

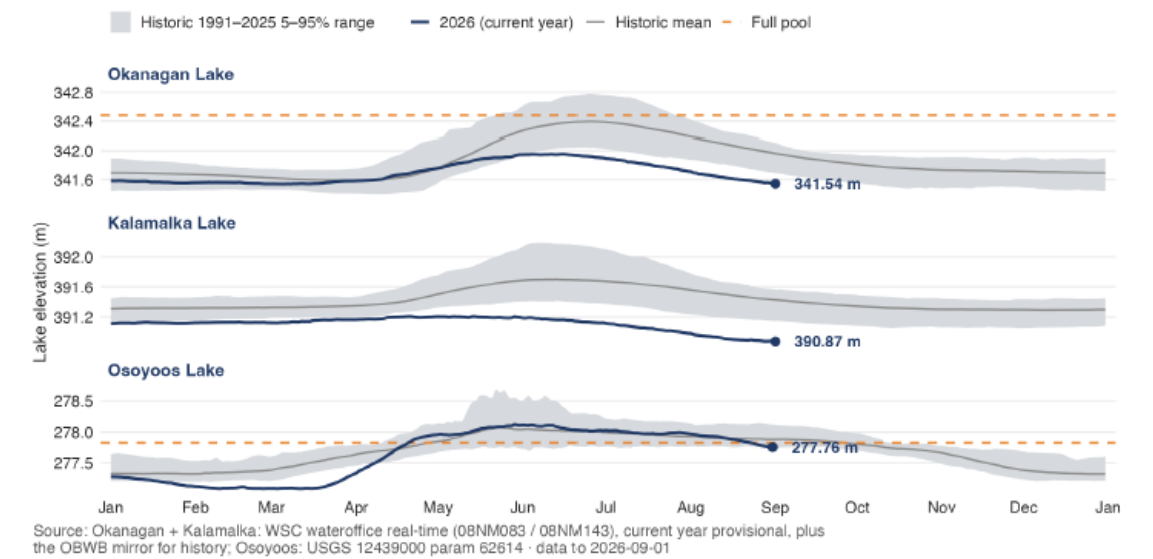


Highlights from the Sept. 11, 2026 meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board, held at the Manteo at Eldorado Resort, Kelowna, B.C.

OBWB warns Okanagan water scarcity challenges will persist through winter and get worse in 2027

The Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) is warning that the region should anticipate another difficult water year in 2027. After four consecutive years of drought, the Board of Directors heard that many of the Okanagan's key water indicators, including lake levels, streamflows, groundwater levels, and precipitation, remain at historically low levels heading into the fall.

Okanagan Lake Levels

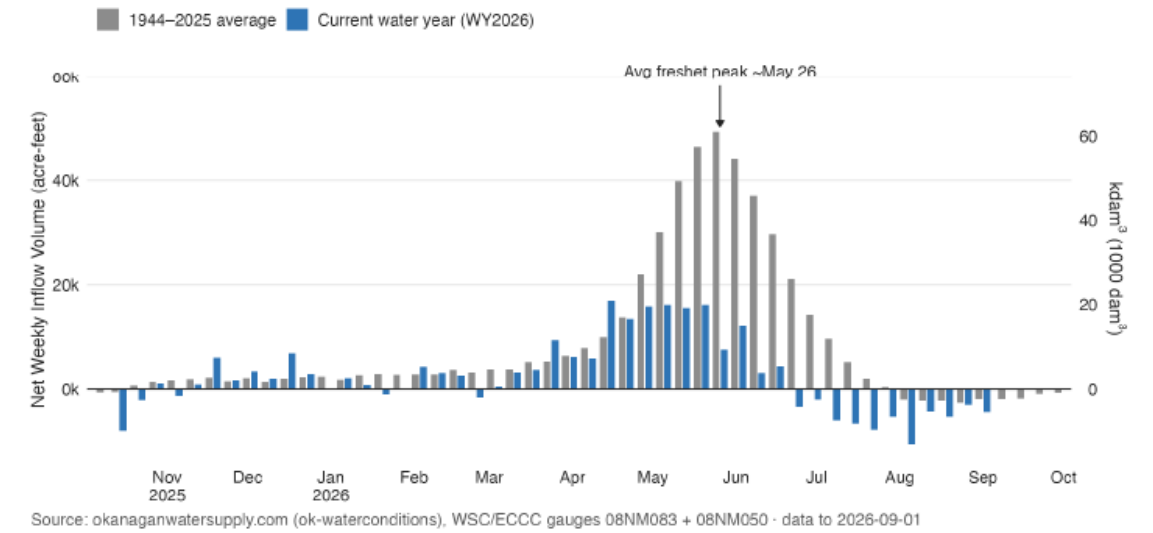


2026 water levels in Okanagan, Kalamalka and Osoyoos lakes plotted against their historical ranges to show current lake elevations in seasonal context. Data source: Water Survey of Canada.

Among the most concerning developments, Kalamalka Lake has dead pooled this summer, meaning water levels fell so low that water could no longer flow over the control structure into Vernon Creek. Okanagan Lake is also sitting at a historic low for this time of year, while many groundwater monitoring wells remain at or near record lows. Staff noted that while any fall and winter precipitation will help, a single wet season is not able to undo the significant water deficit that has accumulated over several years. Predictions for a [‘super El Nino’](#) mean significant snow is not anticipated.

The Board heard that preparation for 2027 should begin now, including continued water restrictions, drought preparedness discussions, water conservation measures, and identifying potential risks before next spring. As of Sept. 3, 2026, the Okanagan Water Scarcity Index, set by the Province, remained at ‘High’ across all five Okanagan sub-basins, signaling ongoing concerns about the ability to meet both human and ecosystem water needs.

Net Inflow



Weekly net inflow to Okanagan Lake during 2026 compared with the historical weekly average, illustrating the timing and magnitude of water entering and leaving the lake system. Data source: WSC and ECCC.

Residents are encouraged to continue using water carefully and to follow the restrictions and conservation guidance of their [local water supplier](#). Water restrictions should be viewed as a minimum, and residents who are able to reduce their water use further are encouraged to do so to help protect the region's limited water supplies as the Okanagan heads into the fall and winter recharge season.

Emerging evidence shows Golden Mussels pose more serious threat than previously understood

The Board received an update on the growing threat posed by invasive golden mussels, an aggressive invasive species that has spread rapidly in California and is raising concerns across North America. Recent research suggests the mussels can survive transit through brackish water, creating new potential introduction pathways through coastal ports.



The report from OBWB Chief Operating Officer James Littlely also noted that golden mussels are more difficult to remove from watercraft than zebra or quagga mussels and can be costly to control once established. One California utility recently spent approximately \$3 million USD in just 30 days responding to an infestation. The update reinforces the importance of continued prevention and early detection efforts to keep invasive mussels out of Okanagan waters.

OBWB meets with provincial minister to push for action on drought, invasive mussels, and water infrastructure

Representatives from the OBWB met with B.C.'s Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, the Honourable Randene Neill, in August to discuss several of the region's most pressing water issues. Topics included drought preparedness, invasive mussel prevention, investment in natural and purpose-built water infrastructure, and support for the Okanagan hydrometric monitoring network.



With the Okanagan in a fourth-consecutive year of drought, much of the discussion focused on the impacts of this summer's water scarcity challenges and the need to begin preparing now for the possibility of worsened water scarcity in 2027. The meeting provided an opportunity for the Board to advocate for increased provincial partnership and investment in protecting the valley's water resources.



Dr. Nelson Jatel promoted to Senior Director of Water Science & Stewardship

Executive Director Melissa Tesche shared the news that Dr. Nelson Jatel has been promoted to Senior Director of Water Science & Stewardship and will continue to provide a key leadership role at the OBWB.

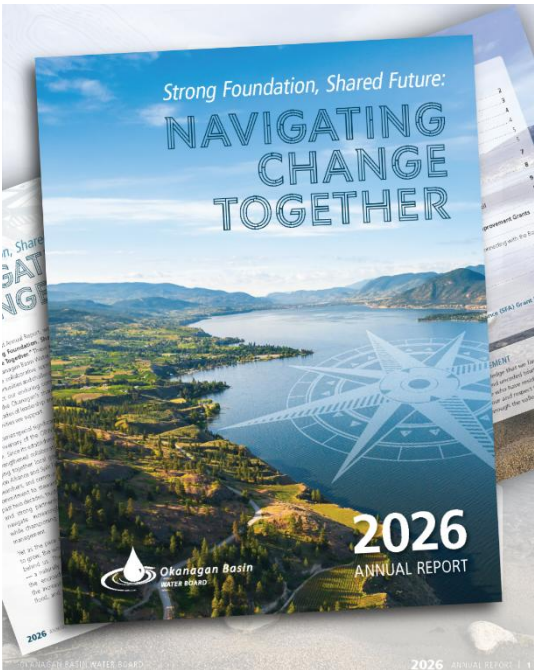
"I am thrilled to share that Nelson has been promoted to Senior Director of Water Science &

Stewardship. With 19 years of dedicated service to the OBWB, Nelson has had a real impact advancing water science, building a network of water champions in the valley, supporting regional collaboration, and helping communities make informed water management decisions. His leadership has strengthened both our organization and the watershed we serve," shared Tesche.

OBWB releases 2026 Annual Report: Strong Foundation, Shared Future: Navigating Change Together

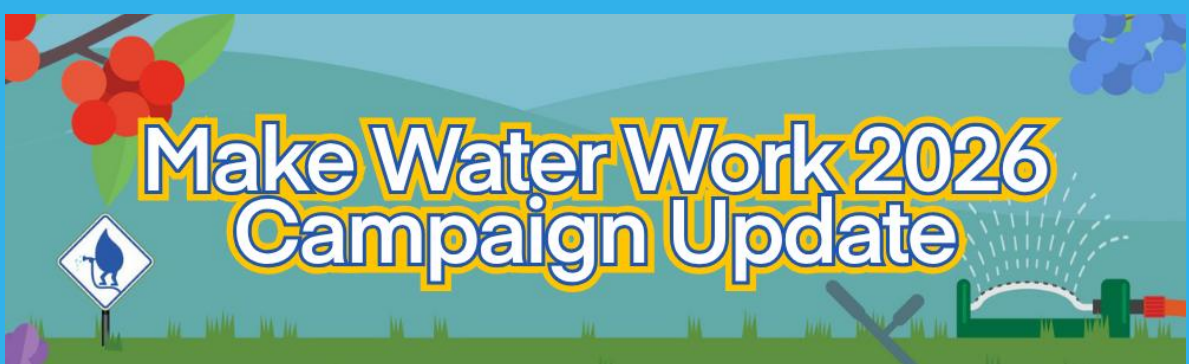
Directors received the [2026 Annual Report](#) titled *Strong Foundation, Shared Future: Navigating Change Together*. The document shares some of the achievements of the 2025–26 fiscal year, while also marking the 20th anniversary of its Water Management Program and the adoption of a new five-year roadmap, its [2026–2030 Strategic Direction](#), to guide watershed stewardship across the valley.

The report reflects on two decades of regional collaboration while looking ahead to a future increasingly shaped by drought, water scarcity, climate uncertainty, population growth, and increasing pressures on the Okanagan's shared water.



The OBWB continues to advance its mission, providing leadership and fostering collaboration to strengthen data collection, improve educational outreach, and implement innovative solutions that build resilience throughout the basin.

"The health of our watershed cannot be separated from the health of our communities," said Tesche. "As we look toward the future, we remain focused on helping communities navigate change together and ensuring healthy water for generations to come."



With the 2026 Make Water Work campaign entering its final weeks, the Town of Oliver is currently leading the Community Champion standings based on pledges per capita. The winning community will be announced at the October OBWB Board meeting, where one community will earn the 2026 Community Champion title and local bragging rights for its commitment to water conservation.

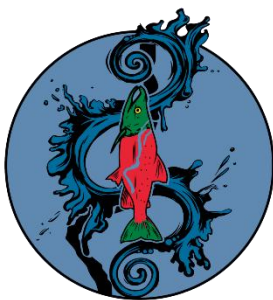
MAKE WATER WORK COMMUNITY CHAMPION RANKINGS



The 2026 Make Water Work pledge numbers as of Sept. 17, 2026.

[Take the Make Water Work Pledge](#)

Upcoming Events



Environmental Flows Conference 2026

- 💧 Co-hosted by the Okanagan Basin Water Board, the Okanagan Nation Alliance, and Canadian Water Resources Association. A national gathering for water science, policy, and practice.
- 📅 Wednesday, Oct. 7 – Friday, Oct. 9, 2026
- 📍 Kelowna – Coast Capri Hotel
- 🎯 1171 Harvey Ave.

[Registration Still Open](#)

Penticton and District Community Arts Council: Artiverse

- 💧 Celebrate the PDCAC's 65th anniversary block party and visit the OBWB booth
- 📅 Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026
- 🕒 4:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.
- 📍 Penticton - Leir House Cultural Centre
- 🎯 220 Manor Park Ave, Penticton
- 🆓 Free

i OBWB will be representing the element of water at Artiverse 2026, a free community block party celebrating art, sustainability, and community connection through the theme “Elemental Threads: The Human Weave,” featuring interactive activities, local artists, entertainment, and community partner displays.

[Learn More](#)

OXA Fall Plant Sale

- 💧 Find everything you need for a Make Water Work WaterWise garden at the OXA Fall Plant Sale
- 📅 Saturday, Sept. 19, 2026
- 🕒 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
- 📍 West Kelowna - Xeriscape Spirit Square Garden
- 🎯 2569 May Street, West Kelowna

i Hundreds of xeriscape perennials will be available, along with an education fair featuring native plants and expert advice on water-wise gardening and landscaping.

[Learn More](#)

Okanagan Nation Alliance Salmon Feast

- 💧 Find the OBWB booth at the ONA Salmon Feast
- 📅 Friday, Sept. 18 - Sunday, Sept. 20, 2026
- 🕒 3 full day schedule is viewable on the ONA website
- 📍 Okanagan Falls
- 📍 Green Lake Rd, Okanagan Falls
- 📄 OBWB will host a booth on Sunday at the Salmon Feast, sharing information about OBWB, Make Water Work, Don't Move a Mussel, water science and more!

[ONA Salmon Feast Full Schedule](#)

North American Lake Management Society (NALMS) Symposium
🐟 Swimming Upstream: Tackling Environmental Challenges through Partnership, Innovation, & Science
📅 Nov. 2 - 6, 2026
📍 Kelowna
📄 Early bird registration now open.

[Learn More About NALMS Symposium](#)

Want to support our goal to educate residents on water in the Okanagan? Follow us on social media, like and share our content, and leave us a comment – your engagement helps us reach more people.



[Go to OBWB.ca](#)

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Okanagan Basin Water Board | 1450 K.L.O. Rd | Kelowna, BC V1W 3Z4 CA



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