

Okanagan Water Stewardship Council

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE OKANAGAN WATER STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL HELD ON OCTOBER 18, 2007 AT THE ECCO CENTRE IN KELOWNA, BC.

PRESENT:

~~Chair Tom Siddon, Okanagan Partnership~~
~~Vice Chair Ted van der Gulik, Ministry of Agriculture and Lands~~
~~Allison MacMillan, Okanagan College~~
~~Bernie Bauer, UBC Okanagan~~
~~Bob Hrasko, Director, Water Supply Association~~
~~Brian Guy, Director, BC Branch, Canadian Water Resource Association~~
~~Bryn White, South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program~~
~~Denise Neilsen, Research Scientist~~
~~Doug Geller, BC Ground Water Association~~
~~Drew Kaiser, CORD Environmental Advisory Committee~~
~~Gord Shandler, BC Fruit Growers Association~~
~~Grant Maddock, Urban Development Institute~~
~~Hans Buchler, BC Agriculture Council~~
~~Hillary Hettinga, Regional District of Central Okanagan~~
~~Howie Wright, Okanagan Nation Alliance~~
~~Jillian Tamblyn, Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen~~
~~Ken Cunningham, Ministry of Environment, Water Stewardship Division~~
~~Kendall Woo, Environment Canada – Pacific and Yukon Region~~
~~Kerry Rouck, Shuswap Okanagan Forestry Association~~
~~Lee Hesketh, BC Cattlemen's Association~~
~~Lorne Davies, OCEOLA Fish and Game Club~~
~~Mike Adams, Interior Health Authority~~
~~Peter Dill, Friends of Mission Creek~~
~~Rob Smailes, Regional District of North Okanagan~~
~~Tricia Brett, Greater Vernon Water Stewardship Committee~~
~~Kendall Woo, Ministry of Environment Canada~~
~~Stu Wells, Community Futures~~

STAFF:

~~Dr. Anna Warwick Sears, Executive Director, OBWB~~
~~Nelson Jatel, Water Stewardship Director, OBWB~~
~~Genevieve Doyle, Water Stewardship Coordinator, OBWB~~
~~Monique Stone, Administration & Communication, OBWB~~

OTHERS PRESENT:

~~Vicki Carmichael, Ministry of Environment~~
~~Judie Steeves, Journalist, Capital News~~
~~Chris LeFloch, Planning Technologist, RDNO~~

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Vice Chair van der Gulik called the meeting to order at 1:06 p.m.

Ms. Carmichael responded no. It seems that the provincial government will be responsible for the drilling authorizations. With Licensing it is still a tough task to get all the previous wells catalogued and there are lots that get 'missed' in the system.

Doug Geller stated that in other jurisdictions there are methods in place to catalogue the older wells.

Dr. Anna Sears commented that with licensing there is the potential to charge people for the use/extraction of water, though it would likely only be the large providers who would be licensed.

Vice Chair van der Gulik stated that Langley did not want the responsibility of doing the drilling authorizations.

Toby Pike stated that in general, people who have established wells don't want licensing as they might be afraid that they have to pay for it once licensed.

Doug Geller made a PowerPoint presentation titled:
["Groundwater Management Opportunities in the Okanagan"](#)²

(Before beginning his presentation, Mr. Geller referenced the background material provided to the OWSC in the emailed agenda package)

Questions and discussion:

Dr. Sears asked whether groundwater tests for capacity in a development (proof of water) take into account the surrounding properties and wells (or surface water supplies). What about the possibility of doing a groundwater plan, so that the surrounding area is assured water would stay the same

Grant Maddock stated he didn't think that a drilling authorization alone will ensure the groundwater will not be extracted in an unethical fashion as it needs licensing and regulation.

Drew Kaiser asked if groups had been lobbying the provincial government for licensing. What about other jurisdictions? Some places have incorporated groundwater as part of legislation for surface water.

Dr Sears asked about whether other areas recognize that water in unconfined aquifers are the same as surface water?

Mr. Geller responded that yes, in Alberta, water in unconfined aquifers covering a large land area are classified as surface water and same regulations apply.

² Available on-line @ www.obwb.ca/presentations/

Jillian Tamblyn asked which municipalities have better groundwater bylaws for proof of water.

Mr. Geller responded by stating he is not going to say which bylaws are bad or good, but there is no consistency and this makes it tough.

Ms. Carmichael explained that there are documents that explain proper ways to test, to monitor, etc... and just not regulation to enforce it.

Bob Hrasco asked about geothermal development. The building department at the City of Kelowna has set up a database to track, but they are having issues. How do we deal with all of the geothermal issues?

Mr. Geller stated that an element of licensing can apply to geothermal wells; it is a type of use under groundwater resources (instead of just drinking water).

Dr. Sears explained that the Ministry of Environment staff indicated that they were not going to incorporate geothermal into the groundwater regulations and registering wells.

Ms. Carmichael explained that for geothermal drilling, the City of Calgary has inspectors and registry for any well to be drilled as they are very nervous of the geothermal side of things. They have decided that local government is better to deal with registration of geothermal drilling.

Vice Chair van der Gulik stated that about 20 years ago there was a paper written on groundwater management with a number of associations calling for licensing. The paper went public but a group of agricultural users in Prince George completely trounced the idea of licensing the resource. People are uninformed of the issues with groundwater use, and the experience he has with irrigators shows that when they are affected by loss of water then they have different perspectives. He recommended that we should have licensing but not all over the province, just some areas. When people realize that you are protecting the resource availability and the quality then they have a more favourable view of it.

Mr. Pike asked about licensing limitations – how do you determine that something (groundwater resource of some sort) is fully allocated?

Mr. Kaiser responded that the OBWB might be the best agency to do a water management plan and other large planning/regulation initiatives to manage the groundwater resource.

Vice Chair van der Gulik stated that the Langley pilot program is good, but there will be things from it that don't make sense for the Okanagan, and we would need to make some changes. The Okanagan could be its own pilot program....

Hans Buchler explained that when the B.C. Agriculture Council discussed groundwater licensing, there was a huge disconnect among the members, some in favour and some totally opposed to licensing. If you do not include some "grandfathering" then the whole thing would be very unfavourable to many.

Mr. Geller responded that there would be some grand parenting of older wells, but use would have to be tracked or metered in some respect if you went with licensing.

Lorne Davies explained that because of surface-groundwater interaction, in some instances you are taking water from the lakes. This is a good way to tell the general public is that you might be affecting the lakes in the end. The other thing with groundwater is that typically you can always extract it faster than you can recharge it, therefore it is not renewable.

Dr. Sears stated that we need to differentiate between small household well areas and the larger well developments that supply big areas. We need equity in the bylaws so that everyone is the same and has the same common understanding. The regulations and licensing should be the same for the entire basin.

Vice Chair van der Gulik asked if we could have an overall Water Management Plan that refers to all water resources (ground and surface)? Then we would have one basin wide, cabinet-endorsed plan for all the resources. It would have clout. Should we make a motion for that?

Dr. Sears responded that possible we should wait to do a water management plan until we have more of the sustainable water strategy. Some of the regional project funding (from OWSC) can be used.

Mr. Pike said we should wait until the Water Supply and Demand study is done and the sustainable water strategy is further along. Wait and see what the other things reveal.

Vice Chair van der Gulik agreed about being cautious like Anna and Toby, but we are part way through a few of these big studies and we have a lot of resources. This is a good tool that we can pull everything together with. What about doing something at the staff level to determine what needs doing next?

Mr. Hrasko stated that we shouldn't go to doing a water management plan yet.

Dr. Brian Guy mentioned Doug's idea of harmonizing the Regional District bylaws to start. And the integrated approach of doing a water management plan, in addition to having some sort of Provincial regulation.

Mr. Buchler commented that getting a uniform policy throughout the basin will take some small steps. It can't be done all at once for some of the areas as they may not be ready for it.

Dr. Guy proposed a motion that staff or a subcommittee meet to help look into policy options and plans and a second motion that we support groundwater legislation. We could also have tracking of geothermal development through building inspection in each municipality.

Break at 2:45 and reconvened and 3:00 pm.

5. REPORTS FROM STAFF

5.1 OBWB Board report

Dr. Sears reported on the strategic planning session held Tuesday Oct 16. Discussions included Board's current role and vision for the future.

She said that the board is very engaged and really appreciates the Stewardship Council as they have a better context of which to work from regarding the issues of the Okanagan Basin Water Board. The OWSC principles have been discussed and will be likely changed a little bit to better suit the board.

5.2 Water Research Tour at UBC-O

Mr. Jatel reported that we want to set up more linkages between post secondary institutions. As a first step, OBWB staff will meet with UBC-O professors and grad students who are actively involved in water research. This allowed an exchange of knowledge about research at UBC-O and the activities of the OBWB. Mr. Jatel will develop a summary document including the professor's current research areas.

5.3 CWRA Conference

Mr. Jatel asked if anyone wants to help in developing the CWRA conference that we are hosting next year in the week of October 20, 2008. Members of committee: Dr. Brian Guy, Doug Geller, Jillian Tamblyn, Stu Wells and Drew Kaiser who will be joining Bernie Bauer, Bob Hrasko (Chair), Hans Buchler and OBWB staff.

6. WORKING GROUPS AND STATUS REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

6.1. Okanagan Sustainable Water Strategy

6.1.1 Environment

6.1.2 Water Quality

6.1.3 Water Governance

Stewardship Council members had an opportunity to explore and provide input on the identified chapter topics.

General comments on the process concluded that people found value in providing input and liked going around to the different stations.

Peter Dill commented that he hoped it would be a strong document with good policy recommendations, strong actions to take and a 'tight' document.

7. NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

7.1. Endocrine Disruptor Project

As the project budget is more than originally anticipated, Dr. Sears asked the group to work on forming partnerships to leverage other funding. Staff is looking into the potential for some funding available to First Nations groups as another revenue stream for the project. The council supports the project and wants to see the full proposal and budget with some suggestions for other funding at the next meeting.

7.2 Land Act Reserves

It was stated that we need to identify what Provincial government is doing for leased lots before we move on Land Act Reserves for these areas.

7.3 Information/Discussion/Report Items

Mr. Jatel mentioned that OBWB website is being constantly updated. Dr. Sears reported that the Waterbucket site for the Okanagan Community of Interest (COI) is going to be up very shortly and Vice Chair van der Gulik mentioned that anyone can contribute to the site by posting articles and power point presentations etc.

7.3 Items for Action

The Canadian Water Resources Association (CWRA) conference is being worked on and developed currently by the OBWB staff, CWRA and interested council members. This conference is important as it will be the forum at which to present the Water Sustainability Strategy and be able to have the new water management initiative renewed by the board, supporting politicians and regional districts.

7.4 No correspondence.

7.5 Upcoming agenda items:

8. NEXT MEETING

8.1 November 8th meeting – look into having Water Economics as the topic to be presented.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn: Jillian Tamblyn

Seconded: Doug Geller

"That there being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:53 p.m."

CARRIED.

Certified Correct:

Chair

Program Manager