



Okanagan Basin
WATER BOARD

BOARD REPORT: August 3, 2023

1450 KLO Road, Kelowna, BC V1W 3Z4
P 250.469.6271 F 250.762.7011
www.obwb.ca

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Similkameen

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Alliance

Bob Hrasko, Water Supply
Association of B.C.

Jeremy Fyke, Environment &
Climate Change Canada

The next regular meeting of the
OBWB will be an abbreviated
session on **Sept. 8, 2023** following
the Annual Public Meeting at
Rotary Arts Centre, Kelowna.

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Okanagan Basin Water Board Meeting Highlights

Water Board hears update on Polson Park creek project: City of Vernon Water Resources Engineer Mathew Keast updated the board on the Vernon Creek Naturalization Project, which received funds from an OBWB Water Conservation & Quality Improvement Grant. Although the creek was channelized in the 1950s to reduce flooding, flow is intensifying and the concrete barriers are not functioning as intended. The city will remove concrete, introduce natural meanders, and plant the riparian area. This complements work by Okanagan Indian Band and Okanagan Nation Alliance to improve conditions for kokanee, trout, and newly reintroduced sockeye and chinook salmon.

Climate report shows Okanagan heating up: Staff presented newly-developed climate change indicators, showing the Okanagan is getting warmer in all seasons. While there are still some extreme cold events, the data show an overall shift to a warmer climate. The number of days with temperatures above 30C has notably increased since 2000, especially in the last 10 years. The indicators will help decision-makers and residents adapt to changes, including how to balance the water needs of fish and irrigation, how to plan for infrastructure needs, and more.

Directors briefed on drought response: The board was briefed on current drought conditions in B.C. and the Okanagan. The OBWB has issued two Drought Bulletins, as the Province of B.C. declared the Okanagan in Level 2 drought (Very Dry) in early June and then Level 3 (Severely Dry) in early July. Of particular note are some South Okanagan streams with low flows and warm water temperatures, creating concern for fish. The OBWB's Okanagan WaterWise program is using social media, and running radio and TV ads encouraging residents to visit www.MakeWaterWork.ca to find watering restrictions and tips to conserve. Another bulletin will be sent this week as the Okanagan moves to Level 4 (Extremely Dry).

Water Board to send calls for action on invasive mussels to province: The board will be calling on the B.C. Government to do more to prevent invasive mussels from reaching the Okanagan. Issues with provincial staff recruitment and retention has led to cuts in inspection stations (eight in 2023 compared to 12 in 2019), and cuts in the number of inspectors (32 in 2023 vs. 64 in 2019). The Province must budget \$4 mill. annually to bring inspection levels back to 2019 levels. The OBWB will also call for "pull-the-plug" legislation prior to the 2024 boating season; an update of B.C.'s Early Detection, Rapid Response Plan, and the development of response, containment and control plans in regions at high risk for the mussels, including the Okanagan.

Water Board preps for public Annual Meeting: Organizing is well underway for the OBWB's public annual meeting on Friday, Sept. 8 at Rotary Centre for the Arts in Kelowna. Doors open at 8:30 a.m. and presentations begin at 9 a.m. The theme this year is "Tapping into Water Solutions."

For more information, please visit: www.OBWB.ca