

## LOW STREAM FLOW ADVISORY PEACE REGION

### WATER CONSERVATION REQUEST

20 July 2010

#### **CURRENT WATER SUPPLIES**

Many streams in BC's Peace Region are currently experiencing very low stream flow conditions.

This winter produced a below normal snowpack and we have since then experienced a dry, warm spring and summer. The prolonged warm temperatures and minimal June and July precipitation has caused rapid evaporation of soil water and surface water, causing river levels to recede quicker than usual.

Although some areas in the far North East of the province have received recent rain, much of the Peace Region has been very dry for the past month, with no significant rainfall evident in the weather forecast for the next week to ten days. As a result, river levels in much of the Peace Region are very low, and are anticipated to drop further for the remainder of July. Some rivers are currently experiencing low flows they would experience, on average, one year in forty or fifty. As of July 19, 2010, the Pine River, Kiskatinaw River, Laird River, Moberly River and Carbon Creek are all at or near their lowest flows of record for this time of year. Their water levels are anticipated to continue dropping until such time as significant rainfall occurs in the area.

Significant, prolonged and widespread rainfall is required to ease the severe low

flow conditions, but with warm, dry conditions in the weather forecast, river levels are expected to continue to drop into August and possibly beyond.

#### **IMPLICATIONS**

Low stream and lake levels can lead to water shortages, creating hardship for people, agriculture, industry and fish.

Potential implications include:

- Critical shortage of water for drinking, agriculture, industry, and aquatic life
- Warmer water temperatures, which may lead to poor drinking water quality and which could be lethal for fish and other aquatic species
- Low water levels that can strand fish and create migration barriers
- Low flows can deplete groundwater supplies, as surface and groundwater "feed" each other

#### **WHAT YOU NEED TO DO**

Water conservation is everyone's responsibility. The Ministry of Environment, along with its partner agencies, is urging all British Columbians to conserve water during these critical low flows. Everyone is encouraged to examine their water use and use water wisely.

## Water conservation tips

At home:

- Limit lawn and outdoor watering
- Don't water during the heat of the day or when it's windy
- Plant drought tolerant vegetation
- Take shorter showers and don't leave the tap running
- Install water-efficient shower heads 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

Industry:

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

## NEXT STEPS

The Government of British Columbia is monitoring water levels and identifying streams and watersheds that require specific low stream flow advisories and more stringent water conservation measures. Local governments, water suppliers and water licence holders who draw water from these streams will be advised accordingly.

If stream flows remain low and if water conservation measures are not effective, additional restrictions based on priority water licence rights may be imposed. On flow-sensitive fish streams or where water

community supplies must be protected, the Government of British Columbia and Fisheries and Oceans Canada may request that Stop Work Diversion Initiatives be put in place.

### **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

Province of British Columbia Drought Information

[http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wsd/public\\_safety/drought\\_info/index.html](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wsd/public_safety/drought_info/index.html)

The status of stream flow and precipitation conditions in the province are provided on the River Forecast Centre website:

[www.env.gov.bc.ca/rfc/](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/rfc/)

Environment Canada Water Conservation

[http://www.ec.gc.ca/water/en/manage/effic/e\\_weff.htm](http://www.ec.gc.ca/water/en/manage/effic/e_weff.htm)

For more information on groundwater visit:

[http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wsd/plan\\_protect\\_sustain/groundwater/library/faq\\_grdwater.html](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wsd/plan_protect_sustain/groundwater/library/faq_grdwater.html)

Province of British Columbia Agriculture Drought Strategies

<http://www.agf.gov.bc.ca/resmgmt/publist/Water.htm#drought>

Farm West

[www.farmwest.com](http://www.farmwest.com)

[www.livingwatersmart.ca](http://www.livingwatersmart.ca)

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