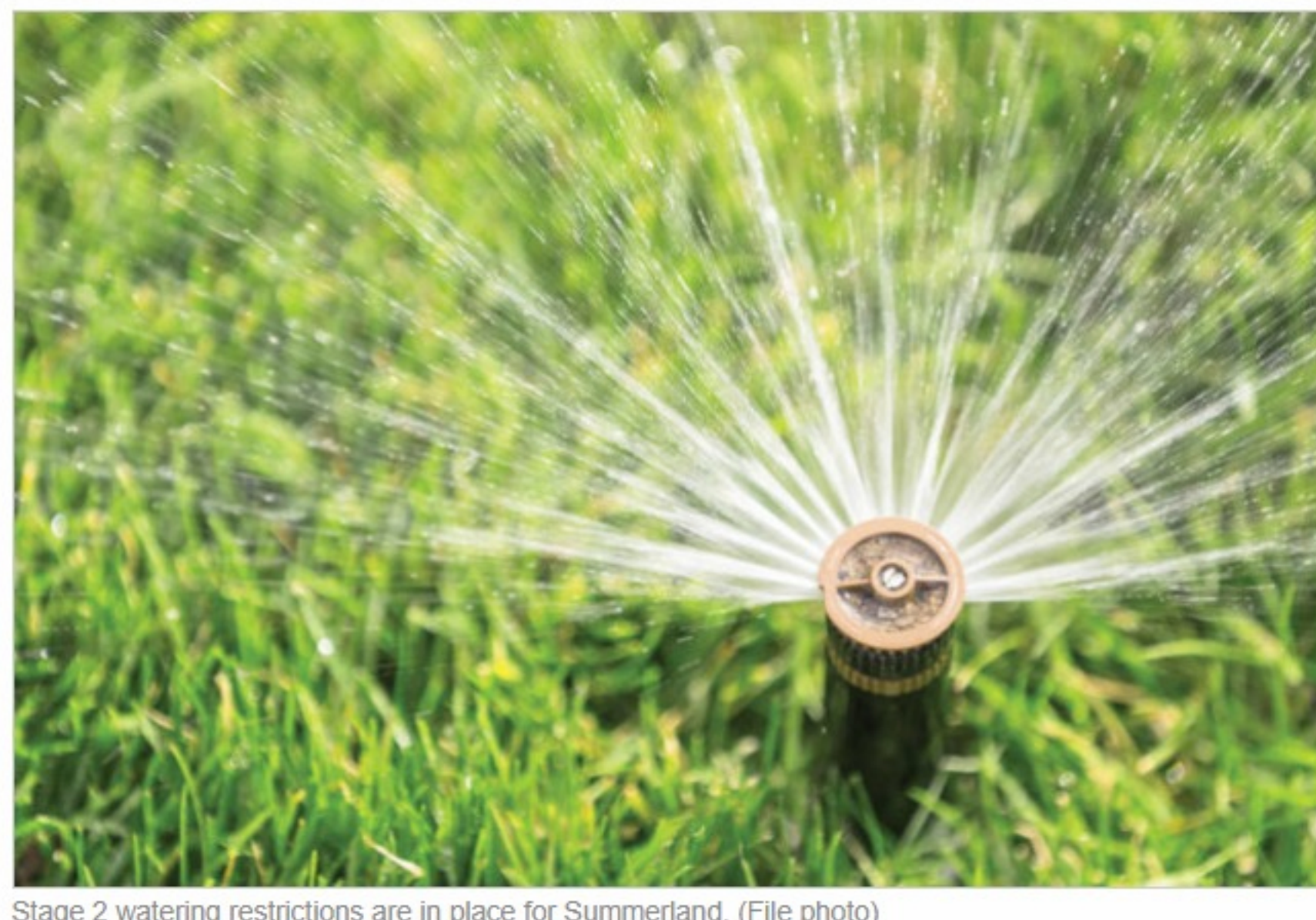


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Stage 2 watering restrictions are in place for Summerland. (File photo)

COLUMN: Managing Summerland's water resource

Stage 2 watering restrictions are in place for the community

Jul. 10, 2021 8:15 a.m. / COLUMNISTS / OPINION



From an unprecedented pandemic headlong into an unprecedented period of extreme temperatures. Impacts of a changing climate?

Perhaps, but one thing is certain: June temperatures up into the mid-40s that followed an unusually dry spring resulted in very high demands on the Summerland Water Treatment Plant.


As noted in a June 28 media release, the District of Summerland is urging residents to reduce water consumption by 30 per cent and, to aid in this reduction, Stage 2 watering restrictions went into effect on Tuesday, June 29.

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The concern came from the Water Treatment Plant struggling to keep up with the demand. It can only treat a certain volume of water at once, and the equipment was overheating.

Staff were able to make some changes to processes, operations and incoming flows to avoid a district-wide boil water notice.

READ ALSO: [Summerland goes to Stage 2 watering restrictions](#)

READ ALSO: [Summerland's reservoirs continuing to spill](#)

Some irrigation services were suspended for several hours in the early hours of June 28. While this situation was not ideal for agricultural users, the decision was made to eliminate the risk of Summerland residents using potentially non-potable water in their usual morning routines.

These watering restrictions are not due to a lack of water storage within the district's watershed, nor to a lack of water. In fact, the District of Summerland is fortunate to have access to several sources of water including Eneas Creek, groundwater, Okanagan Lake, and Trout Creek, which is the second largest watershed feeding Okanagan Lake.

Two of these sources, Trout Creek (supplying 90 per cent of the water) and Eneas Creek (10 per cent) are consistently used; groundwater is used intermittently as a drinking water source only when the levels of water in storage are lower than seasonal averages. Although the district holds two water licences to draw water from Okanagan Lake, currently neither of these licences are active.

Under Stage 2 watering restrictions, even-numbered residential addresses:

- can use underground irrigation systems to water between midnight and 6 a.m. on Sunday and Thursday, and
- can use a sprinkler to water trees, shrubs, and lawns before 9 a.m. or after 6 p.m. on Sunday and Thursday.

Odd-numbered residential addresses:

- can use underground irrigation systems to water between midnight and 6 a.m. on Saturday and Tuesday, and
- can use a sprinkler to water trees, shrubs, and lawns before 9 a.m. or after 6 p.m. on Saturday and Tuesday.

Micro-irrigation, drip irrigation or a hose with a shut-off nozzle can be used to water trees, shrubs or vegetables at both even- and odd-numbered residential addresses on any day, at any time.

Go to summerland.ca/city-services/water/water-restrictions for more information on District watering restrictions.

Thirteen municipalities (including Summerland), three regional districts and four First Nation governments are served by the Okanagan Basin Water Board. The water board, as advised by the cross-disciplinary Water Stewardship Council, delivers programs and activities to promote coordinated water management throughout the Okanagan Basin. One program is Make Water Work, an annual campaign to encourage Okanagan residents to use less water on their lawns and ornamental gardens. For more information, or to make a pledge, visit makewaterwork.ca.

Water is a natural resource that continuously flows through the hydrological cycle.

But it is a finite resource.

Council's 2018 to 2022 Strategic Priorities includes the development of a Watershed Management Plan. The document, a collaboration between provincial, First Nations and other stakeholder representation, will make recommendations for the long-term management of land and water resources in the watersheds.

The district continues to improve the water infrastructure, including separating the water lines so that agricultural water can bypass the water treatment plant, thus reducing demand on the facility. Water lines in the Prairie Valley Road area were separated in 2009, as were the lines during the 2015 Garnet Valley Road reconstruction project. The district will include waterline separation in the reconstruction of Giant's Head Road slated for 2023. It makes for an expensive project, at approximately \$8 million, but replacing the aged underground infrastructure avoids having to dig the road again later to separate the waterlines.

Okanagan Lake stretches 135 kilometres from Penticton to Vernon and is fed by major inflows, including Trout Creek.

Because of the sheer size of the lake and its tributaries, it is easy to think our water supply is limitless. In truth, however, it will take continued collaboration, thoughtful management and strong stewardship to ensure this critical resource is available for future generations.

Toni Boot is the mayor of Summerland.