

Okanagan posted Nov 3, 2023 @ 11:30am by Cheyanna Lorraine

## Okanagan drops to level 2 drought conditions but warmer, drier winter still a concern

A report headed to the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) next week says drought conditions have improved slightly in the Okanagan but we could be in store for a warmer and drier than normal winter.

According to the BC Drought Information Portal, the Okanagan is now sitting at level two drought conditions, which means adverse impacts are unlikely.

The OBWB says the level lowered due to improved stream flows due to some recent rain, the end of the seasonal agricultural irrigation period and cooler temperatures.

However, the report says El Niño conditions are expected to last throughout the rest of the fall and well into the winter, which is expected to extend drought conditions into 2024.

“Okanagan Lake is below normal, and the provincial dam operator is releasing lower-than-normal flows to the Okanagan River channel, to slow the lake-level fall,” says the report.

“Snow pillows are not yet registering meaningful amounts at Brenda Mines, Mission Creek, or Silver Star stations.”

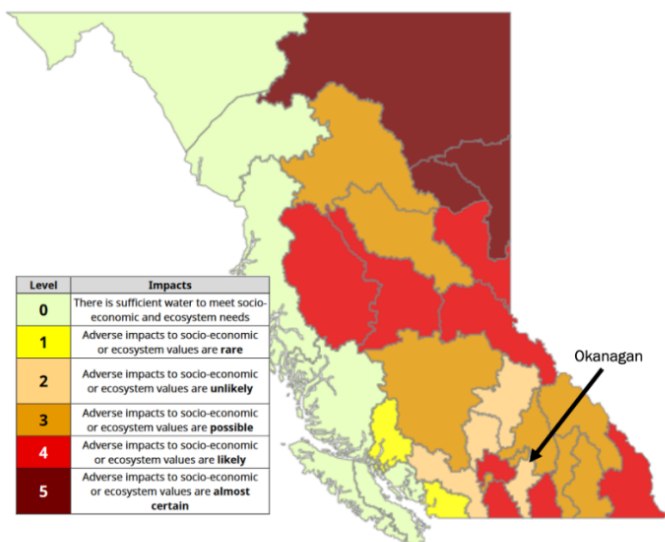


Photo Credit: OBWB

Provincial drought levels map as of October 19, 2023.

Although the Okanagan Valley was moved to level two drought status on Oct. 19, some streams are still at higher drought level and drier weather is not expected to provide significant relief.

The report says Shuttleworth and Vaseux creeks in the southern part of the valley remain at level five drought conditions, which is due to different responses of various streams to rain as well as the difference between regulated and unregulated systems.

The overall improvement in drought conditions across the valley is good news after most of the valley peaked at level five drought condition, which means that adverse impacts to the environment, aquatic life and agriculture are almost certain.

However, if conditions don't change over the winter, there is a concern about the potential for a multi-year drought, says the OBWB.

“Unless we have enough precipitation in the fall and winter for aquifers and reservoirs to rebound, there is concern we could start next year's farming and gardening season in drought,” says an additional report from the OBWB's communications director Corinne Jackson.

The board will be reviewing these reports on Tuesday at 10 am.

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