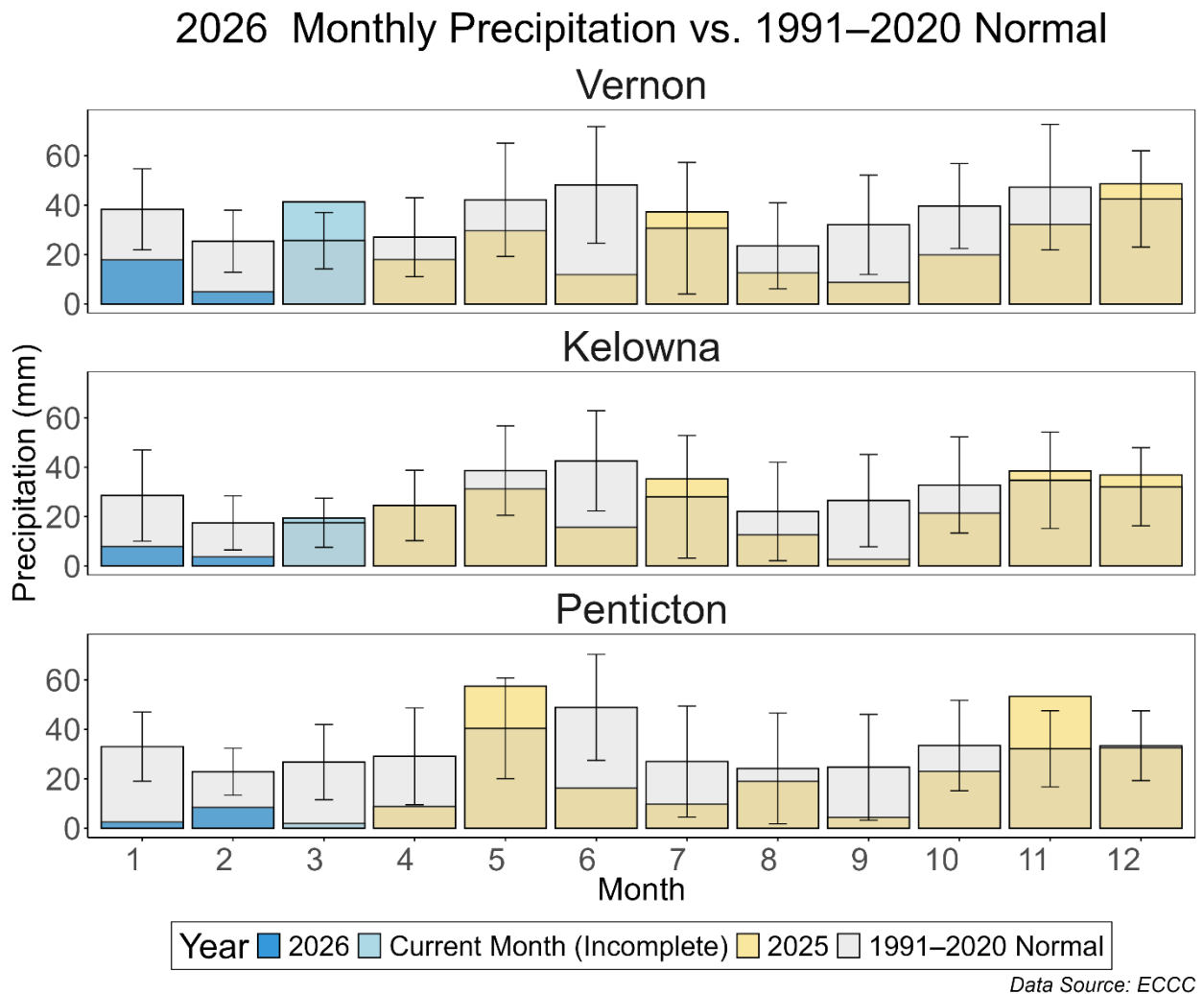
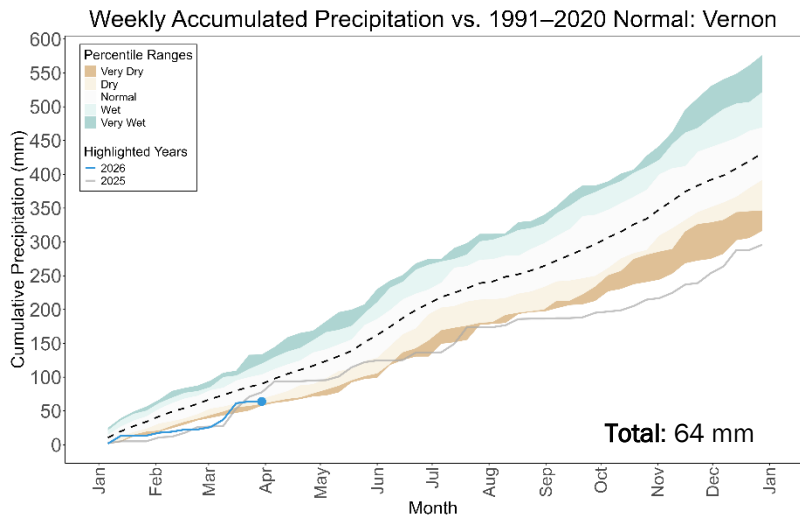
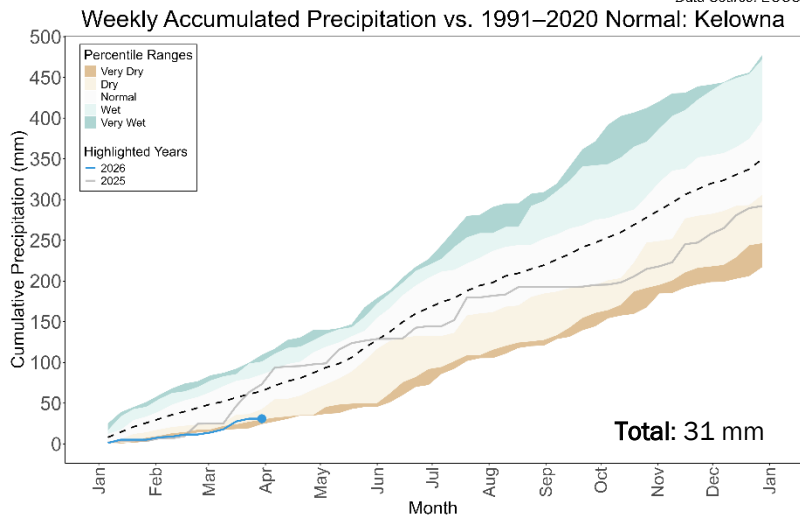


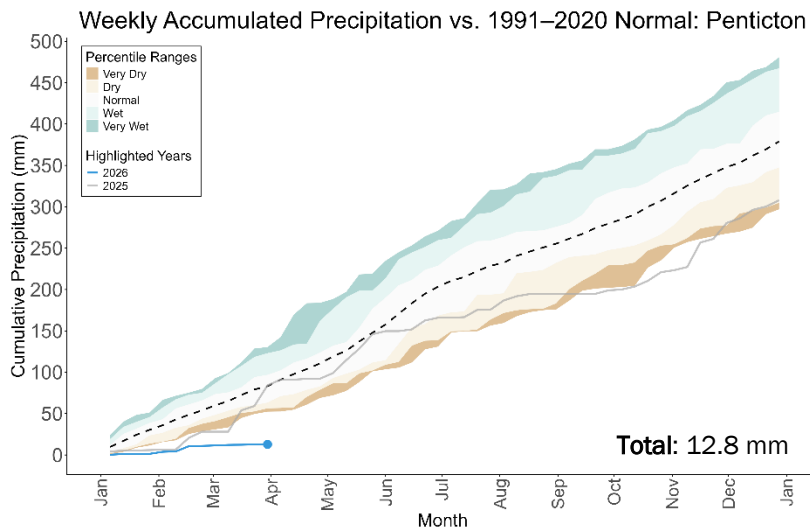
Figure 2: Monthly precipitation in the Okanagan as of March 30, 2026, compared to 1991 to 2020 range. Data retrieved from Environment and Climate Change Canada.



Data Source: ECCC



Data Source: ECCC



Data Source: ECCC

Figure 3: Total accumulated precipitation in the Okanagan as of March 30, 2026, compared to 1991 to 2020 range. Data retrieved from Environment and Climate Change Canada.

Snowpack in the upper watershed remains extremely low across the valley, despite the snow that fell in March (Figure 4). The average snowpack level as of March 1, 2026 was 62% of normal across the whole Okanagan, and 85% of normal in the Similkameen. At the time of writing, Brenda Mines remains at a record-breaking low level, with snowpack at 23% of normal for this date. Mission Creek is very low at only 68% of normal, and Silver Star Mountain is near a record low at 86% of normal. So far, only Brenda Mines — the lowest elevation of the three stations — has seen substantial snow melt. This early melt is about two months ahead of the historical average melt timing, and well ahead of the record-breaking early melt in 2024.

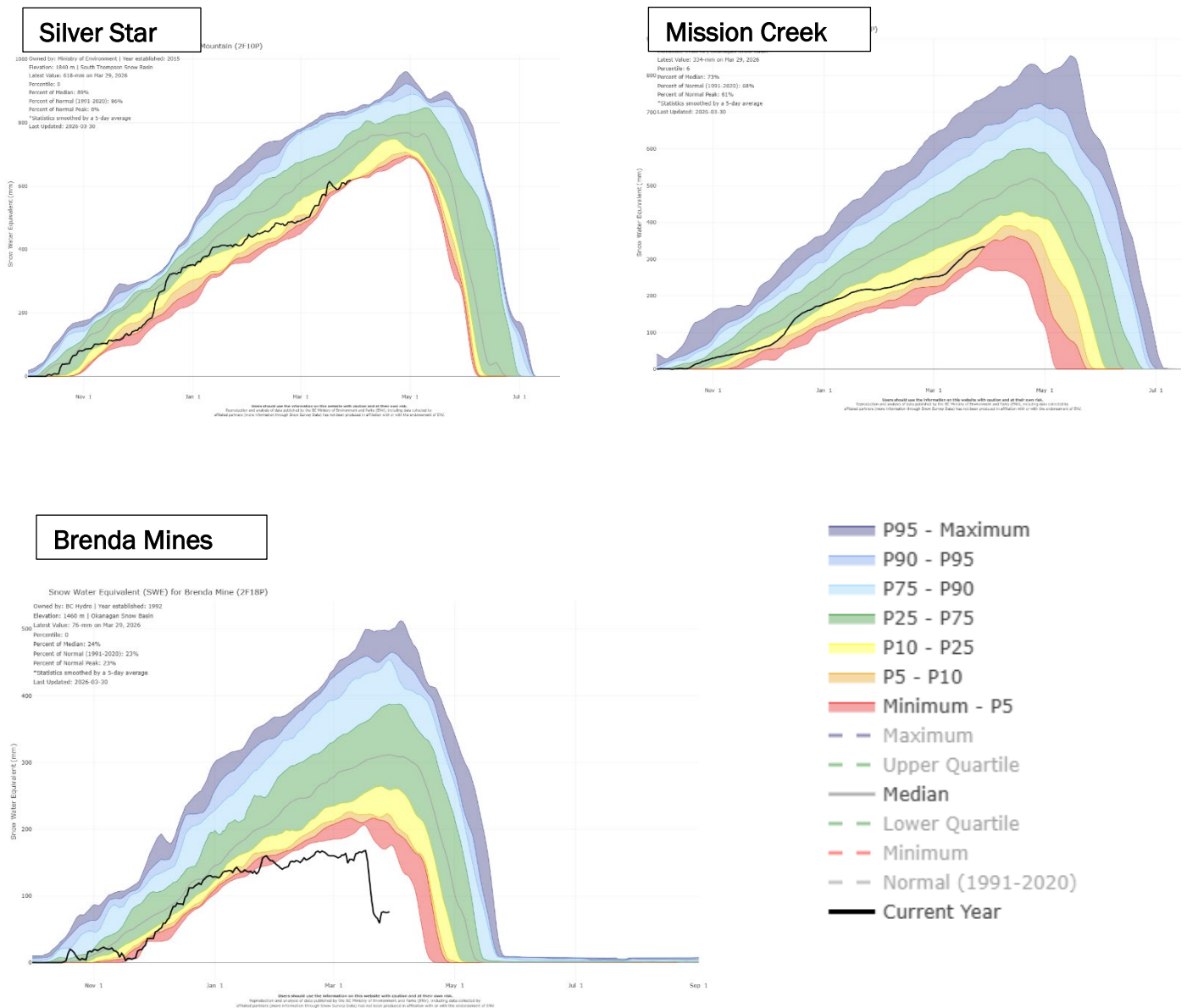


Figure 4: Weekly snowpack accumulation across the Okanagan as of March 30, 2026. Data ranges for each station are Brenda Mines: 1992 – present, Mission Creek: 1969 – present, and Silver Star: 2015– present. Data from the Province of B.C.

Seasonal Forecast

Seasonal forecasts indicate that March through May are likely to be warmer than normal (Figure 5). However, the long-term forecast for precipitation shows no clear signal in either direction for the Okanagan, but a moderate likelihood of wet conditions in other parts of B.C. Warm dry conditions are likely to continue into the early summer, as the United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)¹ indicates a high likelihood of El Niño conditions this summer. 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% certain.

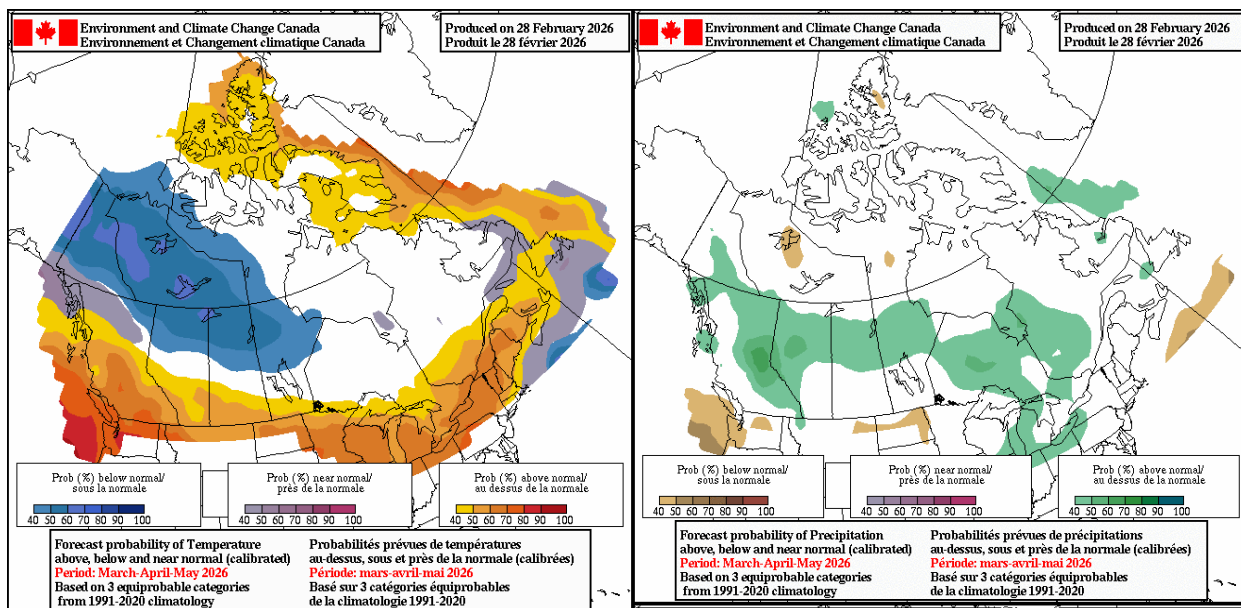


Figure 5: Three-Month Seasonal Forecast from ECCC¹ (Mar-May, 2026).

Hydrology

Lake levels for Osoyoos Lake have increased slightly but remain at a historic low (Figure 6). Okanagan Lake levels at Kelowna started off the year slightly low and have remained stable (Figure 7). Most streams across the Okanagan appear to be around seasonal norms. As snow melts, streams will start shifting into their freshet phase and flows will increase.

¹ <https://iri.columbia.edu/our-expertise/climate/forecasts/enso/current/>

Osoyoos Lake Near Oroville

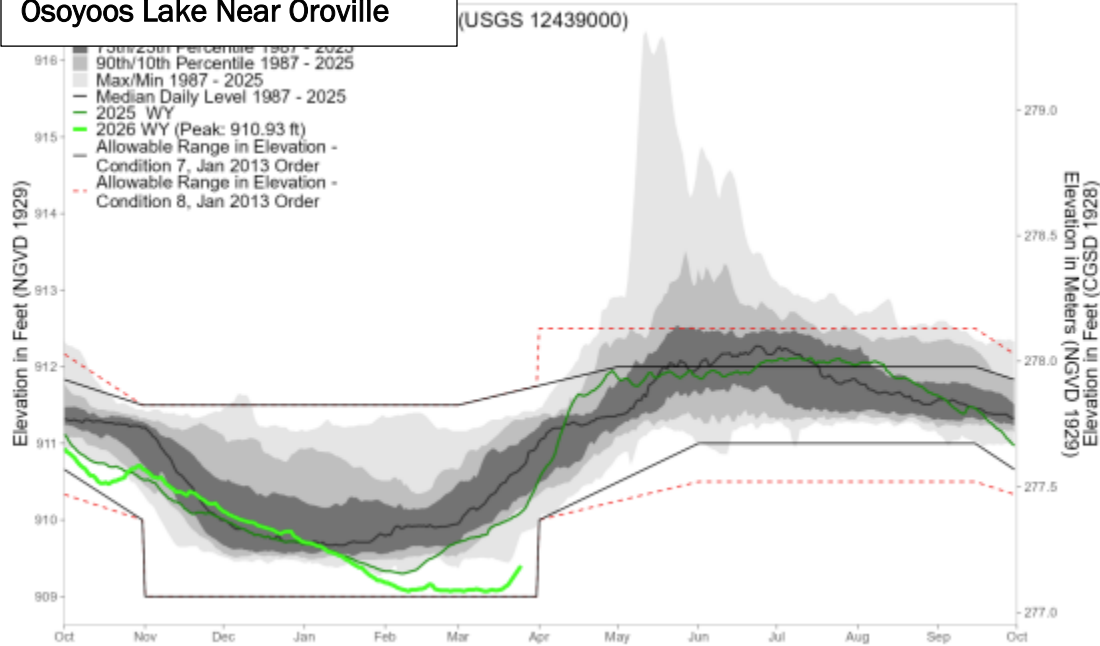


Figure 6: Osoyoos Lake level as measured near Oroville as of Mar. 26, 2026. Data from U.S. Geological Survey.

Okanagan Lake at Kelowna

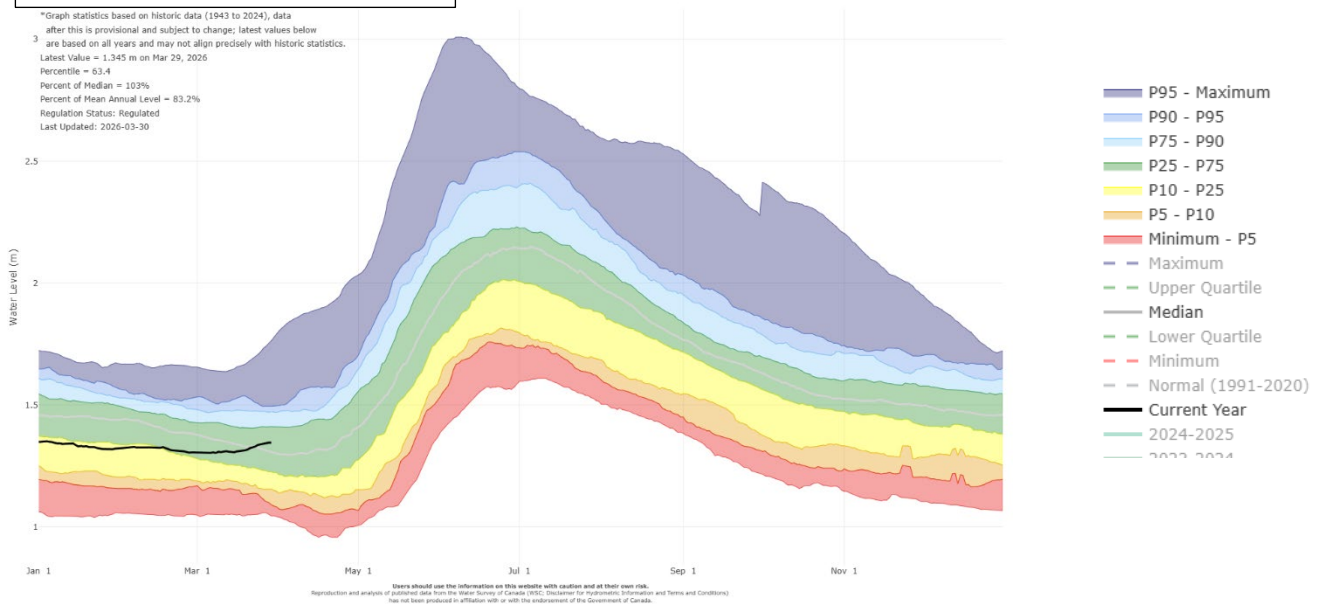


Figure 7: Weekly lake levels for Okanagan Lake at Kelowna as of March 30, 2026, compared to the 1944–2023 range. Data from the Water Survey of Canada.