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## INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Ministry of Environment

### **WATER USE REDUCTION ORDER TO PROTECT FISH POPULATIONS**

**KAMLOOPS** – To protect the kokanee salmon population in the Nicola River, Environment Minister Barry Penner has ordered the temporary curtailment of water use on the river, upstream from Nicola Lake.

The order is the first of its kind in B.C.

Due to low winter snowpacks and drought conditions this summer, water flows in this area are extremely low and the kokanee population are expected to begin spawning soon.

The order to curtail water use was issued under the authority of Section 9 of the Fish Protection Act. Section 9 was brought into force this August in anticipation of a need to protect fish populations in times of drought.

The Nicola River above Nicola Lake is currently experiencing low flows and the risk to the kokanee is particularly high. The ministry believes an order for water use reduction is likely to improve the situation for spawning kokanee.

Section 9 of the Fish Protection Act allows for ministerial orders to temporarily regulate water users, regardless of the terms of their Water License under the Water Act, provided the following conditions are met:

- Water levels are low due to drought.
- The survival of fish populations is or may be threatened due to low water levels.
- Due consideration has been given to the needs of agricultural users.

Before issuing the current order, the Ministry of Environment requested water licensees in the area to undertake voluntary water conservation measures, and informed them that regulatory action may be required if these actions failed to mitigate the threat to fish populations.

Most water licensees within the watershed are supportive of this approach and have been implementing voluntary water conservation measures such as stopping irrigation and reducing irrigation volumes.

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