



Terms of Reference for the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council

October 10, 2006

I. Vision

The Vision of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council is that the Basin will have clean and healthy water in sufficient abundance to support the Okanagan's natural ecosystems, agricultural lands and high quality of life for perpetuity. Accurate, up-to-date water information and scientific knowledge will support community and regional planning. Water will be managed in a spirit of cooperation, and a valley-wide ethic of conservation will create a lasting legacy of sustainable water resources for future generations.

II. Mission

Council's mission is to be a trusted source of expertise and knowledge for sustainable water management in the Okanagan, providing balanced and considered advice to the Okanagan Basin Water Board – and through them to the community at large. The Council will draw upon its member's diverse range of knowledge and experience to develop the recommendations and implement the actions needed to achieve the Vision.

III. Function of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council

The Council was established by the Okanagan Basin Water Board as an advisory body and communication channel to water stakeholder communities throughout the Okanagan. The Council provides independent advice supporting sustainable water management in the Okanagan, using its collective expertise to identify basin-wide water issues and develop workable solutions that reflect the best available science, innovative policy, and consensus approaches. The Council recommends only those actions that can be undertaken within the bounds of the OBWB mandate. In addition to its role as an advisory council, the Council will develop programs that contribute to the local knowledge base and provide stewardship tools for the watershed community, as well as providing *ad hoc* technical advice on Board projects.

IV. Funding and Resources

The Council will be supported by funds allocated under the Okanagan Basin Water Board's Regional Water Management Initiative. The Board will approve an operating budget for the Council, and Board staff will organize Council meetings, produce agendas and record minutes, provide information requested by the Council, and participate in special meetings, events and projects organized by the Council. The Council may recommend projects for funding by Board that promote basin-wide water management.

V. Council Goals

The goals of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council are:

- V. 1.** To adopt an ecosystem-based approach for water resource management planning;
- V. 2.** To increase understanding among all stakeholder of the value of water and knowledge about the state of the Basin's water resources;
- V. 3.** To promote changes in human behaviour related to water resources, leading to greater water conservation and protection of water quality;
- V. 4.** To advance effective and innovative water policy, promote good governance, and build support for wise management of water resources in the Basin; and
- V. 5.** To engage the public and all stakeholders in shaping water policy for the Basin.

VI. Council Objectives

The Council will achieve these goals by taking the following actions:

- VI. 1.** Advising the Water Board on basin-wide water issues that require timely action to address current needs or ensure future sustainability.
- VI. 2.** Consolidating information and expertise – compiling a strategy for sustainable water management that will:
 - a. identify critical information gaps and strategies to fill them;
 - b. advise on existing or proposed water legislation and policies;
 - c. propose changes to existing legislation, and identify needs for new legislation or policies;
 - d. develop priorities for OBWB projects and grant programs based on valley-wide water resource objectives;
 - e. recommend stewardship practices to protect water quality and quantity;
 - f. alleviate allocation disputes during times of drought;
 - g. address the needs of fisheries, wildlife and other environmental resources;
 - h. advise on integrating water, land use and recreation planning;
 - i. provide standards for demand-side management;
 - j. evaluate changes in the value and economics of water in the Okanagan;
 - k. advise on costs, benefits and timetables for water management projects;
 - l. identify, track and increase coordination between all water-related projects in the Okanagan.
- VI. 3.** Integrating research into water management recommendations including:
 - a. the Groundwater Assessment of the Okanagan Basin;
 - b. the Okanagan Water Supply and Demand Study;
 - c. emerging research on Global Climate Change impacts;
 - d. new technologies and approaches.

- VI. 4.** Submitting position papers or verbal presentations on water related matters to the Okanagan Basin Water Board – to be used at the Board’s discretion to support their response to these issues.
- VI. 5.** Increasing public communication and awareness about water resource issues by:
 - a. assisting in the development of a report on the state of water in the Okanagan Basin;
 - b. developing strategies to educate the public and engage stewardship groups;
 - c. supporting water conservation education programs.
- VI. 6.** Developing programs and other implementation tools that conserve or enhance water quality and supply.
- VI. 7.** Building and strengthening partnerships between water stakeholders in the Okanagan – among these: all levels of government including First Nations; agricultural and industrial user groups; environmental organizations; community groups and water supply districts.

VII. Council Membership

The Okanagan Basin Water Board supports membership to the Council under the following basis:

- VII. 1.** The Okanagan Water Stewardship Council has a three-year mandate ending March 31, 2009. The term may be extended with the agreement of the three Okanagan Regional Districts.
- VII. 2.** The Okanagan Basin Water Board will invite selected organizations and jurisdictions to designate a representative to the Council – subject to Board ratification.
- VII. 3.** The total number of members is by decision of the Board and the willingness of invitees to participate.
- VII. 4.** Council members shall be appointed for eighteen-month terms. Members having to resign may nominate a successor appointee to complete their term, subject to Board ratification.
- VII. 5.** Council members may designate alternates. Alternates do not need to be ratified by the Board.
- VII. 6.** The Board may remove a member if it considers that this action would be in the best interest of the Council.
- VII. 7.** A Council Chair and Vice Chair will be elected by a simple majority of the Council. The vote requires the presence of no less than two thirds of the members.
- VII. 8.** The Chair and Vice Chair will serve for an eighteen month period. After that time elections will be held for both positions.
- VII. 9.** The Council Chair will be a full voting member of the Okanagan Basin Water Board with the exception of financial matters. The Vice Chair will represent the Council in the absence of the Chair.

VIII. Council Procedures

The Okanagan Water Stewardship Council will operate under the following procedures:

- VIII. 1.** Two-thirds of current Council members or alternates must be present to constitute a quorum.
- VIII. 2.** The Council will operate on a consensus basis. The Council is a group with common values respecting the importance of water in the Okanagan. The Council has a responsibility to ensure that everyone is heard and that decisions are based on the best possible alternative.
- VIII. 3.** The Chair will ensure that proposals being considered are well understood by everyone; that all objections or reservations have been heard before affirming that agreement has been reached.
- VIII. 4.** Objections may be registered in the minutes through:
 - a. *Reservations or Non Support* – the Council Member disagrees with the decision but he or she will not stop the group from supporting it
 - b. *Request for Postponement* – if a Council member strongly objects to a decision, they may request the Chair to postpone action on the item until the next scheduled meeting, to allow for a period of negotiation and sober second thought. Following the postponement period and additional Council discussion, the group may move forward with a decision based on majority opinion.
- VIII. 5.** The Okanagan Basin Water Board will provide staff to prepare agendas and minutes, and to research matters directed by the Council. Staff will also act as liaison between the Council and the Board.
- VIII. 6.** Council members can request items to be included in the agenda; however the final draft agenda will be developed by the Chair and approved at the beginning of each meeting.
- VIII. 7.** The Council may invite resource people or other members of the public to make presentations or otherwise participate in the meetings.
- VIII. 8.** The Council may form sub-committees or task groups to assess and report on specific issues as established by the Council.
- VIII. 9.** The Council will meet at the call of the Chair.
- VIII. 10.** Council Members who are not reimbursed by their employers or organizations may claim vehicle mileage at the current rate set by the North Okanagan Regional District.
- VIII. 11.** Council meetings will be open to the public.
- VIII. 12.** The Council sessions may be held *in camera* if the discussions involve personnel, land or legal matters.

IX. Communications Protocol

Communications between the Council and the Board will follow the following protocol:

- IX. 1.** The Council may submit position papers, written letters or recommendations, or verbal presentations to the Board for consideration during regular Board meetings.
- IX. 2.** The Board may then take the recommendation under advisement or pursue further action as permitted under the Board's mandate.
- IX. 3.** If an issue requires timely action, the Council may submit written materials to the Board via staff or the Board Chair. The Board Chair may then choose to convene a special meeting to address the issue if deemed necessary.
- IX. 4.** The Board may request the Council, as a body, to submit recommendations on particular water stewardship concerns.
- IX. 5.** The Board or individual Board directors may request *ad hoc* technical advice from individual Council members on particular water stewardship concerns. The request may be made through staff, the Council Chair, or directly to Council members.
- IX. 6.** Individual Council members wishing to address the Board on their own behalf should request in advance to be added to the agenda of a regular Board meeting.
- IX. 7.** The Council will communicate with the public in the following way:
 - a. the Council will provide recommendations directly to the Board. These recommendations then become public documents unless they regard personnel, land or legal matters;
 - b. the Chair of the Council and Council staff may speak to the public on the Council's behalf;
 - c. the Board Chair may designate another member of the Council to act as spokesperson on a particular issue;
 - d. individual Council members may not communicate with the public on behalf of the Council, except as given, above;
 - e. Council members must clarify that they are not speaking for the Council when they speak for themselves or their organization on a Council-related issue.
- IX. 8.** Media releases, web-postings and other outreach materials produced by the Council must be approved in advance by staff or the Board Chair.

X. Conflict of Interest

The Okanagan Basin Water Board does not wish to discourage Council members from bringing forward worthy project proposals for funding consideration by the Council and the Board. However, as an advisory body to the Okanagan Basin Water Board, the Conflict of Interest provisions of the community charter apply (Part 4, Division 6; see: http://www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/stat/C/03026_00.htm).