

Okanagan posted Jun 23, 2023 @ 02:45pm by Josh Duncan

## ‘Very dry’: Okanagan elevated to drought level 2

Lingering effects from a late 2022 drought combined with warm and dry spring conditions, an early freshet and declining stream flows have prompted the Province to elevate drought levels across BC.

That includes here in the Okanagan, where the valley is considered “very dry” at drought level two.

The majority of the province is at level two or level three, which is considered “severely dry.”

However, up north it’s a different story, as northeastern BC is an “extremely dry” level four and northwestern BC is currently in non-drought status.

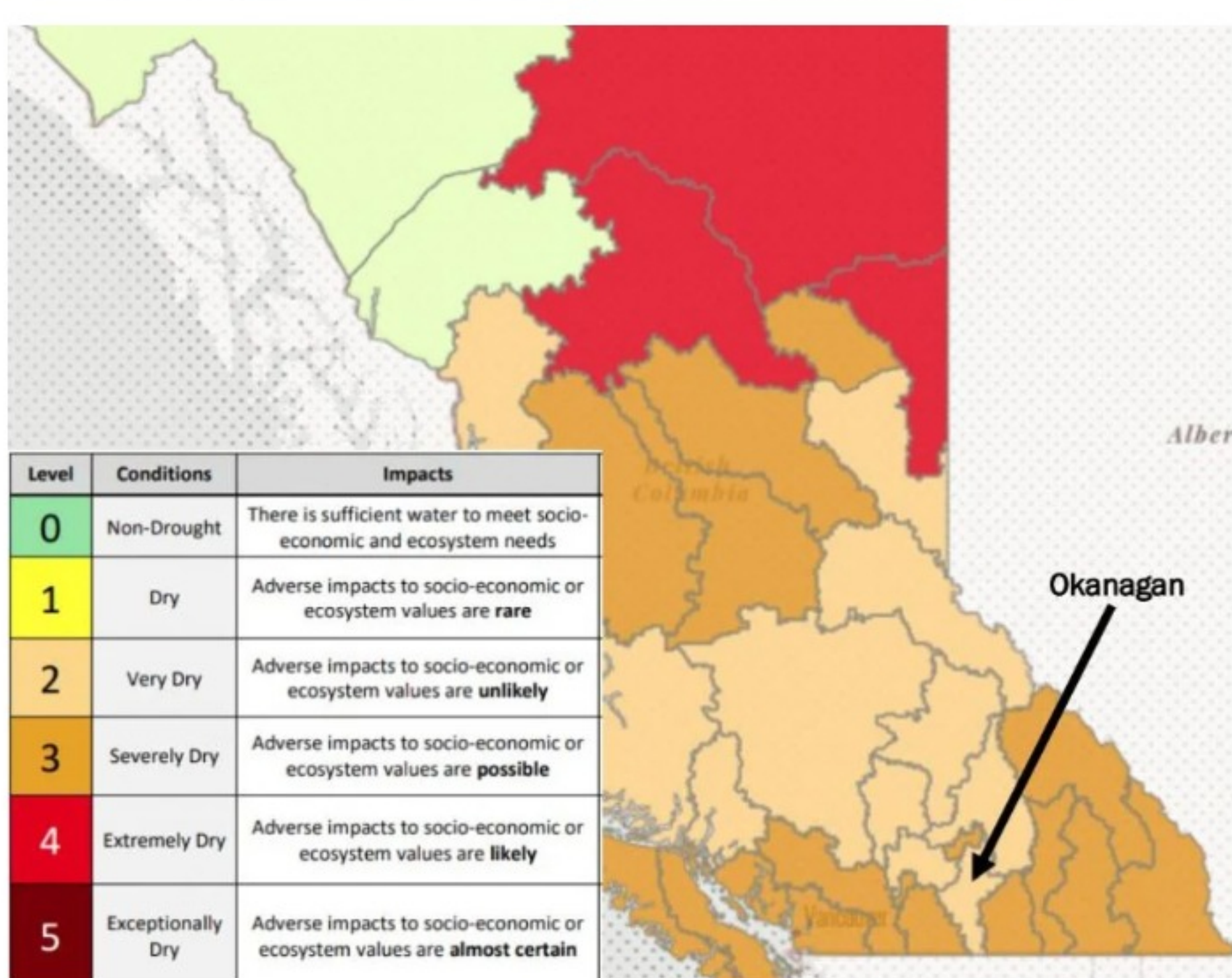


Photo Credit: BC Drought Information Portal

The Okanagan snowpack has completely melted, earlier than usual, and the region has seen lower-than-average precipitation levels in many areas this spring.

“Stream flows have declined significantly over the last few weeks, with many flows reaching the lower end of the historical range for this time period. Water temperatures are also increasing, which can be lethal for fish,” explains a release from the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB).

“Water purveyors with upstream storage should closely follow their release schedule requirements to avoid low flows downstream. Flows in some streams can change rapidly during hot, dry conditions.”

The long-term forecast for most of Canada, including the BC Interior, is for above-normal temperatures, which adds more concern to the situation.



Photo Credit: Okanagan Basin Water Board

The OBWB notes that local water regulations are set using different indicators than provincial drought levels as supply may vary across the region.

“Whether a community moves to a higher restriction stage depends on several factors, including customer demand, infrastructure capacity, and local water supply conditions,” the release says.

“That said, everyone should be using water wisely.”

The OBWB’s Okanagan WaterWise program launched its annual “Make Water Work” campaign on May 18, smack dab in the middle of a record-breaking spring heat wave.

The campaign is aimed at tackling the second largest use of water in the valley, which is household lawns and gardens. [Click this link](#) to learn more.