

Okanagan Basin Water Board Meeting Agenda



Okanagan Basin
WATER BOARD

DATE: Tuesday, February 6, 2024

TIME: 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

PLACE: Online

1. **CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

1.1 Acknowledgement of First Nations Traditional Territory

We acknowledge that we are holding this meeting on the unceded territory of the Syilx Okanagan Nation.

2. **ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR**

3. **INTRODUCTION OF LATE ITEMS**

4. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

5. **ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

5.1 Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of December 12, 2024 held online ([page 1](#))

6. **STAFF PRESENTATIONS**

6.1 Sandra Schira, Water Science Specialist, presenting the results of the Okanagan Climate Indicators project.

7. **STAFF REPORTS**

- 7.1 Executive Director Report ([page 7](#))
- 7.2 Deputy Administrator Report ([page 11](#))
- 7.3 Water Stewardship Director Report ([page 13](#))
- 7.4 Office and Grants Manager Report ([page 17](#))
- 7.5 Water Science Specialist Report ([page 18](#))
- 7.6 Communications Director Report ([page 21](#))

8. **CORRESPONDENCE**

- 8.1 Letter from OBWB to federal government re: invasive mussel program funding ([page 28](#))
- 8.2 Letter from B.C. Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS) Nathan Cullen to OBWB, Westbank First Nation and City of West Kelowna re: invasive mussels ([page 31](#))
- 8.3 Letter from B.C. Minister Cullen and Minister of Environment and Climate Change George Heyman re: B.C. Wildlife Act review ([page 32](#))

9. **NEXT MEETING**

9.1 The next meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board will be **Tuesday, March 5, 2024, at 10 a.m. ONLINE**

10. **ADJOURNMENT**

*** NOTE:** Meetings of the Okanagan Basin Water Board are open to the public, and only closed for in-camera sessions as set out in the B.C. Community Charter. From time-to-time, the board will be holding its meeting online. If you are interested in attending this online meeting, please contact our Communications Director Corinne Jackson at corinne.jackson@obwb.ca for further details. Thank you for your patience and understanding.



**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE OKANAGAN BASIN WATER BOARD
HELD DECEMBER 5, 2023
ONLINE**

PRESENT

Chair Sue McKortoff	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Vice-Chair Blair Ireland	Regional District Central Okanagan
Director Victor Cumming	Regional District North Okanagan
Director Rick Fairbairn	Regional District North Okanagan
Director Christine Fraser	Regional District North Okanagan
Director Wayne Carson	Regional District Central Okanagan
Director Charlie Hodge	Regional District Central Okanagan
Director Doug Holmes	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Director Rick Knodel	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Director Bob Hrasko	Water Supply Association of B.C.
Director Jeremy Fyke	Okanagan Water Stewardship Council (OWSC)

REGRETS

Director Tim Lezard	Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA)
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GUESTS

Alt. Dir. Matt Taylor	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Simone Runyan	District of Coldstream

STAFF

Anna Warwick Sears	Executive Director
Amanda Burnett	Communications Coordinator
Carolina Restrepo-Tamayo	Office and Grants Manager
Corinne Jackson	Communications Director
James Littlely	Deputy Administrator
Nelson Jatel	Water Stewardship Director
Sandra Schira	Water Science Specialist

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair McKortoff called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

Chair McKortoff respectfully acknowledged that the meeting was being held on the traditional and unceded territory of the Syilx Okanagan Nation.

2. LATE ITEMS

8.1.1 Letters package from local govts re: OBWB's calls to action on invasive mussels

8.2.2 Letter from B.C.'s Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship Nathan Cullen and Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy George Heyman, regarding the OBWB's calls to action

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

“THAT the agenda of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of Dec. 5, 2023 be approved as amended.”

CARRIED

4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

- 4.1 Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of Nov. 7, 2023, held online.

“THAT the minutes of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board on Nov. 7, 2023, held online, be approved.”

CARRIED

5. DELEGATION

- 5.1 Natasha Lukey, Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) Fisheries Dept. on the “nlux^wlux^w4cwix (Lower Trout Creek) Restoration Project”

Ms. Lukey was invited to provide an update on the nlux^wlux^w4cwix (Lower Trout Creek) Restoration Project, funded in part through an OBWB Water Conservation and Quality Improvement (WCQI) grant.

The lands where the work is being done was once under the caretakership of the Pierre family and was then transferred to the federal government’s Summerland Research Station, explained Ms. Lukey. Over the years, dams and reservoirs were installed, the creek was narrowed and the floodplain developed. Today, it is the 2nd largest watershed in the Okanagan and supplies the District of Summerland with 90% of its water supply. However, whereas at one time the area was rich with local fish, birds and plant life, the board was told that changes to the area has created problems with flooding, water turbidity, and for the greater ecosystem. In 2019 an Environmental Flow Needs Assessment was done.

Combining local syilx knowledge and western knowledge, the ONA’s Fisheries Department has started to rehabilitate the area, widening the creek to be closer to its natural flow, slowing the water and creating habitat that attracts salmon and other native aquatic life back to the area.

Riparian areas can also help with fire prevention, Ms. Lukey added, noting that the work of ONA and its partners can help rebuild a more resilient landscape. The area has also been dealing with a perpetual slide for several years, with sloughing from the upper bench. The ONA is monitoring to see if work to restore the upper and lower bench is making a difference.

A number of groups have volunteered to help plant the area, including members of the Penticton Indian Band, Summerland Secondary, Agriculture and Ag-Food Canada, and Friends of Summerland Ornamental Gardens. Some of the plants were grown at the En’owkin Centre and are related to plants in the area which is showing great success, including natural cottonwood succession, she said. Despite more restoration needed, fish are beginning to return and so are other wildlife.

The board thanked Ms. Lukey for her presentation. She exited the meeting at 10:42 a.m.

6. STAFF REPORTS

- 6.1 Executive Director Report

Dr. Sears provided an update on the Mission Creek workshop held Dec. 1 co-hosted by the OBWB and MLA Renee Merrifield. Attendees included representatives of the Joe Rich Residents Association, Gorman Bros., City of Kelowna and Rutland Waterworks utilities, ONA, and local farmers. ONA presented on the history of the creek and efforts to rehabilitate the waterway, and Black Mountain Irrigation District spoke about storage and releases to meet water demands. Kelowna spoke about the Mill Creek diversion into Mission Creek, and the province's Okanagan Lake dam manager Shaun Reimer spoke on current policies to manage the lake level, and orphan dikes. The discussion helped highlight gaps in water science and knowledge which will help inform future OBWB projects. Dirs. Blair and Hrasko noted it was a good meeting to hear various perspectives and concerns and help determine what needs to happen next.

The board was told that the current OBWB Strategic Plan goes to the end of 2024. Work is beginning on a review of the plan and preparing an update for 2025-2029. As part of this, staff are working on a review of drought and source protection planning in the valley, metering, water rates and more, to determine water science and planning needs.

Dr. Sears noted that Okanagan Lake is low, at about the 20th percentile for this time of year—only this low 20% of the time in the last 100 years. Warmer temps with El Nino could affect this year's snowpack, she added.

Dir. Holmes said Summerland is looking at saving costs by twinning its water system and not treating agricultural water to drinking water standards, but added that funding is an issue. Dir. Cummings said that Vernon has had the same issue.

Alt. Dir. Taylor entered meeting at 10:55 a.m.

“THAT the Executive Director’s Report, dated Nov. 29, 2023, be received.”
CARRIED

6.2 Deputy Administrator Report

Mr. Littley updated the board on correspondence to the province regarding the OBWB's invasive mussel concerns. The province has noted potential federal funding cuts to their Invasive Mussel Defence Program (IMDP), and problems recruiting and retaining staff. Water Board staff also followed up on an invitation to submit its recommendation for pull-the-plug legislation to the province's Wildlife Act review process. Provincial staff have said that Idaho has been declared a high-risk area for the mussels. Canada Border Services Agency and the province are working closely, watching for watercraft from the area and inspecting as needed. Provincial staff have also agreed to work with the OBWB on its invasive mussel working group, to further develop plans to prevent an infestation and address the mussels should they arrive.

The board discussed sending a letter to the federal government and voice concern about potential funding cuts to the province's IMDP.

“THAT the OBWB send a letter to the federal government, voicing concern about potential funding cuts to the B.C. Invasive Mussel Defence Program.”
CARRIED

Directors were told that letters of support are continuing to come in, supporting the OBWB's call for a temporary moratorium on watercraft coming into B.C., and work is continuing on an Invasive Mussel Vulnerability Guide for those with raw water infrastructure. Plans are also being set for the first meeting of the working group, looking at how to improve prevention of the mussels from coming into the region, and prepare for mitigation in case of their arrival.

Mr. Littley added that low lake conditions in Wood Lake, due to the drought, is making it difficult to launch and rototill the lake. Staff are looking at hiring a crane to help.

“THAT the Deputy Administrator’s Report, dated Nov. 28, 2023, be received.”
CARRIED

6.3 Office and Grants Manager Report

Ms. Restrepo-Tamayo told the board that the call for Water Conservation and Quality Improvement Grant Program applications has gone out, noting that this year’s theme for additional consideration is drought resilience.

The board was updated on a BC Watersheds Collaborative gathering of water funders and leaders in November. Ms. Restrepo-Tamayo spoke to the gathering about the OBWB’s upcoming Environmental Flows Conference in March and encouraged their attendance and help in spreading the word, and Mr. Littley spoke about invasive mussels encouraging their support in helping address the issue.

“THAT the Office and Grants Manager’s Report, dated Nov. 28, 2023, be received.”
CARRIED

6.4 Water Stewardship Director

Dr. Jatel updated the board on the last Okanagan Water Stewardship Council meeting which included a discussion on invasive mussels and the discussion around the OBWB-led invasive mussel working group. The next meeting, he added, would include a presentation from Christina Ortiz with a Columbian perspective on water issues they are facing. Dir. Fyke added that the council’s policy committee is reviewing governance and conflicts around water and drought last year and how this can be avoided in future years. The council is also looking at having a presentation in the new year from the Canada Water Agency.

Dr. Jatel added that he attended a B.C. provincial environmental flows symposium in Victoria and presented on the Okanagan’s EFN work. It was a valuable precursor to the OBWB’s own conference in March, he said.

“THAT the Water Stewardship Director’s Report, dated Nov. 28, 2023, be received.”
CARRIED

Dir. Fraser entered the meeting at 11:25 a.m.

6.5 Water Science Specialist Report

Ms. Schira told the board that, as of Nov. 27, the Okanagan’s drought levels have not changed and remains at a Level 2 where impact to ecological values are unlikely. However, she added, the valley has been in drought for 26 weeks, since June, or more than half of the year. And, although the larger basin is at Level 2, other sub-basins without upland storage (e.g. Vaseux and Shuttleworth) are at higher drought levels. Water managers are hoping for precipitation this winter, but parts of B.C. may end up starting 2024 in drought.

Work is continuing on the OBWB’s new climate dashboard and includes about 30 indicators looking at water quantity. There will also be a section on water quality, Ms. Schira added. The data show that winter temperatures have increased for Vernon, Kelowna and Penticton compared to

the 1951-1980 average. Both Vernon and Kelowna, shifted from being around -3.9 C and -3.3 C to now consistently having average temperatures above 0C. This shift in local climate conditions could have impacts on the local ecology and agriculture. Penticton was historically warmer at about -0.7 C so having temperatures around or above 0 C is not as significant a shift as for the other two cities.

The data is also showing a slight decrease in winter precipitation and a change in the type, with less snow and more rain. These changes are expected to affect the movement of water in the valley bottom, and could impact ecosystems and agriculture, she added.

“THAT the Water Science Specialist Report, dated Nov. 28, 2023, be received.”
CARRIED

6.6 Communications Director Report

Ms. Jackson gave an update on an OBWB survey that is under way in the valley. The survey will help determine the level of awareness among citizens about water issues, where they are getting their information, and potential outreach and engagement activities.

Due to the ongoing drought, the Water Board’s Okanagan WaterWise program is continuing to promote indoor conservation efforts and preparing for outdoor efforts in the spring. Staff have also been talking with various utilities about messaging around the proper use of roof sprinklers during times of wildfire and drought.

Communications support has also been provided on the OBWB’s calls to action on invasive mussels, with letters to senior and local governments and partners, and in responding to media.

“THAT the Communications Director’s Report, dated Nov. 29, 2023, be received.”
CARRIED

7. IN-CAMERA

7.1 In-Camera session (under sec. 90(1)(k) and 90(2)(b) of the Community Charter

Come out at 12:09 p.m.

8. RISE AND REPORT

“THAT OBWB staff follow up with Province of B.C., District of Peachland and City of West Kelowna regarding the toxic spill on the Coquihalla Connector, on or around Nov. 22, and report back to board.”

CARRIED

9. CORRESPONDENCE

9.1 Letters to senior governments, cc’d to OBWB, re: invasive mussels from District of Summerland, Town of Osoyoos, City of Dawson Creek, Penticton and Wine Country Chamber of Commerce, Shuswap Watershed Council, Village of New Denver, CSRD.

9.2 And, two letters from B.C.’s Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship Nathan Cullen and Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy George Heyman, regarding the OBWB’s calls to action

The board voted to accept the letters.

“THAT the letters to senior governments, cc’d to OBWB, re: invasive mussels from District of Summerland, Town of Osoyoos, City of Dawson Creek, Penticton and Wine Country Chamber of Commerce, Shuswap Watershed Council, Village of New Denver, CSRD; AND, the letters from B.C.’s Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship Nathan Cullen and Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy George Heyman, be received.”

CARRIED

10. NEXT MEETING

10.1 The next meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board will be Tuesday, Feb. 6 from 10 a.m. – 12 p.m., online.

11. ADJOURNMENT

“THAT there being no further business, the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of Dec. 5, 2023 be adjourned at 12:16 p.m.”

CARRIED

Certified Correct:		
Chair		Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

Okanagan Basin Water Board
Regular meeting
February 6, 2023
Agenda No: 7.1

To: OBWB Directors
From: Anna Warwick Sears
Date: January 31, 2024
Subject: **Executive Director Report**

Board Election

The first item on the agenda is the election of Chair and Vice-Chair for the OBWB. Please reach out to your fellow directors to discuss nominations before the meeting. We are working on a digital “ballot” process if there is more than one nomination for either position. For 2024, Directors and Alternates are:

Regional District of North Okanagan (RDNO): Director Victor Cumming, Director Rick Fairbairn, Director Christine Fraser (alternates: Director Bob Fleming and Director Shirley Fowler).

Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO): Director Charlie Hodge, Director Blair Ireland, Director Wayne Carson (alternates: Director Gord Lovegrove, Director Patrick Van Minsel, Director Kevin Kraft).

Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS): Director Sue McKortoff, Director Doug Holmes, Director Rick Knodel (alternates: Director Adrienne Fedrigo, Director Subrina Monteith, Director Matt Taylor).

Water Management Appointments: Director Bob Hrasko - Water Supply Association of BC (alternate: TBD), Director Jeremy Fyke – Okanagan Water Stewardship Council (alternate: Sheena Spencer), Director Tim Lezard – Okanagan Nation Alliance (alternate: TBD).

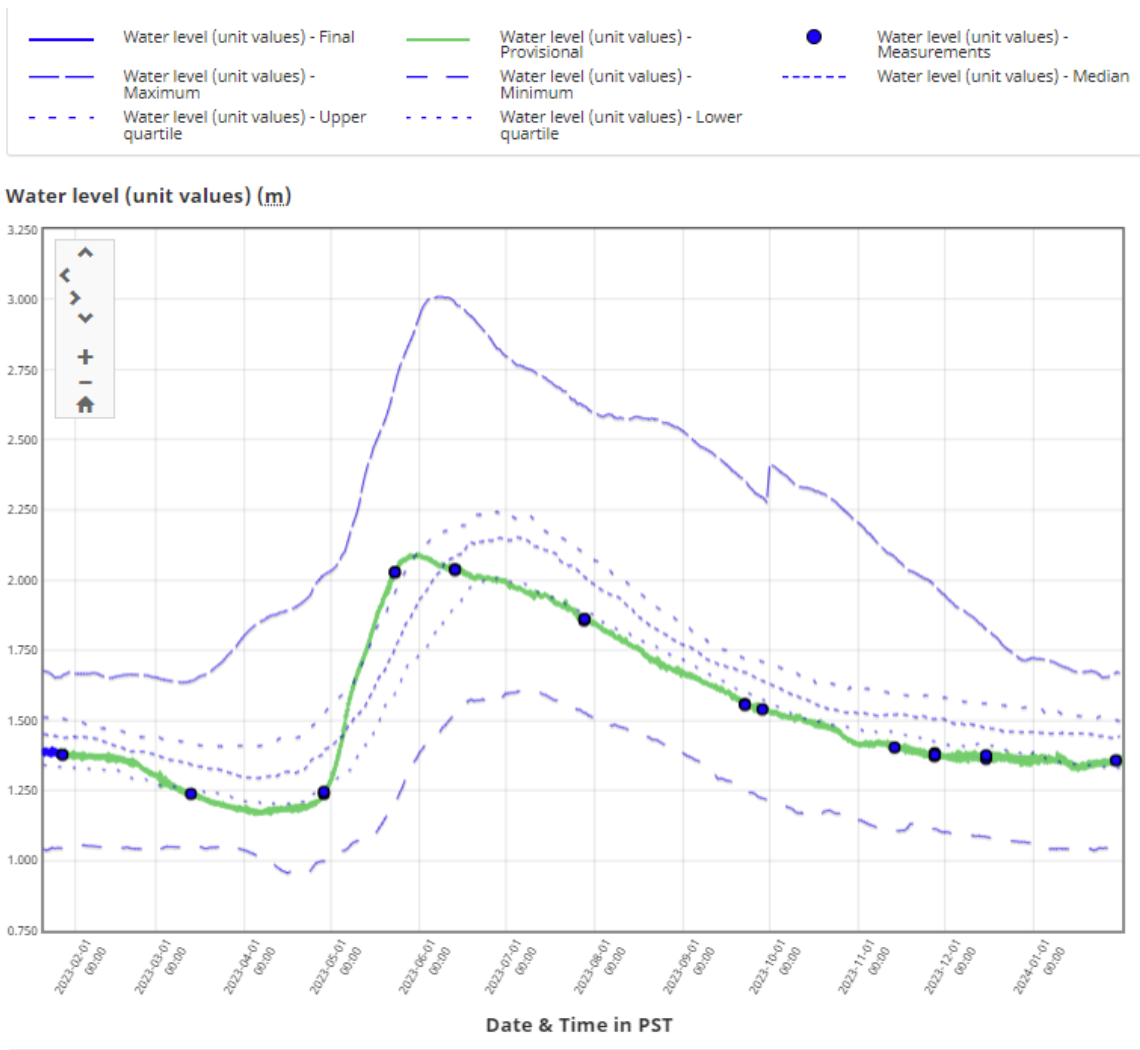
General Update

Since the last board meeting, I have been focusing on compiling the report on our Mission Creek workshop, and working on general administrative oversight. There have been a number of small workshops and meetings about potential new partnerships, but none are at the stage for a full report. I am also continuing preparations for the strategic planning update.

Weather Report

NOAA (U.S. weather agency) continues to forecast a warmer-and-drier-than-normal conditions through the summer of 2024. Although this website just forecasts for the U.S., I find it more useful than the Environment Canada forecasts (which are updated less frequently):
https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/predictions/long_range/

Okanagan Lake is at the 29th percentile for this time of year (only 29 out of 100 years have lake levels been this low at this day of the year), reflecting both the management of the lake, and the recent unseasonal rains.



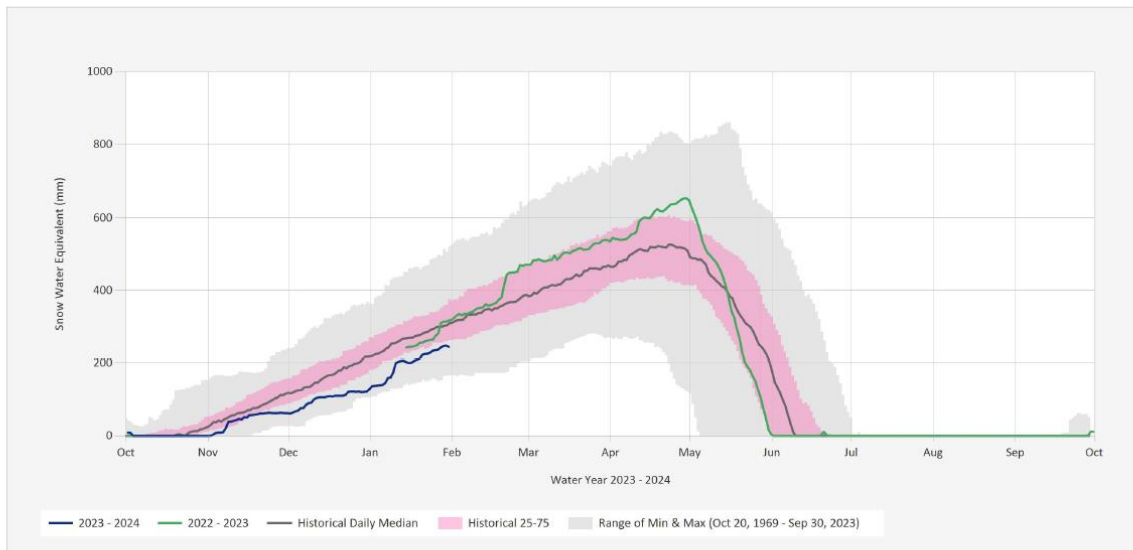
Okanagan snowpillows have recovered to just below the 25th percentile for their historical records. At high elevations, there is not much run off, and the snow can absorb some of the rain, but extended warm temperatures will decrease the size of the snow-reservoir going into our spring freshet. In general, water managers can still be cautiously optimistic at this time of year, because there is a lot of time left to catch up. However, given the El Niño conditions, there is a real possibility that the drought will continue into 2024. The current El Niño forecast projects the condition weakening in the spring of 2024, moving to a neutral El Niño/La Niña status.

Mission Creek Snow Pillow: 1780 m elevation (records began in 1969)

Automated Snow Weather Station Graph
Snow.2F05P Automated Snow Weather Station Graph

Jan 31, 2024 | 1 of 1

Source Data: SW.Daily@2F05P
Location: Mission Creek, Latitude: 49.94467, Longitude: -118.9497, Elevation: : 1780 m

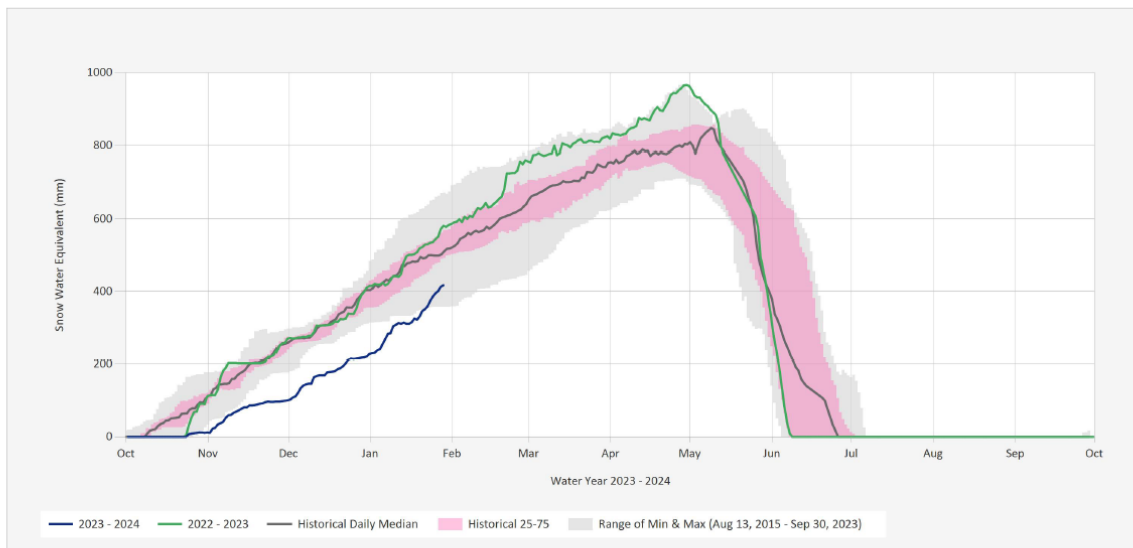


Silver Star snow pillow: 1840 m elevation (records began in 2015)

Automated Snow Weather Station Graph
Snow.2F10P Automated Snow Weather Station Graph

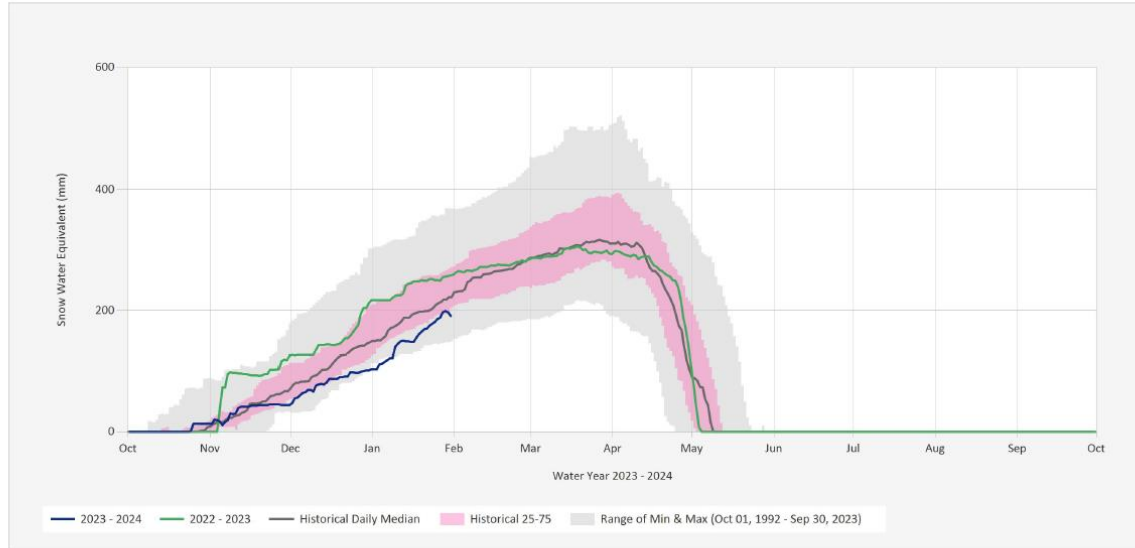
Jan 31, 2024 | 1 of 1

Source Data: SW.Daily@2F10P
Location: Silver Star Mountain, Latitude: 50.37136, Longitude: -119.06211, Elevation: : 1840 m



Brenda Mines snow pillow: 1460 m elevation (records began in 1992)

Source Data: SW.Daily@2F18P
Location: Brenda Mine, Latitude: 49.8623611, Longitude: -119.9821111, Elevation: : 1460 m



Statistics are based on the period of record prior to the current Water Year
Statistics are only displayed for locations with at least two years of data
Automated Snow Weather Station Graph is only available for Active locations

Data last appended: January 30, 2024 16:00 UTC+00:00

Status: Active

MEMORANDUM

Okanagan Basin Water Board
Regular meeting
Feb. 6, 2024
Agenda No: 7.2

To: OBWB Directors
From: James Littley
Date: January 31, 2024
Subject: Deputy Administrator Report

Invasive Mussel Update Federal Funding Reduction

Since the OBWB's last two letters to the province, sent Oct. 18 and Nov 15, 2023, they have responded indicating that there would likely be a reduction in federal funding to the Invasive Mussel Defence Program (IMDP).

The following is quoted from their Oct. 30, 2023 letter, back to the OBWB: "IMDP funding relies on funding partners and fluctuates annually. In direct response, the Government of B.C. has either maintained or increased support in recent years, to maintain fundamental program operations." "Several funding partners, including the federal government, have notified B.C. that they may reduce their financial support for the IMDP in 2024." "We also encourage you to share your expectations directly with the Federal Government, given there are accountabilities in both Governments." "Having your support in seeking funding increases is critical to our Ministries' ability to work with funding partners to keep the IMDP a collective priority."

Based on the information quoted above, OBWB sent a letter to the federal government on Jan. 18, 2024 calling for immediate action (see 8.1 correspondence). We have yet to receive a response.

Response letter to Pull-the-plug Call to Action

As part of the province's Oct. 30 letter to the OBWB, B.C. Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship Nathan Cullen and Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy George Heyman encouraged us to "submit recommendations through the Wildlife Act review process," regarding the call to introduce pull-the-plug legislation, which we did on November 15th. Our letter outlined the urgency for this legislative change and provided the simple wording from similar legislation in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

On Jan. 16, OBWB received a response that indicates the province is taking a process-oriented approach, indicating that the timeline for consultation and engagement for the broader Wildlife Act review will not occur until the winter and spring of 2025. These contradictory messages seem to indicate that pull-the-plug legislation is not an urgent priority. An alternative approach would be for the province to introduce pull-the-plug legislation immediately, based on the multiple examples available, and to then amend if needed as part of the Wildlife Act review.

I recommend that OBWB continue to engage Ministers Cullen and Heyman and stress the importance of introducing pull-the-plug legislation, even if it is later amended through the Wildlife Act review. OBWB has been calling for this action for more than five years.

Invasive Mussel Working Group Inaugural Meeting

We are hosting the first meeting of the new Okanagan-Interior Invasive Mussel Working Group in Kelowna on March 8th. We have invited representatives from Okanagan First Nations, local governments, chambers of commerce, tourism associations, marinas and yacht clubs, and industries working in and around the water, to gather and discuss: 1. how to prevent invasive mussels from entering the province; 2. how to stop the spread between watersheds if they arrive in our province; and 3. what it will mean to live with them should they arrive in the Okanagan-Interior.

I will make a presentation on “Facing the Risk of Invasive Mussels,” followed by a presentation by provincial staff on the B.C. IMDP. We will have resource people in the room to help address questions, and OBWB staff will help capture key points for the group going forward. I will be facilitating the meeting.

The inaugural meeting is intended to be by-invitation-only, as space is limited.

Milfoil Control Program

Milfoil rototilling is currently underway in Wood Lake and the Kelowna and West Kelowna areas of Okanagan Lake. We have had a number of delays this winter due to lake level and freezing conditions, and equipment breakdowns. In view of the delays, we will follow the prioritization policy of the board, concentrating on public beaches prior to treating areas adjacent to private property.

We have also met with provincial staff and presented on our new proposed permitting process for the next five years. We will continue to work with the province to ensure more flexibility to treat invasive milfoil while accounting for all habitat and species concerns.

MEMORANDUM

Okanagan Basin Water Board
Regular meeting
Feb. 6, 2024
Agenda No: 7.3

To: OBWB Directors
From: Nelson R. Jatel
Date: October 31, 2024
Subject: **Water Stewardship Director's Report**

Okanagan Water Stewardship Council

The council was informed of the province's Thompson Okanagan Regional Drought Response in 2023 by **James Telford**, Assistant Water Manager and Senior Authorizations Specialist at B.C. Ministry of Water Lands and Resource Stewardship, and **Nicole Pyett**, Manager of Resource Management. Mr. Telford and Ms. Pyett covered the ministry's organizational changes, provincial and regional drought meetings, the drought conditions 2023, an extended summer and early onset of drought, provincial watershed drought levels, regional communications, and specific drought response measures such as Temporary Protection Orders. The presentation also discussed essential considerations for the Fish Population Protection Order in specific watersheds and the impact of drought on agriculture. It concluded with plans for moving forward into 2024, emphasizing the importance of local community and First Nation involvement.

The February 8th council meeting will occur at the Coast Capri hotel in Kelowna, from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. This session will feature a panel discussion on local government watershed security planning titled "*Where does the Buck Stop?*" Panelists include **Rod Maclean**, Manager of Utility Planning at the City of Kelowna, and **Kiel Wilkie**, Utilities Manager at the District of Lake Country. Additionally, **Sandra Schira**, the OBWB's Water Science Specialist, will introduce new climate indicators tailored for the Okanagan. All board members are encouraged to attend.

Environmental Flow Conference Attendance Options for Board Members

The upcoming Environmental Flow Conference, scheduled for March 13 - 15 in Kelowna presents a valuable opportunity for board members to engage with important environmental flow and water management issues. This conference is especially pertinent given the increasing challenges of climate change, conflicts between fish and farmers during low flow conditions, and the growing severity and frequency of droughts in the Okanagan. The OBWB recognizes the importance of this event and will be covering the cost for directors to attend.

Board member Attendance Options

Board members have several options for participating in the conference:

1. **VIP Reception and Conference Welcome (Tuesday, March 12):**
 - An exclusive opportunity to experience the opening of the conference – this event helps set the stage for the proceeding three days of conference activities and welcomes participants to the Syilx territory.
2. **Wednesday Evening Reception (5 - 6 pm):**
 - A relaxed environment for informal discussions and networking with other conference attendees.
3. **Thursday Gala Dinner (Starting at 6 pm):**
 - One of the conference's highlights, featuring our keynote speaker and a formal dinner. The reception starts at 6 pm, followed by dinner.
4. **Full Conference Participation:**
 - This option allows board members to attend all sessions and activities throughout the conference. It's an immersive experience, ideal for those looking to engage fully with the topics of environmental flow science and policy and network extensively.

Important Notes

- **Assigned Seating:** Please note that there is assigned seating at this conference, and no drop-in option is available. This requires prior planning and confirmation of attendance.
- **Encouragement to Participate:** The OBWB encourages board members to participate in this conference. The issues discussed are integral to our region's environmental and water management challenges.
- **Further Information:** For more details or to confirm your participation, please contact Carolina at (250) 469-6264.

Website for Reference

For additional information about the conference, visit www.environmentalflows2024.ca.

Okanagan Hydrometric (Stream Flow) Monitoring

Last month, despite the cold temperatures, the Okanagan Hydrometric Program continuously monitored water flow and levels across various Okanagan streams. With the cooler temperatures, efforts have focused on completing several data quality control and quality assurance tasks to ensure we have credible and defensible hydrometric data.

The semi-annual Technical Advisory Committee meeting for the Hydrometric service program, involving all our project partners, is scheduled for Friday, February 16th and will be held at the Okanagan Nation Alliance office in West Kelowna.

OBWB Hosts Workshop on Environmental Flow Needs for Teck Cominco and Department of Fisheries and Oceans

On January 16, 2024, the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) hosted an Environmental Flow Needs (EFN) workshop at the Marriott Grand Okanagan Resort in Kelowna in collaboration with Teck Cominco and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. I co-chaired the workshop with Clement Agboma of Teck Resources Ltd. who brought together representatives from environmental and government organizations to discuss the development and application of EFNs for critical fish species in the Okanagan region.

Agboma presented Teck's EFN initiative, focusing on the impact of water usage on river streamflows and fish habitats and the need for collaboration with stakeholders. Elinor McGrath introduced the Okanagan Environmental Flow project, highlighting the Okanagan Nation Alliance's role and the effects of past developments on water management.

The workshop featured in-depth discussions on two EFN-setting methods from the Okanagan EFN project, led by Brian Guy, Brent Phillips, Elinor McGrath, and Drew Lejbek. These presentations emphasized locally adapted methods and the importance of thorough data collection. Rich McCleary from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans explored EFN assessments for the Upper Fording River, focusing on fish habitat conservation.

Kirsten King and James Telford also addressed the response to the 2023 drought in the Thompson Okanagan region, underlining the necessity of coordinated management efforts. McGrath and Jatel detailed the expansion of the hydrometric monitoring network in the Okanagan Basin, outlining its operational plan.

The workshop concluded with McGrath's presentation on the implementation phase of the Okanagan EFN project, emphasizing its integration within Syilx communities for improved water planning and management.

Upcoming Webinar: Sustainable land development and water management practices

On February 1, 2024, the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) and BC Institute of Agrologists (BCIA) are hosting an online webinar titled "Integrating Agrology and Watershed Governance: Paving the Way for Sustainable Land Development and Water Management." The event, scheduled from 12:00 PM to 1:30 PM PST, aims to discuss sustainable land development and water management practices leading up to the 2024 Land Summit in Nanaimo.

The webinar features speakers **Jane Kerner**, CEO of BCIA, **Rod MacLean**, Manager – Utility Planning at the City of Kelowna, **Mary Ann Olson-Russello**, Senior Natural Resource Biologist with Ecoscape Environmental Consultants Ltd., and **me**, among others. They will delve into current land-use trends, the intersection with watershed governance and agrology, challenges in these fields, and water governance and sustainability principles. Topics such as environmental flows, irrigation, climate change mitigation, and professional collaboration will be highlighted.

A 25-minute panel discussion will follow, covering the implications of land development for agrology and balancing agricultural needs with water management. The session will conclude with a summary of key takeaways and anticipatory remarks for the Land Summit.

The event, which requires registration, offers individual tickets for \$30 and group tickets for \$50: <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/integrating-agrology-and-watershed-governance-tickets-794421986547>

MEMORANDUM

Okanagan Basin Water Board Regular meeting February 5, 2024 Agenda No: 7.4

To: OBWB Directors
From: Carolina Restrepo Tamayo
Date: January 31, 2024
Subject: Office and Grants Manager report

WCQI Grant Program:

The call for applications for the Water Conservation and Quality Improvement (WCQI) Grant program will close on Friday, Feb. 23 at 4 p.m. With the persistent situation of drought in the valley, we are hoping for strong projects that tackle this year's theme of "Drought Resilience," specifically projects whose goals are directed to the prevention, management, and/or mitigation of drought, or water shortages, in the Okanagan.

The online platform to submit applications was launched in the new year. The link to submit applications is <https://obwb.ca/overview-grants/wcqi/application-information/>.

More information about the program is available at <https://obwb.ca/overview-grants/wcqi/>.

Environmental Flows Conference 2024:

I have been collaborating closely with Dr. Jatel and the conference organizing committee on planning and fundraising for the upcoming Environmental Flows (EF) 2024 Conference, titled 'siwłkʷ (Water) For All – Co-creating Futures', and scheduled for March 13 - 15, 2024. With the event just six weeks away, our fundraising and registration efforts have advanced since our last update in November. Currently, we have 100 registrants, including 20 members from First Nation communities, and aim to reach 125 registrations, though we can accommodate up to 200.

We have achieved several of our fundraising and sponsorship targets. We have secured nearly 30 experts to present. The conference will address key themes, focusing on the current understanding of environmental flows in B.C. and recent related work in the Okanagan, Canada, and the United States.

The conference will highlight the critical role of environmental flows in future water resource allocation. The committee has been working hard to include voices from various levels of government, the agricultural industry, and sectors that draw water from streams and aquifers. The event will assemble national and international figures involved in water management and research, including fisheries and water managers, First Nations, regulators, policymakers, academia, funders, and NGOs. See Dr. Jatel's board memo for various options for board members to participate, and feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

MEMORANDUM

Okanagan Basin Water Board
Regular meeting
Feb. 6, 2024
Agenda No: 7.5

To: OBWB Directors
From: Sandra K. Schira, Water Science Specialist
Date: January 29, 2024
Subject: Climate Change Indicators Update

With 2023 now over, it is possible to look at some of the indicators for last year (Table 1). Across the Okanagan, it was one of the hottest years on record for Kelowna and Penticton (Figure 1), with average temperatures of 9.5 °C and 10.5 °C, respectively. The hottest year on record for Vernon was 2023, averaging 10.2 °C. Across the three cities, they ranged from 46 to 52 days with a maximum temperature over 30 °C compared to the historical baseline of 17 to 25 days. The growing season was significantly longer than normal, ranging from 184 to 188 days across the cities, compared to 128 to 154 days. For Kelowna, the number of growing season days was the highest recorded. This warming trend is consistent both across the Okanagan and across seasons.

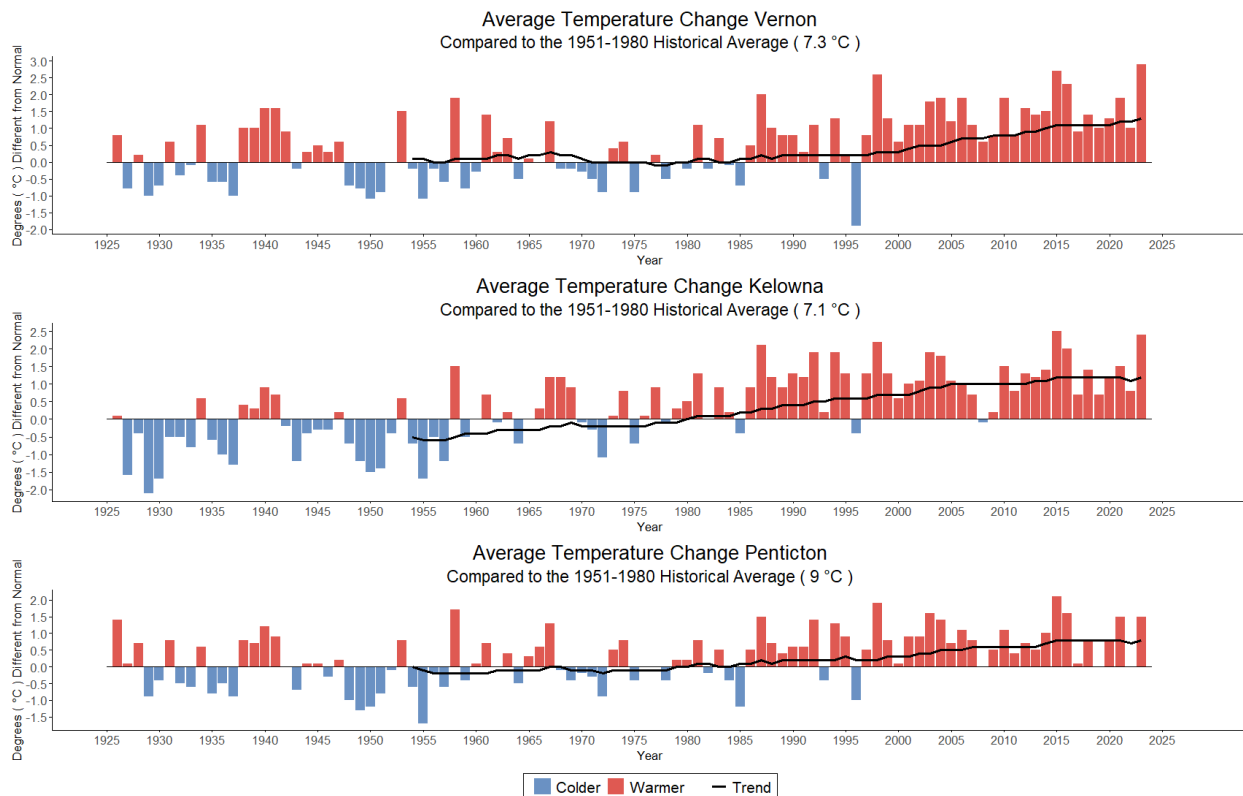


Figure 1: Annual mean temperature anomalies from 1925 to 2023. Red indicates warmer than that city's 1951-1980 average, and blue means colder than the historical average. The black line indicates the average of the preceding 30 years to show a long-term trend. Since 2000, temperatures have been consistently above average and increasingly so while colder than normal years no longer occur.

For precipitation, 2023 was an exceptionally dry year, with all three cities getting less than half of the 1951-1980 baseline average (Table 1). Total annual precipitation was 176.3 mm for Vernon, 150 mm in Kelowna, and 157.9 mm in Penticton (Figure 2). These are all extremely dry values at, or around, the driest on record. What precipitation did come mostly fell as small rain events, and there were only one to two days with 10 mm of precipitation compared with the typical five to seven days. Precipitation that falls in very small amounts is less likely to relieve drought because it tends to evaporate rather than infiltrate into the soil.

Hydrological indicators show that the freshet came approximately five days early for Mission Creek, about a week early for the unregulated streams, and a week early for Okanagan Lake. This early pulse of water came with several days of high flows, but as the summer progressed, low flows became the norm. Despite the significant drought in the region, the stream conditions were not as bad as those seen during 2003 or some years in the 1960s and 1980s.

Table 1 Summary of some precipitation and temperature indicators for 2023 compared to other significant values.

Indicator	City	2023	1951-1980 Average	Maximum	Unit
Mean Temperature	Vernon	10.2	7.3	10.2 (2023)	°C
	Kelowna	9.5	7.1	9.6 (2015)	°C
	Penticton	10.5	9.0	11.1 (2015)	°C
Days Over 30	Vernon	52	17.9	52 (2023)	days
	Kelowna	46	25.1	56 (1958)	days
	Penticton	46	25.5	55 (1958)	days
Growing Season	Vernon	188	153.8	204 (2004)	days
	Kelowna	188	128.1	188 (2023)	days
	Penticton	184	148.4	197 (2004)	days
Total Precipitation	Vernon	176.3	411.6	599.8 (1995)	mm
	Kelowna	150	348.2	529.5 (1982)	mm
	Penticton	157.9	330.4	520.7 (1983)	mm
Wet Days	Vernon	1	7.2	19 (1995)	days
	Kelowna	1	5.3	13 (1927)	days
	Penticton	2	5.4	16 (1997)	days

Overall, Okanagan trends are in line with global conditions, which saw 2023 as the hottest year on record. Hot air can lead to higher evaporation, which makes drought conditions extremely likely when combined with low precipitation. These hot, dry conditions persisted across all seasons and seemed likely to continue into the new year. Furthermore, 2023 continues to demonstrate that historical conditions (i.e. those seen in the mid-20th century) are increasingly unlikely to occur. Therefore, 2023 reflects the realities of ongoing climate change and the conditions that will likely continue to occur.

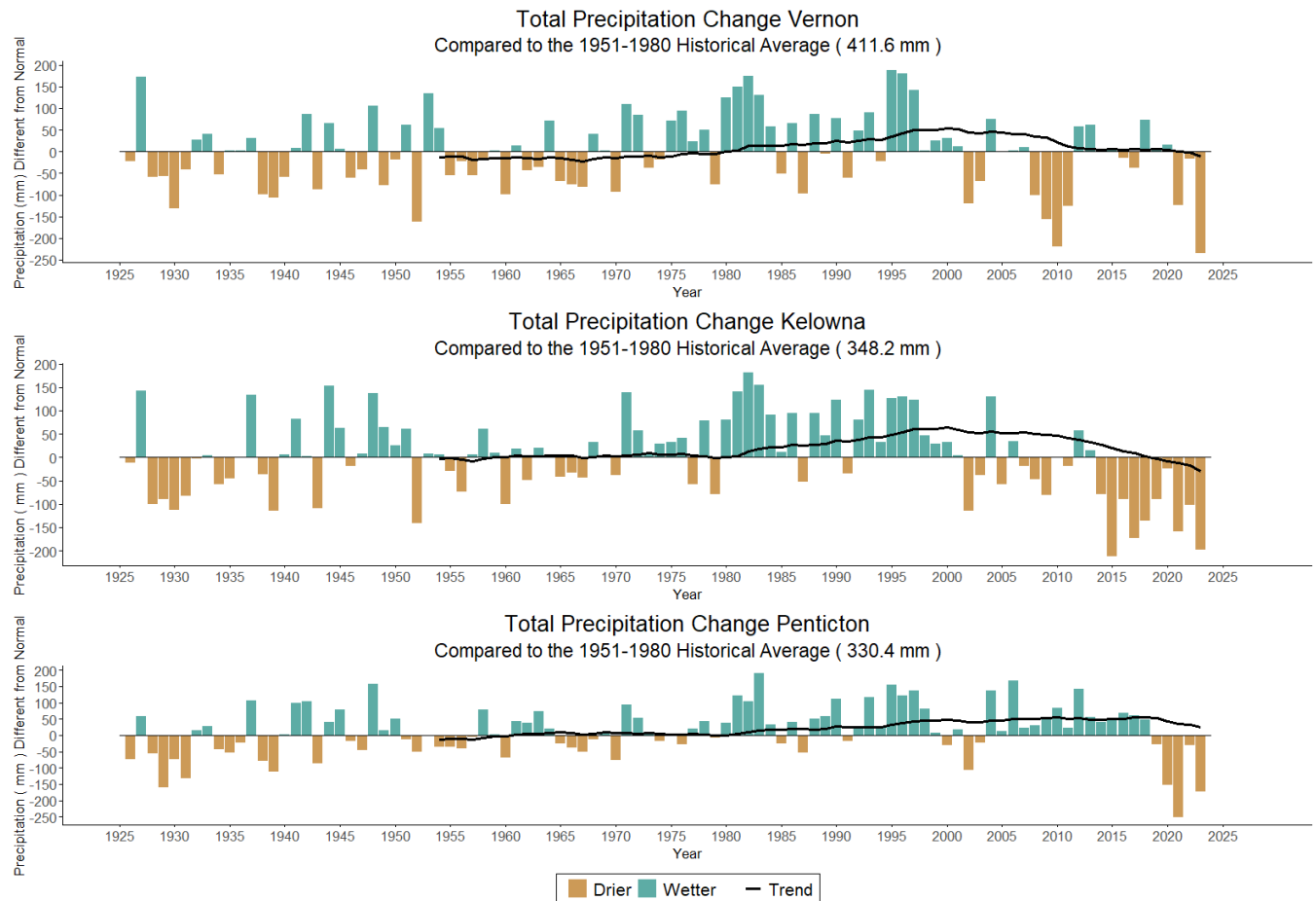


Figure 2 Annual total precipitation anomalies from 1925 to 2023. Green indicates wetter than that city's 1951-1980 average, and brown means drier than the historical average. The black line indicates the average of the preceding 30 years to show a long-term trend. **Each city shows its own pattern, but the past few years have all been dry.**

MEMORANDUM

Okanagan Basin Water Board
Regular meeting
Feb. 6, 2024
Agenda No: 7.6

To: OBWB Directors
From: Corinne Jackson
Date: January 31, 2024
Subject: **Communications Director Report**

Okanagan Water Survey

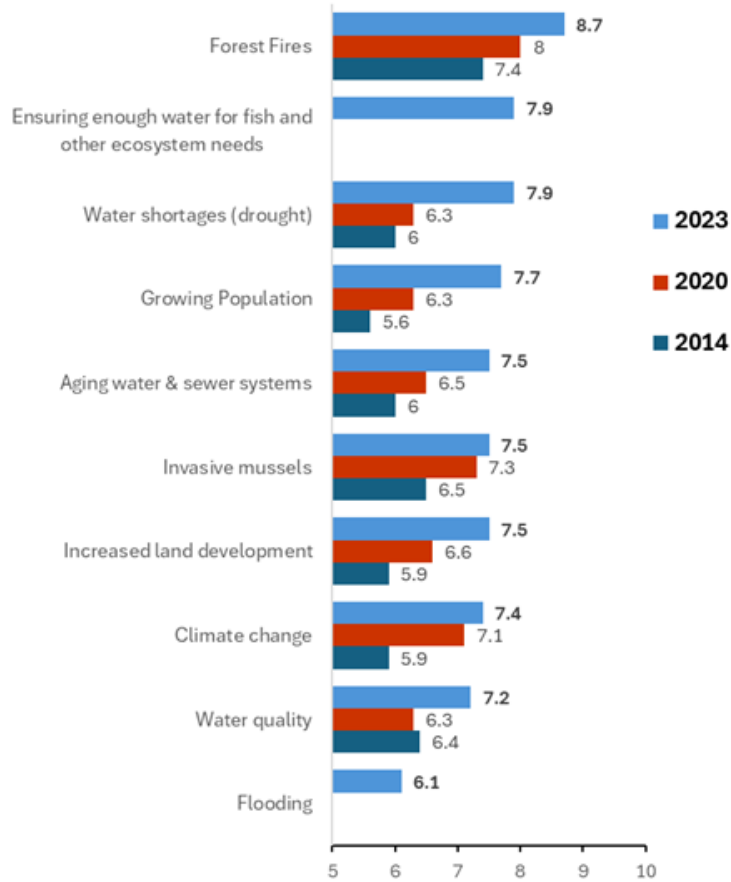
As noted at our last meeting, I have been working with a local polling and research company to conduct a survey of Okanagan residents to gauge interest in, and understanding of local water issues. Similar surveys were conducted in 2009, 2014 and 2020. We have tried to keep the wording as consistent as possible between surveys to monitor changes.

A total of 2,000 surveys were mailed out the week of Dec. 4, with a return-by date of Dec. 22. We received 391 responses. Statistics generated from a sample size of 391 will be accurate within $\pm 4.9\%$, with 95% confidence (19 times out of 20).

The final report is being compiled and will be sent as a separate attachment once it is complete. However, a few highlights have been noted below, along with some graphs.

- Water-related issues that respondents are most concerned about are *forest fires, ensuring enough water for fish and other ecosystem needs, and water shortages (drought)*
- 90% state that they, or a family member, conserve water
- 72% state that they, or a family member, take action to protect water quality
- Awareness for the OBWB's Okanagan WaterWise outreach and education program has increased from 37% in 2020, to 46% in 2023.
- 57% had heard 'Make Water Work' messages
- 86% had heard about zebra or quagga mussels; 64% had heard the "Don't move a mussel" message; 41% had heard "clean, drain, dry"

How concerned are you about the following water issues in the Okanagan?



n=391

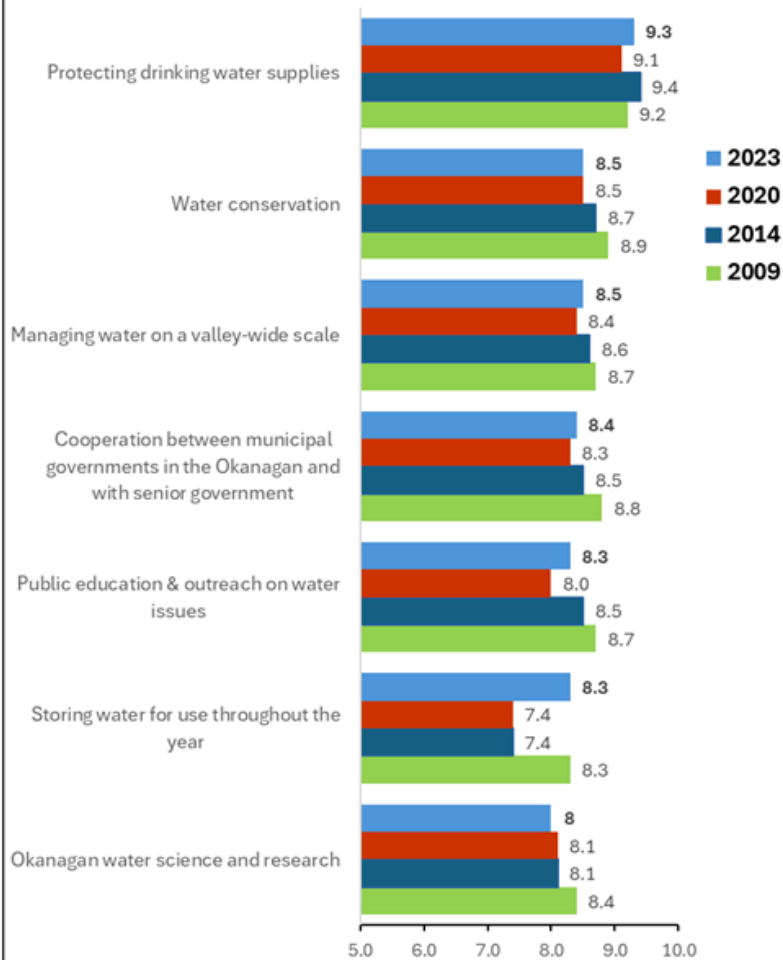
Mean Rating where 1=Not at all concerned and 10=Very concerned

Respondents are most concerned about *forest fires*, receiving an average rating of **8.7** out of 10 in 2023. Concern for forest fires has increased since 2014.

Ensuring enough water for fish and other ecosystem needs received an average rating of **7.9** out of 10. (Note: We have not specified this issue in previous surveys, so no comparison is possible.)

Water shortages (drought) also received an average rating of **7.9**.

Please rate the importance of each of the following to help address Okanagan water issues.



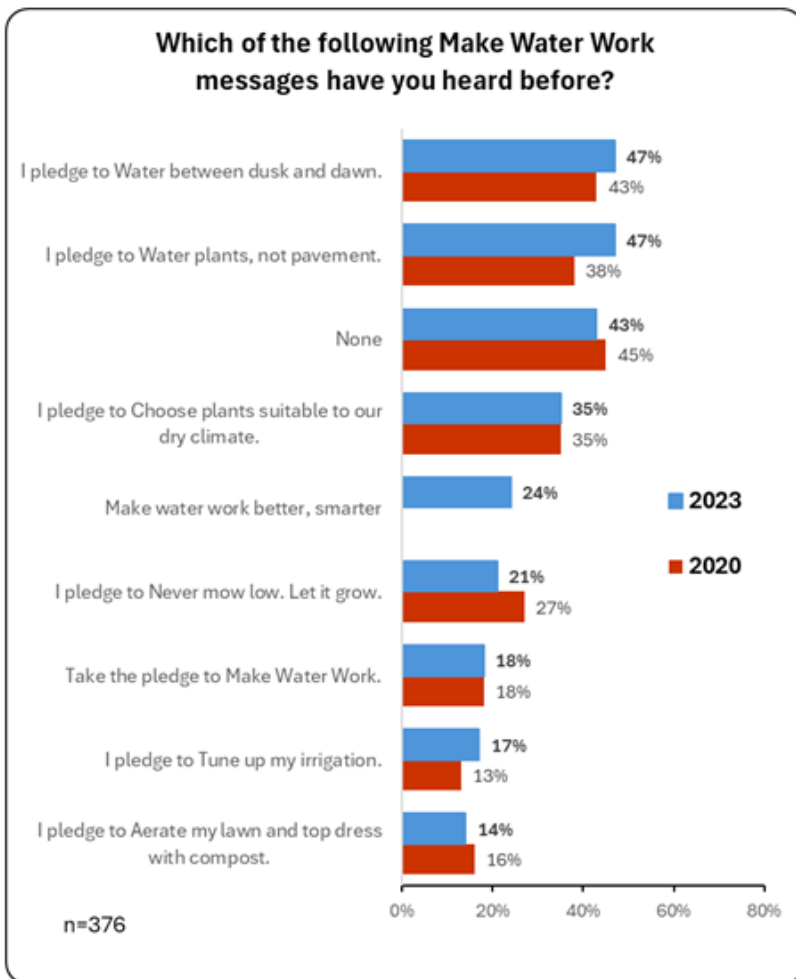
n=391

Mean Rating where 1=Not at all important and 10=Very important

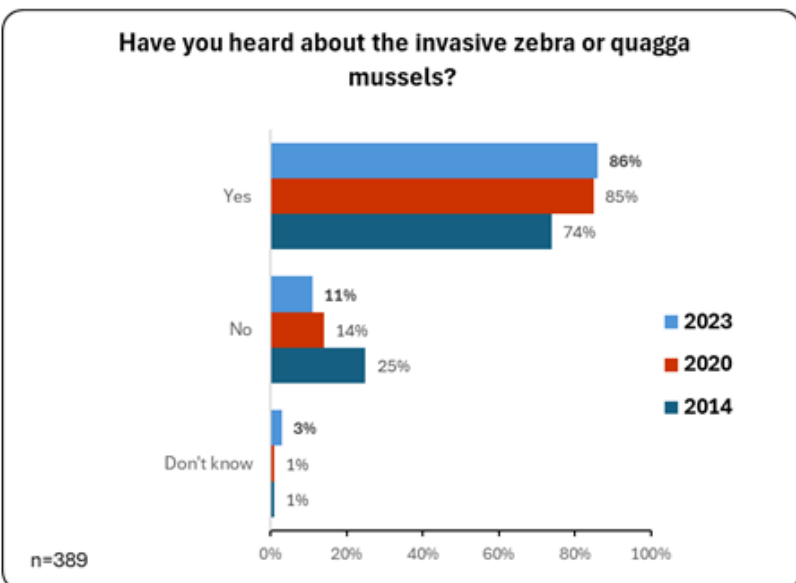
When asked to rank the importance of options to address water issues, where 1 was “not at all important” and 10 was “very important,” all options received an average of between 8 and 9.3.

The most important issue identified for water management in the Okanagan is *protecting the drinking water supply*, receiving an average importance rating of **9.3** out of 10.

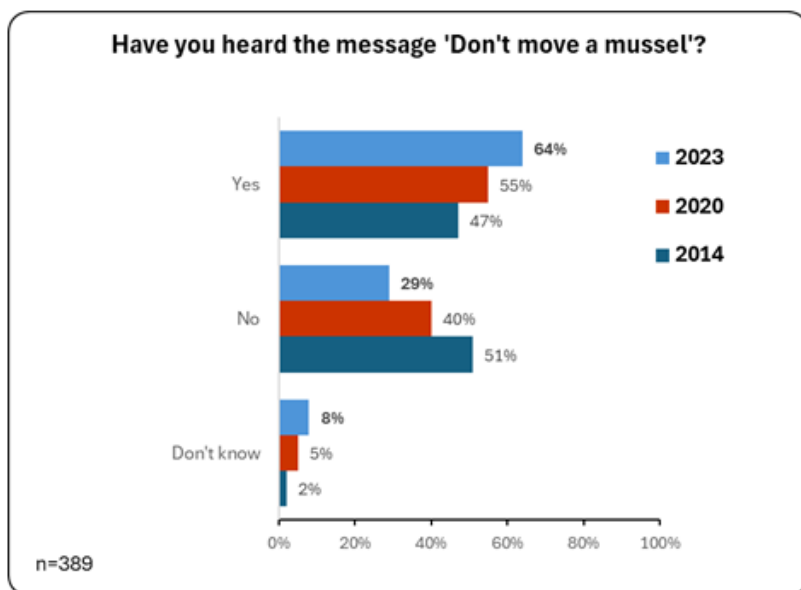
Water conservation (8.5) and *managing water on a valley-wide scale (8.5)* also received high importance ratings.



When asked about specific Make Water Work campaign calls to action, **47%** of respondents indicated they had heard of *the pledge to water between dusk and dawn* and **47%** had heard of *the pledge to water plants, not pavement*.



General awareness of invasive mussels continues to increase among Okanagan residents.



The majority of respondents (64%) had heard of the 'Don't Move a Mussel' message. Awareness has trended up since 2014.

Invasive Mussel Communications

The last couple of months have been busy supporting communications on the invasive mussel file, including editing and sending letters to all levels of government and First Nations, as well as numerous partners, invasive species organizations, chambers of commerce and tourism organizations. A [news release](#) was also sent out regarding the OBWB's concerns about the potential loss of federal funding for the Province of B.C.'s Invasive Mussel Defence Program. This prompted follow-up from several media outlets. (Please see news clippings below.) I also edited the Invasive Mussel Vulnerability Guide and communications pieces for the Invasive Mussel Working Group.

Drought Communications

With continued drought conditions and a delayed start to winter precipitation in the valley, the communications team has continued to message out on drought and respond to media, interested in knowing what the impacts may be.

Below is a social media sample, communicating on drought.

OKANAGAN IN WINTER DROUGHT

With the change of the calendar, the Okanagan region continues to be affected by drought. The Okanagan is experiencing the biggest precipitation deficit since records began in the 1900s.

This week's snow is welcome and we're hopeful that we'll see more of it in the weeks ahead, along with cold temperatures to prevent an early melt.

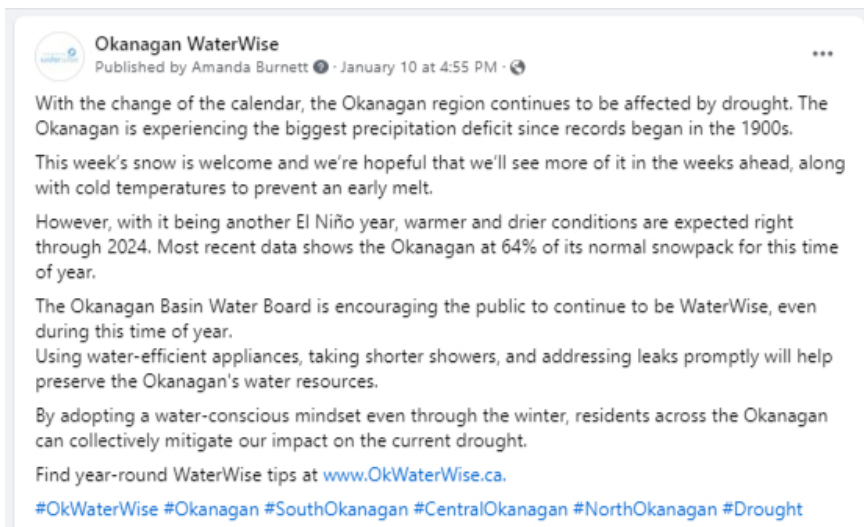
However, with it being another El Niño year, warmer and drier conditions are expected right through 2024. Most recent data shows the Okanagan at 44% of its normal snowpack for this time of year.

The Okanagan Basin Water Board is encouraging the public to continue to be WaterWise, even during this time of year. Using water-efficient appliances, taking shorter showers, and addressing leaks promptly will help preserve the Okanagan's water resources.

By adopting a water-conscious mindset even through the winter, residents across the Okanagan can collectively mitigate our impact on the current drought.

Dr. Anna Marwick-Stone
OBWB Executive Director

RESIDENTS STILL ENCOURAGED TO CONSERVE, DESPITE SOME SNOW



Additional Communications

Amanda and I have continued to provide communications support, as necessary, to the March 2024 **Environmental Flow Conference**, helping drive registrations and responding to questions about the event on our social media feeds.

The **Okanagan WaterWise website** is an important part of the OBWB's OkWaterWise outreach and education program, providing the public with information about the water of the valley, the reasons why it needs our attention, and what people can do to conserve and protect it. The website was launched in 2010 and has been expanded and revised over the years, but it has lost some functionality and is not mobile friendly. We are working to update the site to better meet the needs of Okanagan residents, teachers and students, businesses, and other website visitors. The update will include a new look as well as updated and additional information.

Photos and a few notes from our Dec. 1st **Mission Creek workshop** have been uploaded and can be found on our Facebook page at <http://tinyurl.com/yhvce9x4>.

Summary of OBWB-Related News Coverage

Dec. 1	"Applications open for water conservation grants," <i>VernonMatters.ca</i>
Dec. 6	" Okanagan water conservation champions sought for grants ," <i>Vernon Morning Star, Kelowna Capital News, Similkameen Spotlight, Salmon Arm Observer, Golden Star</i>
Dec. 8	"Okanagan Basin Water Board meeting highlights," <i>AM1150</i>
Dec. 18	"Lake milfoil machines may temporarily scare birds, but they also eat the weeds pulled up," <i>Castanet.net</i>
Dec. 20	"Column – Gardening with Nature: A look back at the year that was for gardeners," <i>Castanet.net</i>
Jan. 2	" Is 2024 the year Okanagan Lake floating bridge becomes a suspension bridge ," <i>iNFOnews.ca</i>
Jan. 3	"Column - Gardening with Nature: Not a good sign as B.C. continues to dry out," <i>Castanet.net</i>
Jan. 8	"Vernon city council to get update Monday plans to connect more OK Landing homes to city sewer," <i>Castanet.net</i>

- Jan. 9 "West Kelowna Council Brief: Council supports Okanagan Basin Water Board's invasive mussel prevention initiatives," *AM1150*
- Jan. 9 "Temporary out-of-B.C. boat ban endorsed by West Kelowna," *Kelowna Daily Courier, Penticton Herald*
- Jan. 17 "Column - Gardening with Nature: It's easy to keep this New Year's resolution," *Castanet.net*
- Jan. 18 "Okanagan Water Board concerned about possible cuts to federal invasive mussel control funding," *Castanet.net*
- Jan. 18 "Okanagan water board fears funding cuts to Invasive Mussel Program," *Vernon Morning Star, Kelowna Capital News, Lake Country Calendar, Grand Forks Gazette, Eagle Valley News, Fernie Free Press, Summerland Review, Victoria News, Creston Valley Advance*
- Jan. 18 "Risk of lost funding sparks renewed calls for invasive mussel protection," *VernonMatters.ca*
- Jan. 19 "Efforts to prevent spread of mussels likely doomed," *Penticton Herald, Kelowna Daily Courier*
- Jan. 20 "[Okanagan Basin Water Board wants more federal support to combat invasive mussels](#)," *Global Okanagan*
- Jan. 22 "Okanagan water board calls out feds on invasive mussel funding," *Times Chronicle*
- Jan. 23 "Kelowna council making moves to 'mussel' out invasive water species," *Kelowna Capital News*
- Jan. 24 "Kelowna to increase water rates," *Global Okanagan*
- Jan. 24 "[OBWB director says board often asked if Okanagan will run out of water](#)," *Castanet.net*
- Jan. 29 "[Vernon councillor hopes conference will come up with better way to deal with drought, save fish](#)," *Castanet.net*
- Jan. 30 "B.C. Wildlife Federation raises alarm over de-funding invasive mussel surveillance," *Trail Times*

Recent Presentations

- Jan. 9 Invasive mussels to West Kelowna Council – James Littlely
- Jan. 16 Natural resource management to UBCO class – James Littlely
- Jan. 30 Invasive mussels to BC Wildlife Federation – James Littlely

Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A2
pm@pm.gc.ca

January 18, 2024

Honourable Diane Lebouthillier
Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard
200 Kent St Station 15N100
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0E6
DFO.Minister-Ministre.MPO@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

Honourable Steven Guilbeault
Minister of Environment and Climate Change
Fontaine Building 12th Floor
200 Sacré-Coeur Blvd
Gatineau QC K1A 0H3
ministre-minister@ec.gc.ca

Honourable Dominic LeBlanc
Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs
269 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0P8
ps.ministerofpublicsafety-ministredelasecuritepublique.sp@ps-sp.gc.ca

Re: CALL FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION TO PREVENT INVASIVE MUSSEL INTRODUCTION TO B.C.

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau and Ministers,

It has come to our attention that federal funding to support B.C.'s Invasive Mussel Defence Program may be reduced or cancelled this year, and further, that other funding partners are citing a lack of federal leadership as justification to cancel or reduce their funding. This is just as the threat of invasive mussels has dramatically increased, with a confirmed infestation in the transboundary Columbia Basin. In addition to the actions we called for in [our letter](#), dated Oct. 18, 2023 and which included a temporary moratorium on boats coming into B.C., we are calling for immediate, long-term federal funding assistance for the Province of B.C. to support invasive zebra and quagga mussels prevention efforts. The Government of Canada should provide funds to at least match provincial government efforts across the West, or plan for significant higher management costs in the near future.

In September, Idaho announced that quagga mussels had been found in the state's Snake River, a tributary of the Columbia River, less than a day's drive to the border of B.C. and Alberta. Idaho's pre-planned rapid response was to spread more than 116,000 litres of toxic copper chelate into Snake River, killing almost

seven tonnes of fish, and poisoning a 26 km stretch of the river. Wholesale killing of fish, invertebrates, amphibians, and plants in the river was considered better than letting these mussels take hold. We won't know until this coming spring if the treatment has worked. Also in September, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) declared zebra mussels were discovered in New Brunswick. And then in November, Parks Canada declared zebra mussels had spread another 100km west to Clear Lake in Manitoba's Riding Mountain National Park.

DFO has a mandate to sustainably manage fisheries, work with Indigenous communities to enable their continued prosperity from fish, ensure aquatic ecosystems are protected from negative impacts, and protect the environment when emergencies arise. If invasive mussels arrive in B.C., they will severely impact Pacific salmon by depleting the food web in their spawning and rearing habitats in the Fraser and Columbia River systems. First Nations in B.C. have spent decades restoring these systems and their salmon populations, and an infestation will undermine the recovery of these fisheries. Knock-on effects will be seen in marine environments, where reductions in Pacific salmon populations will reduce a key food source for Orcas and other marine species. Protecting B.C.'s freshwaters from invasive mussels is squarely within the mandate of DFO.

The Canada Border Services Agency also has a responsibility to enforce the prohibition against importation of invasive mussels under the federal Aquatic Invasive Species Regulations. While we applaud the work of border service officers to intercept infested watercraft at many land crossings, CBSA is not fulfilling its responsibility for enforcement. Instead, it relies on provincial inspectors to follow up and decontaminate high-risk watercraft once they are identified.

The new Canada Water Agency has a mandate to improve freshwater management in Canada by providing leadership, effective federal collaboration, and improved coordination and collaboration with provinces, territories, and Indigenous Peoples to proactively address national and regional transboundary freshwater challenges and opportunities. Invasive mussels represent one of the biggest national and regional transboundary threats, yet none of the [\\$750 million](#) allocated to the Canada Water Agency addresses this threat. The Great Lakes region alone will receive more than \$420 million in funding over 10 years to deal with issues such as algae blooms which have been exacerbated by invasive mussels. It would take only \$4 million/year allocated to B.C. invasive mussel inspections to protect the Canadian Columbia Basin, the Fraser Basin, Peace Region, and other major western river systems. The Province of B.C. already allocates over \$1 million/year to this program, but without federal and other partner funding, these efforts will likely fail.

In addition to the threat to Pacific salmon, these mussels are known to stimulate toxic algae blooms, killing migratory birds and contaminating drinking water. They hurt local economies, requiring ongoing maintenance to remove them from in-water infrastructure such as bridges and docks, as well as water systems used to deliver water for agriculture, domestic, industrial, and commercial use. And of course, they degrade the quality of the shoreline environment for human enjoyment.

We view it as unacceptable and unjustifiable, given all the resources and responsibilities of the federal government and your departments, that no federal funding has been allocated to protect freshwater ecosystems from the extreme threat of invasive mussels in Western Canada. Protecting the west from these



mussels is of national importance, and it will take federal leadership to meet this inter-provincial and transboundary threat.

Understanding that protection of freshwater ecosystems and prevention of invasive species falls within federal mandates, regulations, and laws, we hope your departments will work together to find the resources to properly support western provinces in this important work. This is truly a case where a small investment now will prevent massive costs for years to come.

Yours truly,

Sue McKortoff, Chair
Okanagan Basin Water Board

CC:

- British Columbia MPs
- British Columbia MLAs
- British Columbia Assembly of First Nations
- Okanagan Nation Alliance, Chiefs Executive Council
- Okanagan First Nations Chiefs and Councils
- B.C. Local Government Chairs and Mayors
- Pacific NorthWest Economic Region: Matt Morrison, Chief Executive Officer
- Invasive Species Council of B.C.: Gail Wallin, Executive Director
- B.C. Chambers of Commerce
- Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association
- Union of BC Municipalities
- Shuswap Watershed Council
- Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society



Okanagan Basin Water Board Regular meeting Feb. 6, 2024 Agenda No: 8.2

Reference: 32080

January 9, 2024

VIA EMAIL: info@westkelownacity.ca; jcoble@wfn.ca; corinne.jackson@obwb.ca

Mayor Gord Milson
City of West Kelowna
2760 Cameron Road
West Kelowna, BC
V1Z 2T6

Jordan Coble, Councillor
Westbank First Nation
515 Highway 97 South
Kelowna, BC
V1Z 3J2

Sue McKortoff, Chair
Okanagan Basin Water Board
1450 KLO Road
Kelowna, BC
V1W 3Z4

Dear Mayor Gord Milson, Jordan Coble and Sue McKortoff:

I am writing to thank you and your staff for taking the time to meet with me at the 2023 UBCM Convention in Vancouver, and to recap the topics we discussed, and commitments made at our meeting.

During our meeting we discussed the Invasive Mussel Defence Program (IMDP) in British Columbia (B.C.) waterways in partnership with the City of West Kelowna, the Okanagan Basin Water Board, and the Westbank First Nations. We share your interest in mitigating the risks associated with the increase of boats visiting the B.C. Okanagan in the summer of 2023.

We heard your requests for additional provincial financial support and a broader campaign of public awareness for the IMDP. The IMDP is a unique program that brings together science, education, and enforcement to the design and implementation of the Program. Also unique to B.C. is our approach to working with a range of funding partners including Columbia Power Corporation, Columbia Basin Trust, BC Hydro, and the Government of Canada.

We understand that investing in prevention makes ecological and fiscal sense. If established, zebra and quagga mussels are extremely difficult and expensive to eradicate from large waterbodies such as Okanagan Lake. The IMDP team is currently working with our funding partners to determine the 2024 operating budget, and we are striving to maintain, or increase, funding from the 2023 season.

As part of the IMDP, the Province has been conducting lake monitoring as a key step in the [Provincial Early Detection Rapid Response \(EDRR\) Plan \(PDF\)](#). The IMDP has developed a waterbody prioritization tool that evaluates risk levels, and this tool is used to identify the higher-risk waterbodies that receive early detection monitoring. The risk of

Page 1 of 2

invasive mussel establishment is based on chemical and physical attributes of the waterbody. Calcium concentration is considered one of the most critical factors as it supports shell growth and survival, therefore it is used as the primary parameter to delineate risk categories for invasive mussel infestation.

The lake monitoring list is reviewed and updated annually. The 2024 list will be published in the 2024 [*British Columbia Dreissenid Mussel Lake Monitoring Field Protocol*](#) and will be available on our website as soon as it is available: [Invasive Mussel Defence Program - Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](#). As water chemistry conditions (i.e., dissolved calcium levels and temperature) are considered suitable in the Okanagan for invasive mussel establishment, the Okanagan and Shuswap Lakes are annually included as priorities for lake monitoring.

Since meeting in September, the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship has become responsible for additional water, land, fish, and wildlife authorities. The attached outlines those changes in detail. Engagement sessions will be held with local governments, First Nations and stakeholders in the coming months to review these changes and to continue our work together in these priority areas.

Again, thank you for your time. I am pleased we had the opportunity to meet about topics important to both provincial and local government.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nathan Cullen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Nathan" and last name "Cullen" clearly distinguishable.

Nathan Cullen
Minister

pc: Ben Stewart, MLA, Kelowna West

Attachment (1)



Okanagan Basin Water Board
Regular meeting
Feb. 6, 2024
Agenda No: 8.3

Reference: WLRS 32567 | ENV 407802

January 16, 2024

VIA EMAIL: james.littley@obwb.ca

James Littley, Deputy Administrator
Okanagan Basin Water Board
1450 KLO Road
Kelowna, British Columbia
V1W 3Z4

Dear James Littley:

Thank you for your letter of November 15, 2023, regarding creation of “Pull-the-Plug” legislation in British Columbia (B.C.). We recognize the priority that this issue holds for your organization and many others and share your desire for new and improved tools to manage and prevent aquatic invasive species. To ensure your submission gets the full attention it deserves, we will share it with the team leading the *Wildlife Act* review process.

As you are aware, B.C. has initiated a review of the *Wildlife Act*, in accordance with the commitments made in Action 12 of the [Together for Wildlife Strategy](#) and in support of the implementation of the [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act](#). As part of this review, the project team is developing legislative and regulatory options to enable “Pull-the-Plug,” to enforce Clean, Drain, Dry practices, update and expand the definition of invasive species, and update authorities and enforcement tools to mitigate the spread of invasive species.

Targeted engagement on the *Wildlife Act* Review with First Nations rights and title holders, advisory bodies and other B.C. Government Ministries began in the Fall of 2023 and will be followed by further consultation and engagement when policy intentions are further refined. The attached graphic displays the timeline for the *Wildlife Act* Review and each step in the review process. Recognizing the breadth of topics that will need to be explored in the review of the *Wildlife Act*, B.C. is taking a phased approach to collaboration and consultation with rights and title holders, and engagement with stakeholders, advisory bodies and other government agencies, to ensure all challenges and opportunities are considered. Further information on proposed changes to the Act will be available during consultation and engagement with rights and title holders, advisory bodies, other B.C. government departments, stakeholder groups and the public, which is planned for Winter and Spring of 2025.

Page 1 of 3

While the *Wildlife Act* Review is underway, there are several other interim measures in place to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species in B.C. such as the ongoing implementation of the Invasive Mussel Defence Program. As you know, the Program's prevention efforts are focused on early detection lake monitoring, watercraft inspection stations and the Clean, Drain Dry public outreach campaign. The Program is a unique blend of science and enforcement, and the B.C. Conservation Officer Service leads the delivery of the watercraft inspection stations. This includes enforcement at the mandatory inspection stations and for the 2022 season a total of 63 tickets and 66 warnings were issued for motorists failing to stop at an inspection station.

For more information on the *Wildlife Act* Review, we welcome you to visit our [webpage](#) or contact WildlifeActReview@gov.bc.ca.

Again, thank you for writing and sharing your concerns.

Sincerely,



Nathan Cullen
Minister
Ministry of Water, Land and Resource
Stewardship



George Heyman
Minister
Ministry of Environment and Climate Change
Strategy

Attachment:

Wildlife Act Review: Consultation and Cooperation Plan Timeline

