

OKANAGAN WATER STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

A Technical Advisory Body to the Okanagan Basin Water Board

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, MARCH 11, 2010, AT THE KELOWNA AND DISTRICT FISH AND GAME CLUBHOUSE, 4087 CASORSO ROAD, KELOWNA, BC

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Present

UBC Okanagan	Bernie Bauer, Chair
Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada	Doug Edwards
Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada, Research Branch	Denise Neilsen
BC Agriculture Council	Hans Buchler
BC Cattlemen's Association	Lee Hesketh
BC Fruit Growers Association	Lorraine Bennest
Environment Canada – Pacific & Yukon Region	Dan Millar
Interior Health Authority	Rob Birtles
Ministry of Environment, Water Stewardship	Ken Cunningham
Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program	Carolina Restrepo-Tamayo
Regional District North Okanagan	Anna Page
Water Supply Association of BC	Bob Hrasko

Regrets

BC Ground Water Association	Doug Geller
Canadian Water Resources Association	Brian Guy
City of Kelowna	Mark Watt
Community Futures	Don Main
Ministry of Agriculture and Lands	Ted van der Gulik, Vice Chair
Ministry of Environment, Fish and Wildlife Science	Steve Matthews
Oceola Fish and Game Club	Lorne Davies
Okanagan College	Douglas MacLeod
Okanagan Nation Alliance	Gwen Bridge
Okanagan Nation Alliance	Howie Wright
Osoyoos Lake Water Quality Society	Mark McKenney
Regional District of Central Okanagan	Chris Radford
Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen	Jillian Tamblyn
Shuswap Okanagan Forestry Association	Kerry Rouck
South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program	Bryn White
Urban Development Institute	Bal Poonian

STAFF:

OBWB, Executive Director	Anna Warwick Sears
OBWB, Water Stewardship Director	Nelson Jatel
OBWB, Office and Grants Administrator	Genevieve Dunbar
OBWB, Communications and Research Coordinator	Corinne Jackson

GUESTS:

Ministry of Environment, Mgr. of Science & Adaptation	Celine Davis
Dobson Engineering	Don Dobson
Former OBWB manager	Bill Parchomchuk
Grasslands Nursery	Toni Boot
Kelowna Capital News	Judie Steeves
Kelowna and District Fish and Game Club	Doug Flintoft
Ministry of Environment, OWSC Source Protection Cttee.	Solvej Patschke
Ministry of Environment, Water Stewardship	Conrad Pryce (alternate)
Ministry of Environment, Environmental Quality Section	Vic Jensen
Regional District North Okanagan	Renee Clark
UBC Okanagan	John Janmaat

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair Bauer called the meeting to order at 1:04 pm and welcomed members and guests.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Change date of next meeting to April 8, 2010.

Moved by Dan Millar

Seconded by Ken Cunningham

“That the agenda for the March 11, 2010 meeting of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council be approved as amended.”

CARRIED

3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

3.1 Minutes of a regular meeting of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council held February 11, 2010, at Kelowna and District Fish and Game Club clubhouse, Kelowna

Amendments: A couple small amendments to the minutes were suggested and incorporated.

Moved by Lorne Davies

Seconded by Bob Hrasko

“That the minutes from the February 11, 2010 meeting of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council be approved as amended.”

CARRIED

4. BOARD REPORT

Dr. Warwick Sears reported on the March 2 Okanagan Basin Water Board Meeting and discussions around the launch of Phase 2 of the Okanagan Water Supply and Demand (OWS&D) Project. The board was told the web tool is being reviewed, contracts are being finalized and a launch event is being planned. The board also discussed the start of phase 3 of the project.

Funding for phase 3 will allow further scenarios to be developed and allow local government to access the data. The OBWB expects to receive grant funds to subsidize local government requests to access data. As such, the board approved a data access sharing agreement.

Dr. Warwick Sears noted that the board also approved funding to assist a scoping study for a NASA project that will pull together NASA work and further the work on the OWS&D project.

There was lengthy discussion around the Okanagan Indian Band and its concerns around source protection in the Browns Creek Watershed and harvesting in the area by Tolko Industries Ltd. The board wrote to the province, asking for assurance that the water is being protected, said Dr. Warwick Sears.

The board also wrote a letter to Interior Health asking for clarification around its filtration deferral policy.

Finally, the board reviewed the Water Act Modernization (WAM) recommendations forwarded by the

Okanagan Water Stewardship Council and provided some suggestions.

5. ROUND TABLE – MEMBER UPDATES

Council members provided an update on their organization's activities.

- Dr. Janmaat: A water survey of Kelowna households is going out by mail. We are very encouraged that we already have over 100 completed by internet and phone.
- Mr. Hrasko: Fortis BC is raising agricultural rates because cost of providing service is not covered under current rates. Bob Campbell, a well-respected and contentious professional who worked with Greater Vernon Water, passed away and will be missed.
- Mr. Buchler: BC Wine Council is putting a Sustainable Practices Code together and will be launching it at our July conference. Water use will be a major component. There was talk at the BC Agriculture Council about the potential development of water markets, but there is no support for this.
- Mr. Millar: Osoyoos Lake is being filled again, and because we're headed for a drought year we're adding an additional two feet. Environment Canada is looking to work more closely with everyone in the Okanagan.
- Mr. Flintoff: BC Wildlife Fed will be discussing the Water Act Modernization at its AGM April 28 in Prince George. Discussions around this topic at the OWSC have been informative and will be very useful.
- Bill Parchomchuk – As the retired manager of the OBWB, having served from about 1975 to 1982, I'm very happy to see people still interested in water issues from a technical and a political standpoint. Okanagan Lake is very important to the region and needs ongoing protection.
- Mr. Jensen – As an Environmental Impact Biologist with Ministry of Environment in Penticton, work is being done on WAM and stormwater management planning. The ministry is also sampling the lakes right now and Skaha looks good.
- Dr. Warwick Sears: The OBWB is co-hosting a stormwater conference with the BC Wastewater Association, October 28 and 29, and has invited Vic Jensen to participate. There will be two conference streams – one for technicians and planners, and a second for politicians.
- Dr. Neilsen: We are busy planning the CWRA conference for June in Vancouver. Nine of the 12 presentations are connected to the Okanagan Water Supply and Demand (OWS&D) Study, so there's a terrific presence of that information there.
- Dr. Bauer: We're still waiting to hear about some funding proposals. The Aggregate Task Force I sit on will be doing public outreach and town halls, and will be looking at the effects of gravel extraction on water protection. After the last OWSC meeting, Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts invited me to sit on the Bear Creek task force looking at water issues.
- Mr. Jatel: The Streamlined Water Use Reporting Tool project will allow water suppliers to record their use. There will be two opportunities for professionals to give input on the software. The first is 10 a.m. to noon on March 29 at the Kelowna Ramada. The OBWB will be hosting a panel discussion on March 22 as part of World Water Week events. Robert Sandford will be one of the panellists. On March 26 we will be launching Phase 2 of the OWS&D project. The next drought planning webinar will be announced as soon as we have a date.

Rob Birtles entered the room at 1:30 p.m.

- Ms. Jackson: Work is underway to ensure a good turnout at the launch of the OWS&D Study. Invitations have gone out and media packages are being pulled together. A draft of the Okanagan WaterWise website site map has been completed and feedback received. The information is being compiled and will be forwarded to Think Marketing to get the website up and running.
- Ms. Dunbar: Happy to hear Osoyoos Lake is up because this will help with the milfoil removal work.
- Ms. Restrepo-Tamayo: The Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program has almost completed the first stage of its Sustainable Planning for the Okanagan Environment (SPOKE) project which needs to be done by March 31st. Hopefully we'll be able to tell you more about it at the next OWSC meeting.

- Ms. Bennest: This year's mild winter has put fruit growers two weeks ahead of last year's growing season and we are looking at having to cull buds already.
- Mr. Edwards: Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada has been assisting on the drought management workshops being held around B.C. There is a DVD series available on watershed management if anyone is interested.
- Ms. Davis: The Science & Adaptation branch of BC Ministry of Environment has been busy with drought response planning workshops being held throughout the province.
- Mr. Cunningham: Ministry of Environment held a provincial allocation meeting in March which John Slater, B.C.'s Parliamentary Secretary on Water Allocation, attended. I will be assisting with upcoming drought planning meetings and the WAM process. I am also working with Dr. Bauer on the Bear Creek drinking water task force.
- Mr. Pryce: I'm excited to hear about the OWS&D study moving into Phase 3 and being trained on using the data. Thank you to Mr. Jatel for his work on the drought planning webinars. It should be very useful for water purveyors to be responsive and restrict use when and as necessary.
- Mr. Dobson: In 2007, I was contracted by the OBWB and MoE to provide a report on hydrometric needs in the Okanagan. The report was provided in 2008 and I'm here to give an update.

Lee Hesketh entered room at 1:42 p.m.

- Mr. Hesketh: BC Cattlemen's Association has asked me to get involved in WAM. This has been a steep learning curve for our industry, but there is recognition that we need to respect the resource and properly manage ourselves. I'll be conducting a biodiversity tour on May 14 and 15 and invite everyone to come out.

6. PRESENTATION

6.1 Don Dobson, Dobson Engineering *Hydrometric Requirements for the Okanagan Basin*

Dr. Bauer introduced Mr. Dobson, noting discussion at last week's OBWB meeting and talk about the need for improved hydrometric data collection. The board has asked OWSC to provide recommendations that can be forwarded to the province, added Dr. Bauer.

Mr. Dobson provided a recap of a study conducted in 2007 on the current hydrometric network.

In 2007, he noted, there were 25 active stations operated by Water Survey of Canada (WSC) and 39 by others. But another 156 that were operated by WSC were discontinued. WSC has a high standard of data collection. But with decreased funding it has meant cuts and as a result, a lack of information for water suppliers. While the Okanagan used to be the best monitored region in Canada, the current number of stations is far fewer than what we need to properly manage water in the Okanagan, said Mr. Dobson.

Instead, Mr. Dobson proposed, that the Okanagan should continue with the current 25 stations operated by WSC, 32 operated by others, and that another 65 of the discontinued stations be reactivated, and 28 new stations be developed for 150 total.

The climate is different on the west side of valley than the east so it's important to monitor both sides, he said. Mid-elevation monitoring is also important, with suggestions that climate change is going to create changes in this area. Finally, for the OBWB's Okanagan Water Supply and Demand Study models to work most effectively, we need to understand what is happening in this area, Mr. Dobson continued.

The OBWB should be taking the lead on establishing new regional hydrology stations that would be operated by WSC, Mr. Dobson recommended, adding that the agency should consider holding

workshops for stakeholders and the public to review the recommendations and develop a plan. There are construction costs (about \$510,000) and ongoing operating costs (approximately \$400,000) that need to be considered, he added.

According to Mr. Dobson, standards and archiving is also fundamental. The BC Ministry of Environment and/or the OBWB should establish a permanent managed data warehouse to archive local data.

Mr. Dobson agreed with a suggestion that all the various data recording be integrated, such as the hydrometric monitoring, groundwater stations, snowpillows, etc. so that a more complete picture can be created.

There was some discussion about how this would look. Dr. Warwick Sears suggested that perhaps the OBWB could house the data as an interim measure until the province is ready to take it on. Mr. Edwards added that perhaps the data doesn't need to be housed in one place as long as people have access to it. Mr. Dobson agreed.

The operating costs that come with increasing the number of stations look large, Mr. Dobson said, but noted that water suppliers collect water flow data anyways and maybe more monitoring can be added. You can't properly manage something you don't have data for, added Mr. Dobson, noting that we've given water away for so long we are recognizing the cost of it and its part of doing business.

Mr. Hrasko noted that the water suppliers are currently required to collect information on what they release. Perhaps the Streamlined Water Use Reporting Tool (SWURT) will evolve to allow suppliers to input more data. But it needs to be easy, and suppliers will also want to be able to extract this information so they can watch their trends and plan, Mr. Hrasko added.

Discussion then turned to the ongoing operating costs and whether or not the federal or provincial government would support such a proposal. Mr. Millar noted that the federal government has no money right now, but there could be down the road. And, he added, it is important to stress that it is less expensive in the long-run to install and operate these stations than to have an unpredicted and unplanned drought. Dr. Neilsen added that there will likely be an opportunity in the future for the federal government to build stations, but not operate them.

Dr. Bauer asked if people were interested in joining him in a sub-committee to look at this issue and draft recommendations to the Water Board. Mr. Miller, Mr. Dobson, Dr. Neilsen and Mr. Birtles volunteered.

6.2 Celine Davis, Ministry of Environment, Mgr. of Science & Adaptation *Province's Drought Management Plan*

Ms. Davis introduced discussion on the Province's Drought Management Plan, noting an upcoming workshop in Kelowna on March 25, encouraging OWSC members to attend and provide input.

The province's intention with the Drought Management Plan (DMP) is to ensure earlier communication around potential problems and the rollout of a clear response plan. As it is today, said Davis, the province tends to be more reactive. As we see further climate change, the potential for more frequent drought will increase. We have to be ready for this, she added.

The development of the plan includes looking at what is done in other jurisdictions (e.g. Australia), and holding cross-government workshops. It will then go to an Interagency Drought Working Group. From there a Drought Response Plan will be created.

Right now the province uses the First in Time, First in Right (FITFIR) model, said Davis. And under

the Fisheries Protection Act, the minister can step in if a fish population is threatened. The minister would weigh agricultural needs and then put limits on water use. However, the province wants to avoid these regulatory tools and try to get local people to conserve so we don't have to cut everyone or certain people off, Davis explained.

As part of the drought plan, the province is looking to develop "Drought Response Stages," she said. For example, Stage 1 would be under "normal conditions." Stage 2 = "dry" conditions which would require voluntary water restrictions. Stage 3 = "very dry" and would require voluntary conservation and restrictions. Stage 4 = "extremely dry" and would call for voluntary conservation and restrictions, but also a regulatory response.

At this time, the province is trying to determine when to elevate drought response to the next stage. And there is the potential that, depending on drought conditions, the province could declare a jump from stage 1 to 3. However, as we move through the stages, there would be increased communication, Davis added.

Through the drought workshops, the province is looking for information on pre-drought, drought and post-drought actions at the local level, and the communication needs and timing to address these actions, said Davis.

Dr. Bauer noted that there needs to be more data collection to ensure effective drought management. Ms. Davis agreed, saying that this year the province is identifying streams that may be under threat, but this needs to be expanded. As it stands, the government is trying to put something in place for this season and will then focus on refining it in future years.

Mr. Jatel suggested that he would like to see conservation promoted much earlier in the stages that as proposed now. Others at the OWSC table agreed.

7. NEW & UNFINISHED BUSINESS

7.1 Water Act Modernization – Committee Report / Discussion

Dr. Bauer introduced discussion around the OWSC's draft Water Act Modernization (WAM) submission to the Water Board, noting the board is pleased with the work and had some feedback. The board would like the council to take a last look at its suggestions and forward a final submission.

Dr. Warwick Sears noted that the board's biggest issue was around enabling legislation. The board was sensitive to the wording and didn't want it to be seen as a power grab by the water board, nor did it want additional power given to the water board. However, if the OWSC is happy with the wording it recommended, it should stay.

Dr. Bauer added that the OBWB and OWSC serves a critical function of looking and strategizing on water issues basin-wide. This is important, he said, otherwise we have municipalities advancing merely their own interests. This type of board – with taxation authority – operating elsewhere in the province is important, otherwise water will be held hostage to individual interests.

Ms. Bennest suggested that the board's concerns may be addressed by simply removing the words "taxation authority," from the recommendation.

Mr. Jatel noted that Appendix 3 was added in response to the province's WAM Discussion Paper. The discussion paper asks respondents if they support various WAM objectives and Mr. Jatel said that he indicated strong support since they are in line with the direction of the OWSC membership. However, OWSC members were encouraged to review the appendix and make sure they are in agreement.

Dr. Warwick Sears said that the WAM Discussion Paper discusses approaches to improving water governance, and asked OWSC members to review the comments on this issue provided in the submission's appendix.

Dr. Janmaat noted that there is the WAM Discussion Paper and the OBWB's submission contains inconsistencies between the environment and FITFIR. Are we in favour of FITFIR or not, he asked.

Ms. Davis responded, saying that the Discussion Paper was intended to open up the dialogue. Dr. Bauer added that he agrees there are inconsistencies, but that the OWSC merely suggests there be a re-evaluation of FITFIR because it understands that consensus on the issue will be difficult.

Ms. Bennest suggested the OBWB's submission stay away from groundwater numbers. Dr. Bauer noted that he and Mr. Jatel would work on the language around that.

Moved by Lorraine Bennest

Seconded by Rob Birtles

"That the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council forward its submission on the Water Act Modernization to the Okanagan Basin Water Board, amended as discussed."

CARRIED

7.2 Okanagan Water Supply Communication strategy: drought proofing the Okanagan

Mr. Jatel reported that the next drought proofing webinar, currently set for March 18, will be postponed. However, the feedback indicates they are worthwhile and there will be more of them. More information will be provided once a date is determined.

8. NEXT MEETINGS

The next meeting of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council will be held April 8, 2010 at Kelowna and District Fish and Game Club clubhouse.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:40 p.m.

Moved by Anna Page

"That there being no further business, the meeting of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council of March 11, 2010 be adjourned."

CARRIED

CERTIFIED CORRECT:

Chair

Executive Director