

## OKANAGAN DROUGHT BULLETIN #2024-3

July 25, 2024



### OKANAGAN DECLARED AT DROUGHT LEVEL 3

Conditions in the Okanagan are changing quickly. Cooler temperatures and rain in May and June have given way to hot, dry conditions in July. Stream flows are dropping and water temperatures are increasing. In reviewing these conditions and the expected forecast for continued hot, dry weather, the Government of B.C. has moved the Okanagan up to Drought Level 3.

*Some important fish-bearing streams in the Okanagan have low flows. Okanagan water purveyors should continue to monitor supplies and customer demand closely, and take action to conserve.*

The heatwave has continued through July with air temperatures consistently between 35C and 40C and no significant precipitation. As a result, stream flows across the Okanagan have continued to drop — in some cases quite rapidly — and water temperatures have continued to increase. Although flows remain better in some streams with control structures (e.g. a dam), some unregulated streams are extremely low.

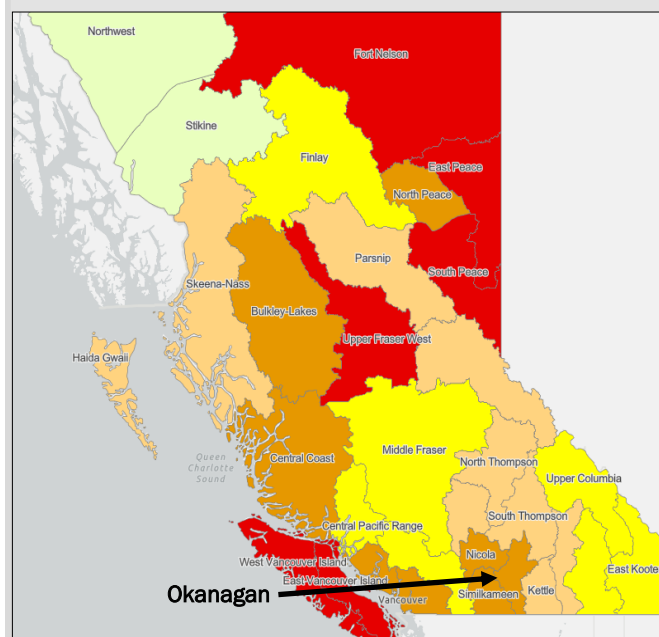
After being moved to Level 2 last week, continuing hot and dry conditions have prompted a move to **Level 3 (Severely Dry)**. At this level, serious ecosystem and socio-economic impacts are possible. All unauthorized use should be curtailed and water suppliers are likely to impose water restrictions. Utilities should be communicating these restrictions to customers.

Whether a utility moves to a higher restriction stage depends on several factors, including customer demand, infrastructure capacity, and local water supply conditions. Local water restrictions (stages) are set using different indicators than provincial drought levels, and water supply conditions vary across the region. That said, everyone should be using water wisely.

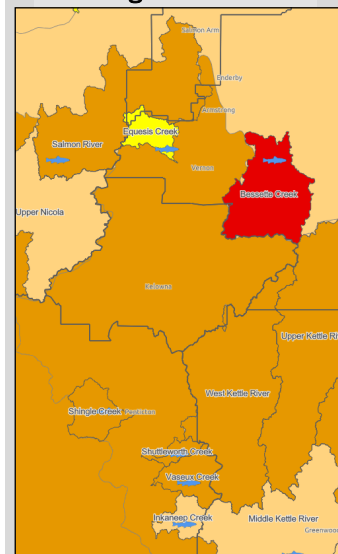
Customers of water utilities should comply with all watering restrictions and advice from their supplier. Water licence holders on streams and wells who are not customers of local water utilities should adhere to conservation measures communicated by the Government of B.C.

Provincial drought level map on July 25, 2024

Source: [BC Drought Information Portal](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/drought-preparedness)



#### Okanagan Zoomed In



Level	Conditions
0	Non-Drought
1	Dry
2	Very Dry
3	Severely Dry
4	Extremely Dry
5	Exceptionally Dry



**Implementing effective water conservation strategies helps mitigate the effects of drought. By working together we can help reduce conflict and support agriculture, firefighting, and fish, through 2024 and into the future.**

## FARMERS AND RANCHERS

Water is critical to ensuring a healthy agricultural sector – feeding our community and our economy. Hot and dry conditions mean crops and livestock need more water to survive. As these conditions persist, good water management is essential right now, especially where water sources do not have storage to fall back on.

Visit [www.OBWB.ca/ag](http://www.OBWB.ca/ag) for tools and information about increasing water-use efficiency and responding to drought on the farm.



## REGULATORY TOOLS TO PROTECT FISH

With the increase in drought level, B.C. provincial staff are working with water licencees to encourage voluntary water conservation. If these measures do not achieve sufficient results and drought conditions worsen, temporary protection orders under the *Water Sustainability Act* may be issued to support drinking water for communities and avoid significant or irreversible harm to aquatic ecosystems. The protection orders give the province the ability to restrict water withdrawals if streamflows drop below environmental flow needs (EFNs), or completely stop withdrawals if flows drop below critical environmental flow thresholds (CEFTs).

The Okanagan basin is an extremely important region for fish. Low water levels can impede fish passage to spawning and feeding areas, increase susceptibility to disease and predation, cause stranding, or result in fish kills due to low oxygen and high water temperatures. An EFN, or in-stream flow need, is the volume and timing of streamflow required for proper functioning of an aquatic ecosystem. A CEFT is a short-term flow threshold, below which significant or irreversible harm to the stream's aquatic ecosystem is likely to occur.



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## HELP FOR RESIDENTS



Okanagan Basin Water Board staff have been delivering “Make Water Work” outreach materials to local government and utility partners, as well as garden centre and irrigation business partners, throughout the valley. Materials include the “2024 Make Water Work Plant Collection” list that denotes the many plants also deemed FireSmart, Make Water Work tips sheet, branded gardening gloves, garden centre banners, plant and yard stakes.

The plant list and tips sheet are available for printing and distribution at [www.MakeWaterWork.ca/resources](http://www.MakeWaterWork.ca/resources).



This week, we also filmed interviews with Okanagan residents to produce a series of videos aimed at educating the public on the Okanagan's water challenges and to promote conservation.

“Make Water Work” is an annual valley-wide residential outdoor

water conservation campaign, delivered between spring and fall by the OBWB's Okanagan WaterWise outreach and education program and with water utilities throughout the valley. Learn more at [www.MakeWaterWork.ca](http://www.MakeWaterWork.ca).

Interested in becoming a Make Water Work utility or business partner? Email [corinne.jackson@obwb.ca](mailto:corinne.jackson@obwb.ca) or call 250-469-6271.