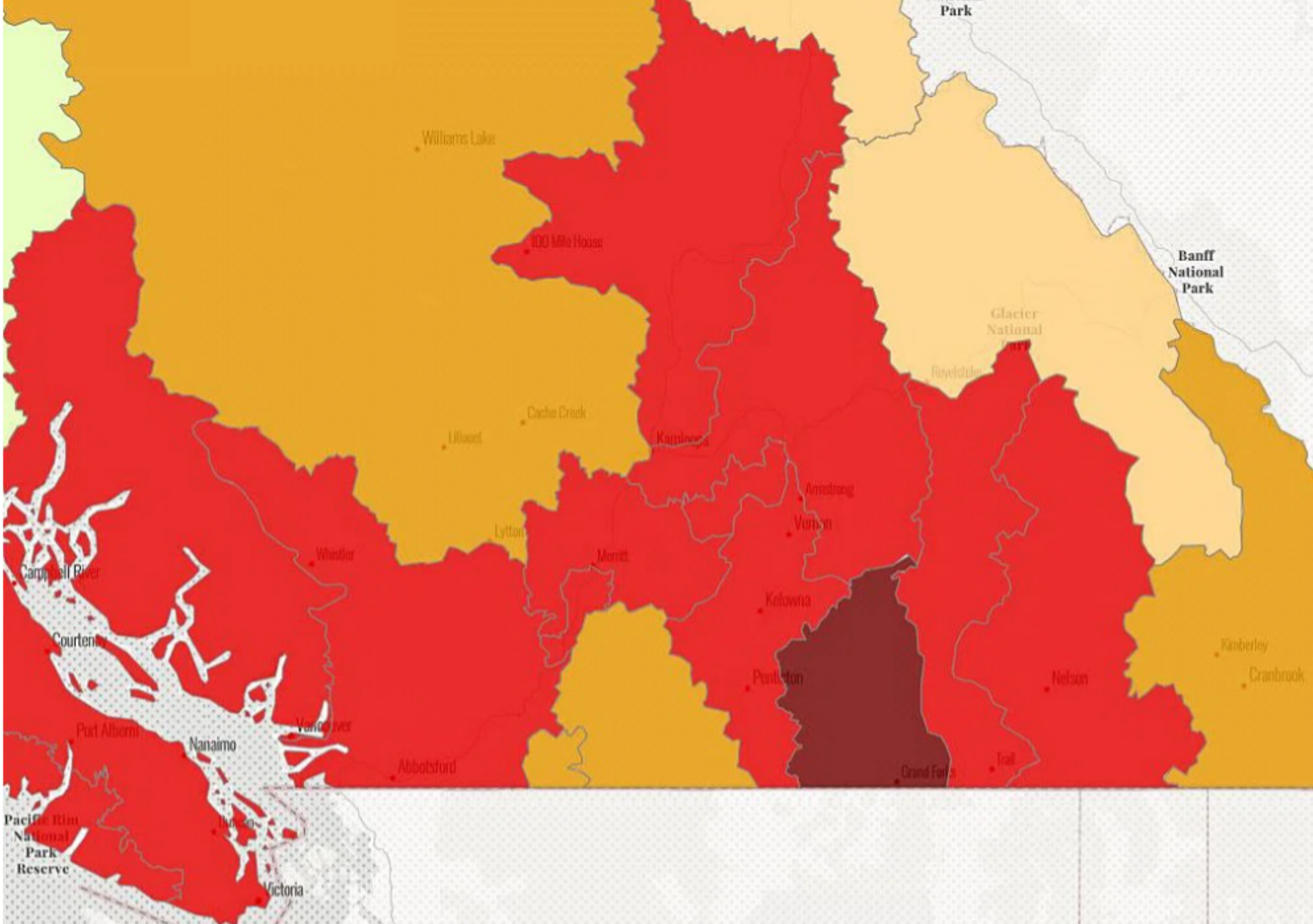


ENVIRONMENT

Okanagan now at Drought Level 4; government asking residents to reduce water use

By Doyle Potenteau · Global News

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A map showing drought levels across B.C., including the Okanagan region in dark red. Province of B.C.



The Okanagan is now at [Drought Level 4](#), the province declared on Saturday.

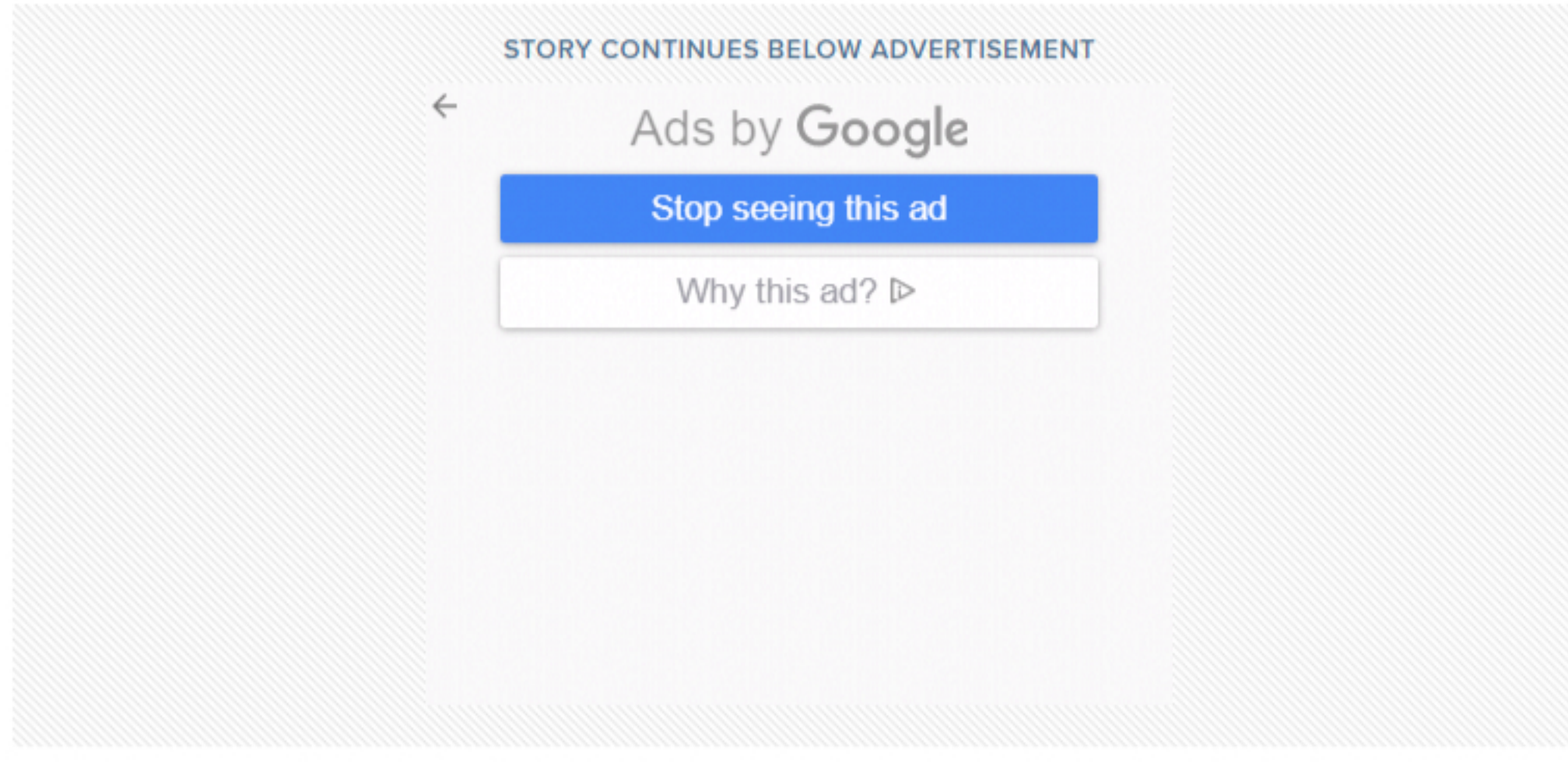
Citing unprecedented dry and hot conditions, the government is asking area residents to reduce their water use whenever possible, and to observe their local watering restrictions.

“General voluntary reduction of water usage, from surface and groundwater in southern B.C., is encouraged as the summer continues,” the Ministry of Forest and Lands said in a press release.

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“In areas where voluntary water reduction has already been implemented, it has helped to slow down the intensification of drought conditions and the need for regulatory action.”

The province ranks its drought levels on a zero-to-five scale, with five being “the most severe, with adverse impacts to socioeconomic or ecosystem values being almost certain.”



As proof, the province pointed to its recent decision to ban recreational fishing in many Okanagan rivers and streams due to low water flows and high water temperatures. Notably, fishing is still allowed in small and large lakes.

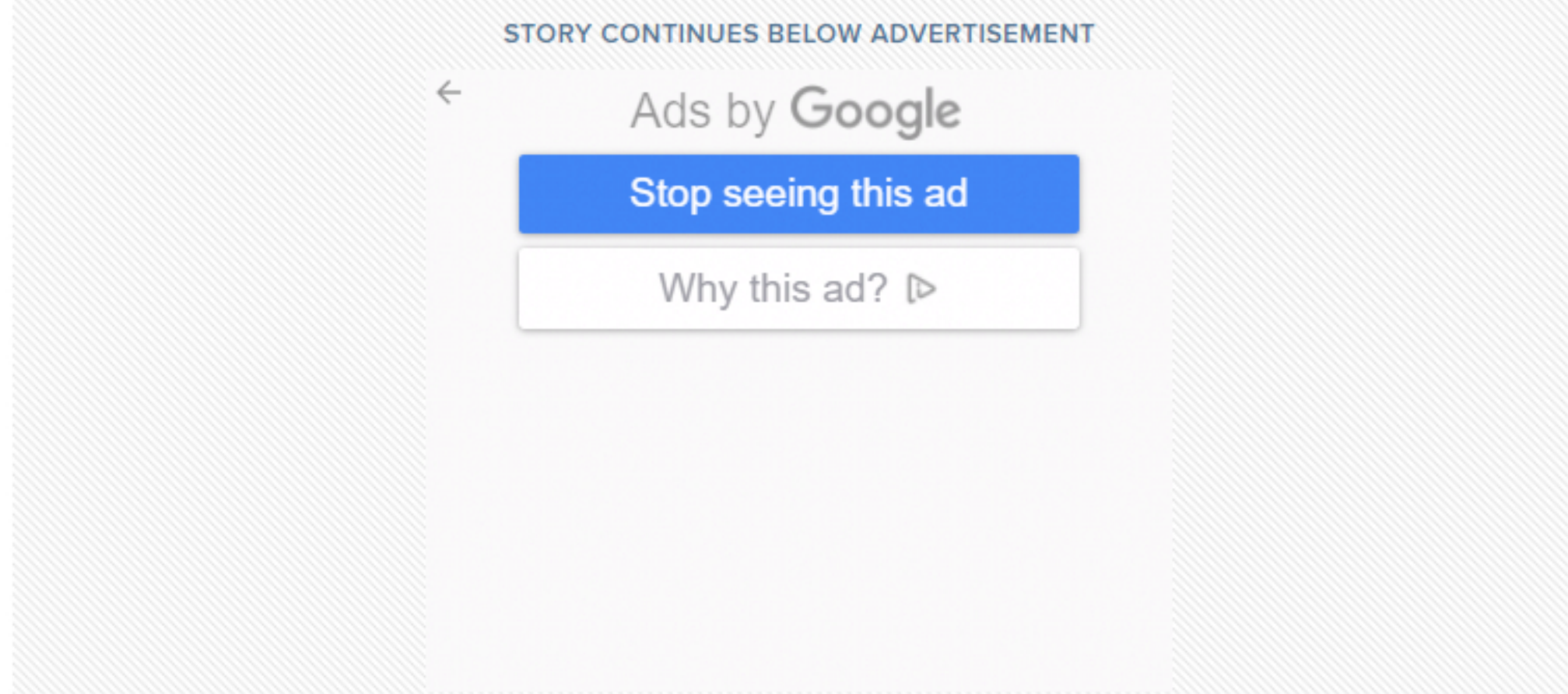
The ministry also noted that conditions between watersheds across the Okanagan Basin may vary, “which explains why neighbouring jurisdictions might require different restrictions.”



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The effects of drought, says the province, include reduced crop growth, leading to smaller harvests.

The ministry also said “if conservation measures do not achieve sufficient results and drought conditions worsen, regulatory action may be taken under the Water Sustainability Act, such as temporary protection orders issued to water licensees, to avoid significant or irreversible harm to aquatic ecosystems. Provincial staff are monitoring the situation and working to balance water uses with environmental flow needs.”



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The Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) [issued a bulletin on Saturday](#) regarding the move to Drought Level 4.

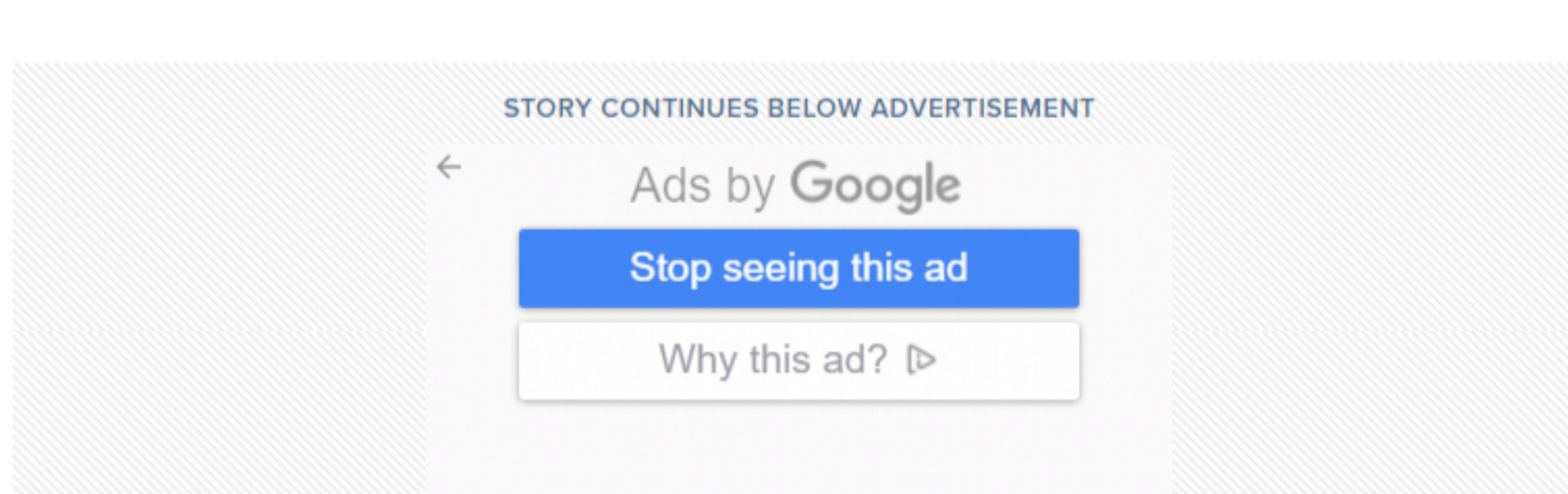
In addition to stating that area residents should comply with all water conservation bylaws, it noted that the long-term forecast is calling for above-normal temperatures for the next three months.



A photo of Vaseux Creek in the South Okanagan. Okanagan Nation Alliance

“Precipitation is harder to forecast, but the short-term shows a chance of showers next week for much of the Okanagan,” said OBWB.

“While rain will bring some relief to low streams and dry landscapes, we need a significant amount to make any real difference and improve drought conditions.”

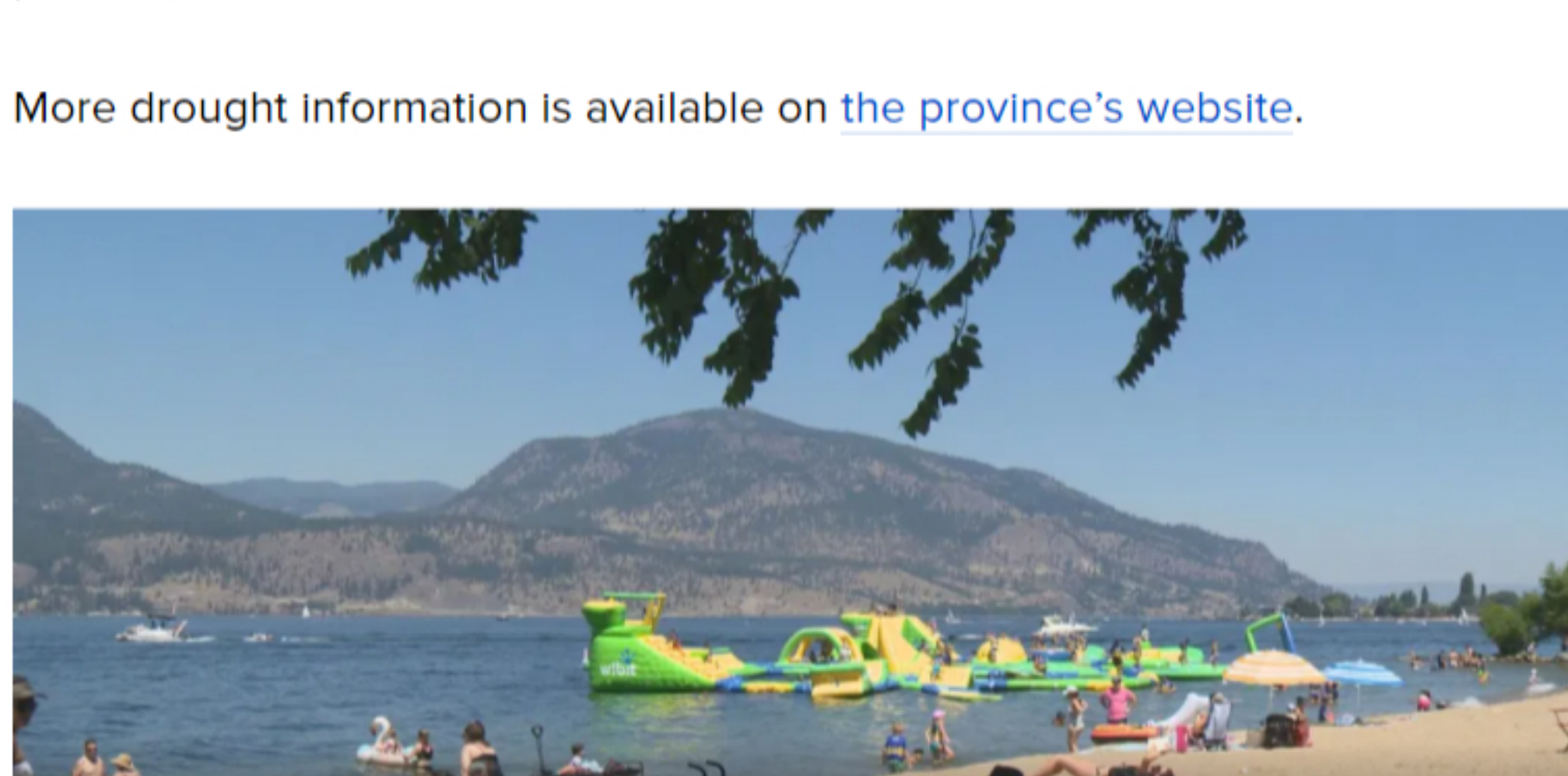


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The bulletin also said “the next month is going to be difficult. Everyone must use water efficiently and conserve what they can, ensuring enough for food production, fish spawning, ecosystem health, and fire suppression.”

“Water conservation is everyone’s responsibility, especially during drought,” says the province. “You can save money by conserving water, and help to protect our natural resources.”

More drought information is available on [the province’s website](#).



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