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## INFORMATION BULLETIN

For Immediate Release  
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Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations  
and Rural Development

### **Water conservation urged for Kootenay Columbia region**

VICTORIA – With many streams and rivers in the Lower Columbia, West Kootenay and East Kootenay regions currently experiencing very low streamflows, Kootenay residents are being urged to reduce water consumption.

The Government of British Columbia has announced a Level 3 drought rating for the area that calls for voluntary water use reductions of 30% from all water users, including residents, industry, farmers and municipalities.

Weather forecasts are calling for insufficient precipitation to recharge streams. As a result, streamflows are expected to continue to drop, creating stress for fish and ecosystems, as well as reducing water supplies for water users. Some larger storage backed systems have normal water levels. However, many streams are experiencing extremely low flows that are problematic for spawning fish populations.

While water conservation is the goal, it is recognized that water may be needed to extinguish fires. The Water Sustainability Act allows the diversion of water to extinguish a fire without an authorization, providing the water is restored to the stream channel once the fire is extinguished.

Ministry staff are closely monitoring river levels and may upgrade the drought level if the weather continues to have a negative effect on stream flows and water supply. Provincial water managers may exercise their authority to temporarily suspend authorized water usage in affected watersheds and aquifers.

Users in critical watersheds will be contacted directly to encourage water conservation and to advise of potential water regulation.

Local water conservation bylaws may differ from provincial water conservation targets, due to local water supply and demand, and the availability of storage (lakes and reservoirs) or groundwater. Residential, agricultural and industrial water users who are located within municipalities and regional districts are encouraged to observe local water conservation bylaws where they exist.

Water conservation is everyone's responsibility. Many communities in B.C. have drought management plans and water conservation programs already in place to deal with water supply shortages and low streamflow conditions.

### **Water conservation tips:**

At home:

- Limit outdoor watering.
- Do not water during the heat of the day or when it is windy.
- Consider planting drought-tolerant vegetation.
- Take shorter showers.
- Do not leave the tap running.
- Install water-efficient showerheads and toilets.

On the farm:

- Implement an irrigation scheduling program using real-time weather data.
- Schedule irrigation to match crop needs and soil storage capacity.
- Improve water system efficiencies and check for leaks.
- Focus on high-value crops and livestock.

Industry:

- Reduce non-essential water usage.
- Recycle water used in industrial operations.
- Use water-efficient methods and equipment.

**Learn More:**

2017 B.C. Drought Information Portal: <http://arcg.is/1W9SMZv>

B.C. Drought Response Plan: [2016 BC Drought Response Plan PDF](#)

Agricultural Industry: [BC Drought and Agriculture Information Page](#)

Elk River flow data (at Fernie): [https://wateroffice.ec.gc.ca/report/real\\_time\\_e.html?stn=08NK002](https://wateroffice.ec.gc.ca/report/real_time_e.html?stn=08NK002)

Kootenay River flow data (at Fort Steele):  
[https://wateroffice.ec.gc.ca/report/real\\_time\\_e.html?stn=08NG065](https://wateroffice.ec.gc.ca/report/real_time_e.html?stn=08NG065)

Lardeau River flow data (at Marblehead):  
[https://wateroffice.ec.gc.ca/report/real\\_time\\_e.html?stn=08NH007](https://wateroffice.ec.gc.ca/report/real_time_e.html?stn=08NH007)

Salmo River flow data (near Salmo): [https://wateroffice.ec.gc.ca/report/real\\_time\\_e.html?stn=08NE074](https://wateroffice.ec.gc.ca/report/real_time_e.html?stn=08NE074)

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