



Date: April 16, 2025

Reference: 45546

To: Improvement District Trustees and Staff

Re: Preparing for Potential Drought Conditions in 2025

Please be advised that drought conditions experienced across the province in recent years may occur again. The [BC River Forecast Centre](#) has reported below normal [snowpack conditions](#) across much of the province, currently signalling an increased risk of drought for spring and summer. Based on these early indications, we recommend all water suppliers once again prepare for an increased risk of experiencing drought in 2025.

Stay informed about current drought conditions

The Province's [drought preparation and response website](#) has several online resources to support water suppliers through drought conditions. The BC Drought and Water Scarcity Response Plan provides an overview of drought response in the province, including management responsibilities, pre-drought preparedness, descriptions of the provincial drought levels and the potential regulatory actions that may be taken. This plan is updated annually, so please look for the updated 2025 plan on the [BC drought information website](#) later this Spring.

To understand trends in water availability, it is important to have procedures in place to regularly monitor available information about water conditions. The Province produces datasets to better understand water availability regionally including:

- the [BC Drought Information Portal](#) that displays regional Drought Levels and
- a [Map of 7-Day Average Streamflow](#) that displays Water Survey of Canada streamflow gauges relevant to your area.

Drought levels provide information about how dry conditions are, and how often these dry conditions may reoccur. However, they cannot tell you if your systems will be impacted or at risk of being impacted as this depends on the resilience of each water supply system in times of drought.

Take part in the water supply status survey

The Province, in partnership with the Regional Health Authorities, will again this year reach out directly to drinking water suppliers across the province to invite you to submit water supply status information. The Ministry of Water Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS) Drinking Water Team will send these survey invitations at regular

intervals from June to October. We encourage you to take part and help us understand the state of drinking water supplies. By sharing information with the Province, we can better assess which communities are at risk of water supply issues, and where support may be needed if drought occurs or worsens.

Improve resilience to drought and other hazards

Actions you can take to better prepare for drought and other hazards include:

- **Establish a water supply monitoring program:** If your water sources (raw water storage and inflows or groundwater levels) are not gauged, consider establishing a water supply monitoring program, which will enable you to quantify the water available and adjust water use accordingly. Understanding the status of your water supply can help to anticipate future water scarcity and improve drought resilience. Professional consultants can help design an appropriate monitoring program for your system.
- **Prepare/update a water conservation plan:** Preparing a water conservation plan or updating a current plan that is more than five years old is also recommended. This [Water Conservation Guide](#) provides a resource on creating these plans. A Water Conservation Plan can help you develop, or update, a Water Conservation Bylaw, which can set out watering restrictions seasonally or in stages, based on projections of water availability. If your water system is fully metered, charging users for the amount they use may encourage conservation. Public outreach and communication can also be an effective tool to explain the importance of water conservation, its impacts and what individuals need to do to participate.
- **Prepare/update an emergency response and contingency plan:** Section 10 of the [Drinking Water Protection Act](#) (DWPA) requires all water suppliers to have a written emergency response and contingency plan (ERCP) to be implemented in the event of an emergency or abnormal operational circumstances (see below for more information). Having an updated ERCP that includes drought response actions will help ensure water systems are prepared to deal with water shortages.
- **Plan for the long term and future:** All water suppliers are encouraged to ensure effective and efficient operations of their works to help mitigate against the potential impacts of drought. When planning for capital projects, consider projects to support drought resilience such as leakage reduction, universal water metering, increased raw water storage and development of secondary or back-up water sources.
- **Share key drought and water management resources with farmers and**

agricultural water users: The [Drought in Agriculture](#) website offers factsheets, videos, tools, financial support information (including infrastructure funding), and workshop listings to help the sector make the most of water resources.

Keep up-to-date on the latest guidance and resources available to you

You may already be aware that there are resources to help you fulfil your responsibilities as a water supplier regulated by the [Drinking Water Protection Act](#) (DWPA) and Drinking Water Protection Regulation. These [resources for water system operators](#) include:

- [Emergency Response and Contingency Planning for Small Water Systems](#)
- [Guide to Emergency Response and Contingency Plans for Water Supply Systems](#)
- [Dealing with Drought: A Handbook for Water Suppliers](#)

The Agriculture Water Infrastructure Program (AWP) supports community-scale water and on-farm water projects that enhance agricultural water security and drought resilience. The program offers cost-share funding for activities such as developing or upgrading water storage, improving conveyance and irrigation systems, and completing planning and engineering studies. Eligible applicants may receive up to \$1 million for producer projects, \$2 million for community projects, and \$200,000 for planning and engineering studies. Additional application intakes are expected in 2025. For more information, please visit the program [website](#).

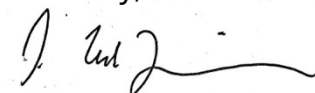
For questions about the DWPA and Emergency Response and Contingency Planning for Small Water Systems, please contact your regional health authority at the applicable email address:

- Island Health – drinkingwater@islandhealth.ca
- Vancouver Coastal Health – healthprotectionNS@vch.ca
- Interior Health – ihsws@interiorhealth.ca
- Fraser Health – hpland@fraserhealth.ca
- Northern Health – php@northernhealth.ca

We understand and appreciate that improvement districts are facing numerous challenges in addition to drought and are doing their best to plan ahead and ensure they can continue providing essential services to their communities.

Thank you for your cooperation and attention to preparing for drought this year.

Sincerely,



Ted Zimmerman

Executive Director, Watershed Stewardship and Security Branch
Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship