

Council pauses irrigation limits during freshet

SUMMERLAND – In response to concerns raised by local farmers, Summerland Council has decided that, for this year only, all irrigation water consumed before Thirsk Dam Reservoir stops spilling will not count toward annual allocation thresholds.

Once the reservoir transitions into storage condition, Drought Level 3 (very dry) restrictions will remain in effect with a 20% reduced water depth allotment as follows:

- agricultural, cemetery, park, playfield and golf course properties - 640 mm
- greenhouses - 1,381 mm

Council approved the temporary adjustment at a Committee-of-the-Whole meeting on May 13, following its decision on April 1 to move from Drought Level 4 to Level 3.

While drought conditions persist throughout the region, the current freshet and runoff conditions are providing a temporary surplus of water in Trout Creek. Irrigators have requested access to this water to top up soils before the anticipated hot and dry summer, when the dams have stopped spilling.

The District of Summerland will continue to work with the agricultural community and will closely monitor watershed conditions, Trout Creek and Eneas Creek flows, reservoir storage levels and overall system performance. It is possible that further reductions to water allocations may be necessary depending on how the season unfolds.

Once Thirsk Dam has stopped spilling, every attempt will be made to contact irrigators to inform them that allocation tracking has resumed, however it is the responsibility of agricultural property owners to monitor their water use, and they should communicate any changes to orchard lessees or tenants. All water users are encouraged to register for VoyentAlert notifications (<https://voyent-alert.us/community/>).

Summerland residents are asked to report irresponsible irrigation water use to water@summerland.ca during the exemption period.

Quote:

“Council’s direction recognizes that it’s a special situation this year. While we see the merits of using spill water to top up soils, continued conservation and responsible water use will remain important as we move into the summer.”

~ Mayor Doug Holmes

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Contact

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