

# Holding the line on U.S. demands for valley water flow

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By [Judie Steeves - Kelowna Capital News](#)

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The International Joint Commission will be receiving a letter from the Okanagan recommending it not change the terms of the operating orders on cross-boundary Osoyoos Lake to include a requirement that certain flows of water be maintained into Washington State from this valley.

Since the Okanagan is a cross-boundary water basin and that lake straddles the border, an international body meets to decide on the management of the lake's level.

Current orders governing that are up in 2013 and the IJC is currently informing itself with eight scientific reports on various aspects on the lake's operation in order to renew the orders.

Five were written by local scientists, including hydrogeologist Brian Guy, hydrologist Don Dobson and engineer Jim Mattison, formerly the province's comptroller of water rights.

They presented a report to the Okanagan Basin Water Board at this week's meeting, recommending the OBWB ask the IJC not to include lake flows in the operating orders when they are renewed, since flow management is beyond the mandate of the IJC.

Their recommendations did encourage continued cooperation between B.C. and Washington State to manage the lake so downstream flows for fish and other uses are provided as required.

However, they suggest lake level management could be improved to reduce impacts on shoreline properties.

Automation of the gate operation and better communication with B.C. dam operators could also improve the current situation, they recommend.

Directors on the OBWB agreed with West Kelowna Mayor Doug Findlater that the report should be sent to the IJC, along with a letter from the board concurring with the recommendations.

As well, he said it should be sent to relevant federal and provincial government officials.

“We’re all local government officials and water providers and this would affect us. The letter should say we’re in substantial agreement with the report,” he said.

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