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REGIONAL DISTRICT OF
NORTH OKANAGAN

September 13, 2017

To: Bessette Creek Water Users

Re: Low Water Advisory and Complete Non-domestic Water Use Shut-down Request

A number of watersheds in the Southern BC Interior are facing critical water shortages. The entire South Thompson River Watershed has reached drought level 4 (extremely dry). The purpose of this letter is to request your participation in *further* voluntary water usage reductions for the remainder of the dry season and to give you advance notification of the potential for regulated restrictions on water licences should conditions deteriorate further.

Water levels are rapidly dropping in streams and aquifers due to extremely hot and dry weather patterns experienced these past three months. Please visit the BC Drought Information Portal to identify the drought level in your area:

<http://bcgov03.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=9042807690964463b268dfd91949d65b>

As indicated in notification sent out on August 30, 2017, low water levels in Bessette Creek are of particular concern because adult Chinook salmon are migrating into the creek and spawning. Spawning Chinook will be in the creek through the month of September. The size of the Chinook salmon run in 2017 is smaller than expected. At this time of the year, Bessette Creek also supports important populations of juvenile fish including Coho salmon, Chinook salmon and rainbow trout. Kokanee will utilize the lower reaches of Bessette Creek for spawning in September. Low water levels present a number of risks to these fish including increased risk of predation, elevated temperature stress, limited access to spawning habitat and difficulties migrating within the creek to preferred spawning habitats.

On Wednesday, September 6th, Bessette Creek near Lumby the flow was measured at 41 litres per second. At this location, the critical flow threshold to ensure survival of juvenile fish is 100 litres per second, with 400 litres per second required for salmon migration and 200 litres per second required for spawning. As flows in Bessette Creek are below this level, we may need to employ additional conservation measures including irrigation shut-downs.

We are asking for your help in reducing water use by adopting voluntary water conservation measures in the hopes of avoiding future water restrictions. **For basins in drought level 4, a complete reduction in non-domestic water use, including irrigation, is requested.** This request for voluntary



reductions includes groundwater use which as of February 2016 is regulated under the Water Sustainability Act. If your licence includes a storage component, please note the timing of when you are permitted to divert water into storage, and the timing of when you are required to be using stored water. Under the terms of the licence, water must not be diverted to storage after June 15th. Please ensure that you are adhering to the terms of your licence.

Please check the following sites for information on drought conditions:

- Information and tips for ranchers and the agriculture industry:
<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/agricultural-land-and-environment/water/drought-in-agriculture>

Thank you for your support. Conserving water is everyone's responsibility, even more so in times of water shortage. If you have any questions about your water licence, please contact FrontCounter BC at <http://www.frontcounterbc.gov.bc.ca/>, or call 1-877-855-3222.

Many thanks,

Ray Crampton
District Manager
Okanagan Shuswap Natural Resource District
Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development