

Dry Weather and Low Snowpack Put Okanagan Water Supplies Under Pressure

As snow melts and flowers begin to sprout, it is time to assess the valley's drought conditions. The Okanagan has been in some form of drought since the fall of 2022, and it seems likely that this will continue into summer 2026. Conditions may change if significant and sustained rain occurs this summer, but for now, here is a summary of conditions.



Snowpack critically low heading into freshet

- Snowpack, a major source of the valley's water supply, was consistently low across the Okanagan this winter.
- As of April 1, 2026, average snowpack was 58% of normal.
- Key monitoring sites such as Brenda Mines and Silver Star Mountain are at, or near, record-low snowpack levels, with some areas already largely melted.

Spring precipitation far below normal

- Valley-bottom weather stations have recorded very little precipitation since January.
- Penticton, for example, has received only 18 mm of precipitation in 2026 so far, putting it 54 mm below average for this time of year.

Summer streamflow risk remains high

- Streamflows are expected to increase temporarily as snowmelt begins, but late-summer water shortages are a concern without ongoing precipitation.
- Okanagan Lake is slightly above normal, while Osoyoos Lake recently rebounded after sitting near historic lows earlier this spring, highlighting uneven conditions across the system.

2026 Precipitation as of April 13th vs. Historical Average

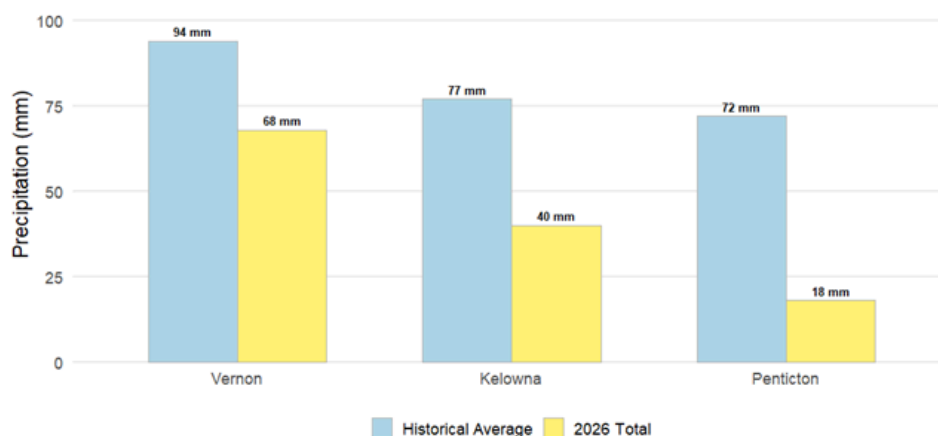


Figure 21: Cumulative precipitation across the Okanagan vs Historical average by April 13, 2026. Data from Environment and Climate Change Canada. Historical average is Vernon 1900 – 2025, Kelowna 1899 – 2025, and Penticton 1907 -2025.

Hotter, drier outlook increases drought risk

- Environment and Climate Change Canada forecasts indicate:
 - Higher likelihood of above-average temperatures
 - No clear signal for increased precipitation
- Seasonal outlooks show an increased likelihood of El Niño–like conditions, which typically bring hotter, drier summers to the Okanagan, similar to 2023.
- Seasonal forecasts can be used to provide a sense of likely future conditions, but they should not be taken as 100% certain.

Washington State drought adds regional context

- On April 8, 2026, [Washington State declared a statewide drought emergency](#) due to poor snowpack, marking the fourth consecutive year of drought in parts of the state.
- [Although B.C. has not yet assigned provincial drought levels for 2026](#), Washington's declaration underscores the broader regional water risk facing the Pacific Northwest.

What you need to know

- Drought conditions vary widely across the valley.
- Local water restrictions, not provincial drought levels, are what residents must follow.
- Lake levels are not the primary place we will “see” whether we are in drought. Okanagan Lake has many control structures, such as dams along it, which are used to manage lake levels to mitigate floods and droughts. Instead, low stream levels, depleted aquifers and reservoirs, and dry soil will be the main ways we see the drought.
- Collective action and individual water conservation remain essential to protect fish, agriculture, firefighting capacity, and community water supplies.

Local Conditions

Your local conditions are what matters most. Many municipalities are starting this gardening season with watering restrictions already in place. Check out your community below to see what watering stage you are on, determined by your water service area's specific conditions.


If your community isn't listed below, you can find a full list of water providers in the Okanagan at [MakeWaterWork.ca](#).

Location	Current watering restrictions	Learn more
Greater Vernon Area	Stage 1 — Up to three days a week as per your address, automated sprinklers only between midnight and 6 a.m.on permitted days.	Visit the Greater Vernon Water Restrictions page here.
Kelowna	Normal — Up to three days a week as per your address, no watering on Mondays, automated sprinklers only between midnight and 6 a.m. on permitted days.	Visit the City of Kelowna Water Restrictions page here.
Lake Country	Stage 2 — Residential and commercial irrigation permitted once or twice per week, automated sprinklers only between midnight and 6 a.m. on permitted days.	Visit the District of Lake Country's Water Conservation Page here.
West Kelowna	Stage 2 — Up to two days a week as per your address, automated sprinklers only between midnight and 6 a.m. on permitted days.	Visit the City of West Kelowna's Watering Regulations and Conservation Page here.

Peachland	Stage 3 — Even numbered addresses water Saturday, odd numbered addresses water Sunday, no watering between 10 a.m. and 7 p.m.	Visit the District of Peachland's Conserving Water Page here.
Summerland	Stage 1 — Up to three days a week as per your address.	Visit the District of Summerland's Water Restrictions page here.
Penticton	Stage 2 (starts May 1) — Up to two days a week as per your address, automated sprinklers only between midnight and 6 a.m. on permitted days.	Visit the City of Penticton's Water Restrictions page here.
Osoyoos	Stage 2 (starts May 1) — Up to two days a week as per your address, automated sprinklers only between midnight and 4 a.m. on permitted days.	Visit the City of Osoyoos Water Restrictions page here.
RDNO	Varied stages depending on the Water Utility, please visit the link to learn more.	Visit the RDNO's Water Restrictions page here.
RDCO	Stage 1 — Even numbered addresses on even calendar days, odd numbered addresses on odd calendar days.	Visit the RDCO's Water Systems Page here.
RDOS	Normal — Up to three days a week as per your address, no watering on Mondays, automated sprinklers only between midnight and 6 a.m. on permitted days.	Visit the RDOS' Water Restrictions page here.

2026 Okanagan Water Supply Webinar

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Friday, May 8th 11:00 am – 12:00 pm



With the Okanagan entering a fourth consecutive drought year, join OBWB and partners for a one-hour snapshot of supply conditions heading into the 2026 irrigation season, followed by audience Q&A.

We'll cover:

- Reservoir levels
- Snowpack
- Groundwater
- Weather forecast

Past participants have included: Local government, agricultural community, water managers, public, business owners, and water professionals.

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[Join us at this Zoom Link.](#)

For more info contact Nelson at:
nelson.jatel@obwb.ca | 250-469-6295

Past participants have included: Local government, agricultural community, water managers, public, business owners, and water professionals.

Follow our social media accounts below to stay connected to OBWB.



Okanagan Basin Water Board | 1450 KLO Road | Kelowna, BC V1W 3Z4 CA

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