



July 31, 2023

To: Water Licence holders in the Upper Columbia drought basin

**Re: Low Water Advisory and Voluntary Water Conservation Request**

Many areas in BC are facing drier than normal conditions leading to low water availability. The purpose of this letter is to request that you **voluntarily** reduce your water usage and to let you know that mandatory restrictions on water licences may be necessary should conditions worsen.

The Province uses a 6-level system to rank drought severity by basin, with Level 0 representing average or wet conditions and Level 5 representing the most severe conditions of drought and water scarcity. The Ministry of Forests is responsible for assigning drought levels and, in response to a lack of rain combined with stream flows approaching critically low levels, has declared a **Level 4** drought for the Upper Columbia drought basin.

**Due to the Level 4 drought conditions, the Ministry of Forests is requesting voluntary water use reductions of 50% by all water users in the Upper Columbia basin.** The request for this level of reduction is due to the especially early, rapid and severe onset of drought conditions. Level 4 drought means that serious ecosystem, community and economic impacts are likely. The voluntary reduction includes groundwater and surface water use and for all use purposes whether domestic, commercial, irrigation or otherwise. If your water licence includes a storage purpose, you are encouraged to **not** divert water for further storage at this time. To further support voluntary reductions, efforts are being made to identify and stop unauthorized use of non-domestic water by those who do not hold a current water licence.

If voluntary water conservation measures prove ineffective in ensuring sufficient source water availability, mandatory restrictions may be necessary to protect the rights of water users and/or aquatic ecosystems. The Province is currently pursuing unauthorized use of water, including withdrawals greater than authorized by licence, and will respond with enforcement as necessary. Under the “first in time, first in right” system of precedence of rights, older licences have priority over junior licences to access water first during times of drought and water scarcity. We encourage you to collaborate with other water licensees in your community to help achieve voluntary reductions targets on your source. To find water licence information online, use the keywords “BC water licence search” in your web search.

Drought conditions can change rapidly so you are encouraged to stay tuned to the **BC Drought Information Portal** (the Drought Portal) listed below for the most current information. The Drought Portal, updated weekly on Thursdays, is managed by the Ministry of Forests and provides

information on drought levels across the province. Some drought basins may be provided with additional information by clicking on the labeled part of the map found in the **Kootenay-Boundary Stream Watch** tab.

**If you see that the Drought Portal is reporting a change in drought level in your basin, please follow the requested voluntary conservation measures associated with different drought levels seen in the table below.**

Drought Basin	Drought Level	Requested Conservation Measures
Upper Columbia	<b>2</b>	Normal Seasonal Water Use
Upper Columbia	<b>3</b>	30% Voluntary Reduction
Upper Columbia	<b>4 (Current level)</b>	50% Voluntary Reduction
Upper Columbia	<b>5</b>	Maximum Possible Voluntary Reduction

More information and updates are available on the following websites, which can be found by searching for the underlined wording in your preferred search engine or by using the shortened URL (shown in bold lettering):

- [British Columbia Drought Information Portal](http://bit.ly/BCDroughtPortal): Current provincial drought levels and advisory bulletins. (**http://bit.ly/BCDroughtPortal**).
- [Drought Information-Province of British Columbia](https://bit.ly/37vhPAj): Current drought information and other helpful resources, including tips for water conservation. (**https://bit.ly/37vhPAj**).
- [River Forecast Centre](https://bit.ly/37C9PNG): Streamflow conditions and modelling. (**https://bit.ly/37C9PNG**).
- [British Columbia Drought and Water Scarcity Response Plan](https://bit.ly/2VG3QVx): Information on drought levels and how the Province manages drought. (**https://bit.ly/2VG3QVx**).
- [Drought in Agriculture – Province of British Columbia](https://bit.ly/44d2IqJ): Information and resources available for agricultural drought management. (**https://bit.ly/44d2IqJ**)
- Local governments may also have up-to-date information on their platforms.

If you have questions about drought or drought conditions, please contact FrontCounter BC at 1-877-855-3222 or [FrontCounterBC@gov.bc.ca](mailto:FrontCounterBC@gov.bc.ca).

Conserving water is everyone's responsibility, even more so in times of water scarcity. Thank you for your support.

Yours truly,



Russ Laroche  
Regional Executive Director  
Kootenay Boundary Region  
Ministry of Forests