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CANADA

Okanagan begins annual drought watch at Level 2, very dry



By **Doyle Potenteau** • Global News

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Concerns growing tonight over drought conditions across the Okanagan. The region is now at a level 2 drought rating which means very dry and the outlook for the coming months is not promising. As Klaudia Van Emmerik reports, residents are urged to do their part to prepare for what's shaping up to be an extremely dry summer season. – May 17, 2024



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For a third week in a row, with the unofficial start to summer underway, the Okanagan remains at Drought Level 2, which is very dry.

Provincial officials began their annual **drought-monitoring process** on May 2, and the **Southern Interior** began the season by skipping Drought Level 1 (dry) and jumping into Drought Level 2.

In B.C., there are six **drought levels**: 0 (non-drought) to 5 (exceptionally dry), with 5 featuring “adverse impacts to socio-economic or ecosystem values are almost certain.”



At Level 2, the province says “adverse impacts to socio-economic or ecosystem values are unlikely,” but response measures should include conservation actions that include local water restrictions where appropriate.

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The **Okanagan Basin Water Board** stated on Thursday that “lingering effects from the 2023 drought, low winter snowpack, low precipitation and warmer-than-normal temperatures causing an early freshet, have prompted the Government of B.C. to move the Okanagan to a Level 2 drought rating.”

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The OBWB continued, saying “while recent localized rains have helped, drought conditions will persist into 2024 unless we have prolonged rain within the next few weeks.”

At Level 3 (severely dry), the province says “adverse impacts to socio-economic or ecosystem values are possible,” while Level 4, extremely dry, has likely adverse impacts.



With temperatures to rise soon, the OBWB says Okanagan water purveyors should closely monitor supplies and customer demand and begin communicating with customers for continuing drought conditions this summer.

“The Okanagan spent more than half of 2023 in drought, starting in June and this drought is persisting into 2024,” said the OBWB. “The below-normal snowpack this winter means, despite some rain in April, the Okanagan hasn't seen significant recovery from last year's drought.”

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The federal government's **drought classification** has a 1-4 rating. The Central Okanagan is at level 2, severe drought, while the North Okanagan and South Okanagan are at level 1, moderate drought.



Across the **Southern Interior**, several communities have implemented water restrictions, **such as Kelowna**, which is under Stage 1 restrictions (lawn watering three times a week).

Check your local jurisdiction for watering restrictions.

In related news, provincial officials also released their weekly freshet and flood status on Thursday.

According to the province, normal to above-normal seasonal flows are present, but stable river conditions are expected through next week.

It also said the peak of seasonal snowmelt runoff is anticipated over the next one to three weeks.