

Summerland Moves to Drought Level 3

SUMMERLAND – Summerland is moving to Drought Level 3, effective immediately, but could return to Level 4 later in the year depending on spring precipitation and summer temperatures.

The District had been in Drought Level 4 with associated water restrictions since November but at a special committee-of-the-whole meeting today, Council reduced the level to Drought Level 3 based on the latest data for snowpack and reservoir levels.

Information obtained from on-the-ground readings on March 27th shows that Headwaters is at 48% of the historical average measured over the last 63 years while Isintok Lake is at 29% of the historical average measured over the last 62 years. This indicates that Summerland is still at a stage of water scarcity and Council will reconsider the level once freshet has concluded and storage dams have stopped spilling.

As per the Summerland Drought Response Plan, Drought Level 3 necessitates a minimum, compulsory reduction of 20% in water allocations – adjusting agricultural, cemetery, park, playfield and golf course allocations from 800mm to 640mm (and from 1727mm to 1381mm for greenhouses).

Irrigators should anticipate Drought Level 4 being reached during the 2026 irrigation season, which would necessitate further water allocation reductions. Irrigators are advised to closely monitor consumption since penalties for overuse are determined on total water use at the end of the season, inclusive of any reductions implemented throughout the year.

For residential water, the District is beginning the year at “Stage 1”, meaning that watering is limited to three times per week with specific days based on odd/even residential addresses. Residential restrictions will also be reassessed at the conclusion of the spring freshet.

The District operates 11 reservoirs in the uplands west of Summerland to store water for community needs, including drinking water, agricultural and residential uses. While many millions of dollars have been invested in recent years to maintain, improve and raise dams, reservoir levels are influenced heavily by precipitation and environmental conditions, as well as downstream consumption. District staff work closely with the provincial government to meet regulatory requirements for dam safety and maintenance, and for outflow requirements into Trout Creek for fish survival and spawning.

If community efforts to conserve water are insufficient, it is possible that a provincial order could institute mandatory requirements.

Quote:

“We’re starting the irrigation season at Drought Level 3 based on the best information available at this time. We will continue to monitor stream flows and reservoir levels in the weeks and months ahead, and take extra steps as necessary to ensure responsible water use in this time of drought.”

~ Mayor Doug Holmes