

**BC Fruit Growers' Association
Friday File**



August 18, 2015

Water

The Okanagan Basin Water Board held a meeting last week to present information on managing water during times of drought. Fred Steele, President of the BCFGa, attended the meeting. Also attending were representatives from the grape and beef sectors.

In the previous week, the province declared the Okanagan-Similkameen Valleys to be in a level 4 drought - the highest classification. A Level 4 classification means the area is extremely dry. People and businesses may be affected by short water supplies, as well as fish stocks in streams. The goal is voluntary reduction of water use. Water suppliers and regulators may introduce rules to conserve water. While we were concerned about some of the directions being discussed, we were able to provide information that regulators may not have taken into account.

The BCFGa learned that there are some water restrictions being applied to urban users, but at this time we are not aware of any water systems introducing new rules to restrict water for agriculture. There was also a general sense that some municipal decision-makers did not have a good understanding of the water use and needs of agriculture. As a result of the discussion at the Okanagan Basin Water Board meeting, the BCFGa Executive will meet August 19 to set a position on drought policy. The policy will likely include the following points:

- climate change is placing new stresses on the water supply systems in the Okanagan.
- agriculture water rationing will be implemented only after extreme water restrictions have been implemented for landscaping and recreational use.
- if implemented, agriculture water rationing will take into account the large, intensive investment in perennial crops (ie. tree fruit).
- the BCFGa supports the continued adoption of technology for greater irrigation efficiency.
- food security should be a major consideration in allocating water.
- expansion of tree fruit production needs to be considered in developing future water storage.
- the BCFGa will support the municipalities in seeking provincial and federal funding to expand water storage reservoirs.

In summary, the BCFGa recognizes that climate change will impact the way water systems work in the Okanagan, but cosmetic, landscaping and recreational water use is secondary to agriculture irrigation use. If you have any other ideas or issues for input into the BCFGa water policy, please send a quick email to info@bcfga.com as soon as possible.

You can access some great irrigation management information and tools at Farm West, www.farmwest.com. Find out about irrigation needs and irrigation efficiency. Growers should stay within allocation so there is room to irrigate trees in Fall for winter protection.

Growers Supply - appreciation days

Fred Steele, BCFGA President, and Pinder Dhaliwal, BCFGA Vice-President are planning to attend the Growers Supply appreciation day meetings. For the August 19th event, the BCFGA Executive will attend at lunch, as part of its Executive meeting that day. This is an opportunity to bring any items of concern or any positive ideas to the attention of the BCFGA Executive.



The image shows a white sign with a black border. On the left is the Facebook logo with the text 'bc.cherries' below it. On the right is the BCFGA logo, which is a circular emblem featuring a basket of fruit, the text 'BC FRUIT GROWERS ASSOCIATION', '125 YEARS', and 'est. 1889'. In the center, the text reads 'BCFGA BC LABOUR PROJECT'. Below this, it says 'Ron Forrest, Facilitator', '(250) 859-7503', and 'rforrest.bcfga@gmail.com'. At the bottom, the words 'WORKSHOPS!' and 'EMPLOYMENT!' are written in large, bold, black letters.

Summerland Varieties Corporation and the BCFGA Research and Development Orchard Ltd. provide funding for the BCFGA Labour Project - thank you to these BCFGA subsidiaries for supporting growers.

