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# Okanagan stays at Level 2 drought conditions

Valley-wide outdoor water conservation campaign – Make Water Work – is coming to an end for the year, but despite best efforts of citizens and municipalities, Level 2 conditions remain



[Roger Knox](#)  
about 17 hours ago



1 / 3 The Okanagan remains on Level 2 drought conditions. | Okanagan WaterWise/X Photo



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The drought this year certainly wasn't as bad as 2023, when severe drought fuelled a frightening fire season in the Okanagan. And that, said outgoing Okanagan Basin Water Board communication manager Corinne Jackson, is in part due to residents who did their part to conserve this year.

"But there were still impacts on crops, and on fish," said Jackson, who manages OBWB's Okanagan WaterWise outreach/education program, and Make Water Work. "This means we need fall rains, a good snowpack, and a nice slow spring melt to recover. Whether that happens, or not, we can't predict."

With days getting cooler and rains forecast in the next few days, Jackson said water managers are hoping it brings relief to some Okanagan streams that have been struggling this year.

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In particular, the South Okanagan's Shingle and Shatford Creek remain at Level 3, Shuttleworth Creek is at Level 4 and has had problems with fish passage, and Vaseux – which is dry at the mouth – is at Level 5.

During a regional drought call Wednesday, Oct. 16, it was decided to keep the Okanagan at Level 2 until the impact of the potential rains is known.

At Level 2 adverse impacts to socioeconomic or ecosystem values (for example, impacts for farmers, or aquatic life including fish) are unlikely. At Level 3, these impacts become "possible;" at Level 4 they are "likely;" and at Level 5 they are "almost certain."

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"We were very happy to see strong participation in the Make Water Work campaign this year, especially given the concerns around the valley's water supply and the need for everyone to adopt more WaterWise behaviours," Jackson said.

Make Water Work is delivered in partnership with local governments, water utilities, and garden centre and irrigation businesses throughout the valley. As part of the campaign, residents were encouraged to pledge to undertake at least one of [six actions to reduce outdoor water use](#) and be entered to win \$500 in WaterWise yard material.

Some 318 people pledged and one of this year's winners is Lisa Boulanger of Kelowna.

"Water is so precious here and it's not going to change so we are the ones that have to change," said Boulanger, who is with the Kelowna Garden Club which has been encouraging members to move away from the traditional English cottage garden, or to at least use plants better suited to the Okanagan.

Among some of the WaterWise gardening practices Boulanger uses is to mulch garden beds in the spring, which feeds plants and helps hold moisture so they require less watering, and she has installed drip irrigation.

"I try to lead by example," she said, adding she plans to use some of her prize winnings to fix up an irrigation zone and plant an Okanagan-appropriate tree.

The Town of Oliver reclaimed its Make Water Work Community Champion title for collecting the most pledges per capita. This is Oliver's second win after taking the title in 2014.

Every year, the Make Water Work campaign has improved, grown in scope, and attracted new partners, and this year was no exception. The campaign partnered with FireSmartBC in 2024, noting the plants on the *Make Water Work Plant Collection* list that are also deemed FireSmart.

"This was important to us, knowing that our communities need to be prepared for both drought and fire, and that you can have both by following WaterWise and FireSmart principles," Jackson said.

Fall is an excellent time to plant, said Jackson, and you can find the *Make Water Work Plant Collection* list and the partners that carry it at [www.makewaterwork.ca/plants/](http://www.makewaterwork.ca/plants/). "

"If you're not ready to do the landscaping work now, it's also a great time to start planning for spring," she said.

Jackson, who launched and has managed the board's [Okanagan WaterWise](#) program and its Make Water Work and [Don't Move A Mussel](#) campaigns, is leaving the organization later this week after 15 years.

"It's been a dream to create programs, campaigns and resources in response to real-world, real-Okanagan, issues, and to grow partnerships to expand the reach of the Water Board's messages and efforts," she said.

The Make Water Work campaign was first launched in 2011 and is aimed at tackling the second largest use of water in the valley – residential outdoor use.

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I am a journalist with more than 30 years of experience in the industry. I started my career in radio and have spent the last 21 years working with Black Press Media.

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