

LOW STREAM FLOW ADVISORY SKEENA REGION – July 23, 2010

WATER CONSERVATION REQUEST

CURRENT WATER SUPPLIES

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

This winter produced a below normal snowpack with an early melt that led to relatively low soil moisture. Although precipitation this spring was near normal, this summer has been exceptional dry with rainfall at the Smithers airport being 25% of normal.

As a result, small stream and river levels in much of the Skeena Region are very low, and are anticipated to drop further for the remainder of July and possibly into August. As of July 22, 2010, the Skeena, Bulkley, Kispiox and Nass Rivers are well below normal and have experienced some of the lowest flows on record for this time of year. Although high elevation snow and ice melt continues to augment much of the flow in these watersheds, their water levels are anticipated to continue dropping until such time as significant rainfall occurs in the area.

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 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

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/

Environment Canada Water Conservation 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

Province of British Columbia Agriculture Drought Strategies <http://www.agf.gov.bc.ca/resmgmt/publist/Water.htm#drought>

Farm West www.farmwest.com

www.livingwatersmart.ca

CONTACTS

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