



Kelowna

# B.C. drought getting worse

## Okanagan now at Level 4 drought, people asked to conserve water

Darren Handschuh - Aug 14, 2021 / 10:00 am



Photo: Okanagan Nation Alliance  
Vaseux Creek, north of Oliver, is now dry.

It's dry out there and getting drier.

The [Okanagan Basin Water Board](#) is warning of "extremely dry" conditions in the West Kootenay, Lower Columbia, Okanagan, Thompson, Nicola, Lower Fraser, South Coast and Vancouver Island basins and "exceptionally dry" (Level 5) conditions in the Kettle Basin.

The long-term forecast is calling for above normal temperatures for the [next three months](#). Precipitation is harder to forecast in the long-term, but there's a chance of showers next week for much of the Okanagan. While rain would bring some relief to low streams and dry landscapes, a significant amount is needed to make any real difference and improve drought conditions.

These continued unprecedented dry and hot conditions have prompted the provincial government to increase the drought level in the Okanagan.

At drought Level 4, licence holders who do not get their water from local water utilities are being asked to reduce water use by half.

Water licence holders who get their water directly from one of the large lakes, or the Okanagan river channel, are also being asked to conserve water.

General voluntary reduction of water usage, from surface and ground water in southern B.C., is encouraged as the summer continues.

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.

Conditions between watersheds across the Okanagan Basin vary, which explains why neighbouring jurisdictions might require different restrictions.

Co-ordination between the OBWB and the province is ongoing.

All water users in affected areas need to reduce their water use wherever possible and observe all watering restrictions from their local/regional government, water utility provider or irrigation district.

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.

British Columbia ranks drought levels from zero to five with Drought Level 5 being the most severe.

Many freshwater angling closures are in place throughout the region as well, due to increased stress to fish from low flows and high water temperatures.

Anglers are encouraged to report fish kills to their local fish and wildlife office or RAPP line, 1-877-952-7277.

Water used to extinguish a fire or contain and control the spread of a fire remains exempt from a provincial water licence or approval.

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