

# OKANAGAN WATER STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

*A Technical Advisory Body to the Okanagan Basin Water Board*

## MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD THURSDAY, MAY 12, 2011, AT BEST WESTERN INN, 2402 HWY. 97N, KELOWNA, B.C.

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### COUNCIL MEMBERS:

#### Present

B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Lands	Ted van der Gulik, Vice Chair
Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada, Agri-Enviro. Services Branch	Doug Edwards
Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada, Research Branch	Denise Neilsen
Assoc. of Professional Engineers & Geoscientists of B.C.	Don Dobson
BC Agriculture Council	Hans Buchler
BC Cattlemen's Association	Lee Hesketh
BC Fruit Growers Association	Lorraine Bennest
BC Ground Water Association	Remi Allard
B.C. Ministry of Environment, Fish and Wildlife Branch	Steve Matthews
B.C. Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Ops	Ken Cunningham
Canadian Water Resources Association	Brian Guy
City of Kelowna	Jason Ough (alternate)
City of Vernon	Rob Dickinson
Environment Canada – Pacific & Yukon Region	Dan Millar (alternate)
Oceola Fish and Game Club	Lorne Davies
Regional District North Okanagan	Anna Page
South Okanagan Real Estate Board	Elden Ulrich
Water Supply Association of BC	Bob Hrasko

#### Regrets

Interior Health Authority	Rob Birtles
Kelowna Fish and Game Club	Doug Flintoft
Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program	Carolina Restrepo-Tamayo
Okanagan College	Douglas MacLeod
Okanagan Mainline Real Estate Board	Howard Neufeld
Okanagan Nation Alliance	Gwen Bridge
Osoyoos Lake Water Quality Society	Mark McKenney
Regional District of Central Okanagan	Margaret Bakelaar
Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen	Evelyn Riechert
Shuswap Okanagan Forestry Association	Kerry Rouck
UBC Okanagan	Bernie Bauer
Urban Development Institute	Robert Evans

#### STAFF:

OBWB, Executive Director	Anna Warwick Sears
OBWB, Water Stewardship Director	Nelson Jatel
OBWB, Communications and Research Coordinator	Corinne Jackson
OBWB, Interim Office and Grants Administrator	Melissa Tesche
OBWB, Intern	Emma Talbot

#### GUESTS:

B.C. Ministry of Forests, Lands & Natural Resource Ops.	Solvej Patschke
Cows and Fish	Lorne Fitch
District of Lake Country	James Baker
Former Okanagan Water Stewardship Council Chair	Tom Siddon
North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance	Graham Watt
Urban Systems	Glen Zachary

### 1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Vice-Chair Ted van der Gulik called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. and welcomed members and

guests.

## 2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Moved by Denise Neilsen

Seconded by Lorraine Bennest

*“That the agenda for the May 12, 2011 meeting of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council be approved.”*

**CARRIED**

## 3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

3.1 Minutes of a regular meeting of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council held April 14, 2011, at the Best Western Hotel, Kelowna.

A small amendment was noted.

Moved by Lorraine Bennest

Seconded by Dan Miller

*“That the minutes from the April 14, 2011 meeting of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council be approved as amended.”*

**CARRIED**

## 4. BOARD REPORT

Dr. Anna Warwick Sears told council about a Strategic Planning Session held by the Board of Directors at their May meeting and led by consultant Allan Neilsen-Welsh. Future board priorities were discussed and there was endorsement of Water Management Program activities and the work of the Water Stewardship Council. Once a report on the planning session has been developed, the board will discuss it further, she said.

## 5. ROUNDTABLE – MEMBER UPDATES

Council members were invited to provide an update:

- Dr. Neilsen: Ag Canada is now using a climate data set to run models for the Okanagan region.
- Mr. Buchler: The BC Agriculture Council is looking to pilot a few farms based on the Riparian Management Field Plan, hoping that it will become a mainstream practice in 10 to 15 years. The council is also continuing its work to develop the concept of an Agricultural Water Reserve.
- Mr. Hrasko: Black Mountain Irrigation District is having problems with 4X4s in its watershed. BMID took photos and went to the media to try and bring attention to the issue. The problem is with a handful of riders. BMID is looking to have a meeting with the backcountry riders association and Interior Health to address it.
- Mr. Dickenson: City of Vernon has benefited from monthly meetings with a committee made up of developers, Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, B.C. Ministry of Environment and other ministries, regarding building in sensitive water areas. It was a useful committee which has unfortunately been cancelled.
- Ms. Page: Regional District of North Okanagan is busy helping coordinate the development of a Sustainability Plan for the Shuswap River Watershed.
- Mr. Hesketh: BC Cattlemen’s Association has published a brochure on Livestock, Drinking Water and Fish. The annual biodiversity tour of the Hesketh ranch is July 22 and coincides with a Wild Salmon Festival July 22-24 in Lumby. The Salmon Enhancement and Habitat Advisory Board also holds its board meeting and public forum that Friday night in Lumby. Everyone is invited.

- Mr. Edwards: The Groundwater Well Monitoring Committee is looking to install additional wells in the Okanagan this year. A steering committee is being formed with provincial and federal staff. The plan is to hold workshops and work with the Groundwater Association over the next two to three years to develop pilot projects in regional districts for private agricultural wells.
- Mr. Ough: City of Kelowna is finalizing its filter deferral application. Recommendations in its Source Protection Plan are focussed on being deliverable action items while meeting requirements and being economically feasible.
- Mr. Baker: As mayor for the District of Lake Country and an OBWB Board Director, interest in source protection is high since it's the best place to save money. There is also great interest in the Water Stewardship Council's work on groundwater, protection of stream health and an Agricultural Water Reserve. Lake Country is looking to diversify its tax base, but some 40% of its current land base is agriculture. The district is also looking to upgrade its water system.

Mr. Siddon entered the meeting at 1:24 p.m.

- Mr. Davies: Oceola Fish and Game Club have replaced culverts in the Winfield Creek Wildlife Habitat Preserve with bottomless, rather than round, culverts. The group is trying to lead by example about what structures are appropriate.
- Mr. Millar: The Operating Orders for Osoyoos Lake expire in 2013. The International Joint Commission has commissioned studies on a number of topics to assist it in its decision to renew the orders. The Commission is waiting on two more studies to be completed. The studies are online at [www.ijc.org](http://www.ijc.org).
- Dr. Guy: The Canadian Water Resources Association's AGM is in St. John's Nfld. in June. Summit Environmental has provided a report to the IJC regarding climate change and will be presenting its report at the Osoyoos Lake Water Science Forum, Sept. 18- 20, in Osoyoos.
- Mr. Ulrich: Environmental issues are not on the agenda for the realty community right now with the group heading into its busy sales season. There is interest in floodplain studies, but nothing is being done in this regard right now.
- Mr. Matthews: The newly named B.C. Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations is busy with water management planning in various parts of the Okanagan. Work is continuing on the restoration of Mission Creek and securing land in critical areas. Mr. Matthews has been in charge of overseeing the work of his branch in the Okanagan and this is being expanded to include the Thompson area.
- Mr. Cunningham: Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations is busy with the province's flood situation. Some areas are looking at opening up their reservoirs and pushing the water through now to prevent flooding.
- Mr. Allard: The BC Groundwater Association is struggling with geothermal drillers. The Canadian Groundwater Association is now working with the province to try and have drillers certified.
- Ms. Tesche: Water Board staff are working on developing a Topsoil Bylaws Toolkit, similar to the Groundwater Bylaws Toolkit. Staff are also preparing for summer milfoil harvesting.
- Dr. Warwick Sears: Water Board staff attended the Canadian Environmental Grantmakers' Network conference in Vancouver and there is interest in funding B.C. projects, especially to do with fisheries. The review of the OBWB's Water Management Program is continuing. The board is interested in expanding the Sewage Grants program to include stormwater management. The Water Supply and Demand Study project team is continuing to run models and is looking at water use and how it affects water availability in other parts of the valley.
- Mr. Jatel: The SWURT Team has developed a user manual for utilities. The Streamlined Water Use Reporting Tool (SWURT) was intended to help utilities track water use but is now allowing them to also report reservoir levels – something of great interest to the province right now with potential flooding. A SWURT training session was held last week with 18 utilities. The Groundwater Well Monitoring program is continuing thanks to a partnership between local governments, Agriculture and AgFood Canada, Environment Canada, the province and the OBWB. Six wells have been drilled in the South Okanagan and the team is looking to set up five more in the North and Central Okanagan this year.

- Mr. Siddon: The Meadowlark Festival invited the OBWB's Dr. Warwick Sears, Chair Stu Wells and I to share a panel with Maude Barlow next week in Penticton. As past chair of the Water Stewardship Council I am interested in the Water Management Program and the Water Supply and Demand Study. In my area, water issues in Twin Lakes are a concern.
- Mr. van der Gulik: Regional District of North Okanagan has made a five year commitment to use the Okanagan Irrigation Management Tool. The tool will be moved over to the OBWB server so Okanagan farmers can access it. BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands is holding a workshop June 8 in Vernon, June 9 in Glenmore and June 10 in Summerland to show farmers how to use the OKIM tool and improve irrigation. The program was funded by the Canada-BC Regional Adaptation Collaborative Program, which is running out so the hope is to have additional communities hook into the system to make it more effective and affordable. The province has sent information to local government regarding riparian setbacks and is asking that bylaws conform. People are getting certified through the Irrigation Industry Association of B.C. but there are no irrigation conservation standards to follow, so IIAABC is developing a standard for designers to use.
- Ms. Jackson: Water Board staff launched the Okanagan WaterWise Challenge during World Water Week (at the end of March) and it continued until B.C. Drinking Water Week in May. The contest was aimed at five to 15 year olds, encouraging them to learn more about Okanagan water and be entered to win a pool and pizza party. About 200 young people took the challenge and another 100 or so took the challenge but did not enter the contest (some of these were adults). Staff were very pleased with the results and will be looking to do something similar next year. Staff are also coordinating an "Okanagan WaterWise series" in community newspapers throughout the valley, as well as on AM1150's The Early Edition. Stories will include pieces on xeriscaping, proper irrigation, groundwater, water conservation, water for fish, and others.

## 6. **DELEGATION – WATER MANAGEMENT PLANNING**

Cows & Fish – Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Society: Lorne Fitch, Provincial Riparian Specialist

North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance: Graham Watt, Basin Planner

Mr. Fitch began the presentation and spoke on "Stewardship and the Elements of a Complex Relationship." He used the analogy of food and eating, noting that we often eat more than we need. He went on to speak about ethics and action, and the need to recognize the importance of being healthy.

Mr. Fitch told of a number of projects that Cows and Fish have been involved in, helping landowners develop an ecological awareness and improve areas through proper riparian management. (Examples of stewardship projects can be found at [www.cowsandfish.org](http://www.cowsandfish.org).) In one case, he noted a rancher who was concerned that the willows the area was known for were dying, and the fish were gone. The man was willing to give up cattle grazing in the area to help in its recovery. The recovery was amazing, said Mr. Fitch, adding that the rancher has convinced his neighbours to join in the efforts.

Mr. Fitch noted the importance of engaging the people who can make a difference in ways that are not threatening. Effective communication does not focus on what's being done wrong, he added, explaining that it requires us to help people see their landscape through a new set of eyes. We need to help people understand – it's a lack of knowledge that needs to be addressed, he added.

The multiple uses in watersheds require us to work with many partners, Mr. Fitch continued, adding it is important to include landowners in discussions. They provide wisdom for their land.

It's important to note, Fitch added, that stewardship is about moving to long-term sustainability with elements of altruism. And, as engaged as people are, sometimes sustainability is hard to understand and truly adopt. Fear of prosecution or better economic opportunity may have to push the way for change.

Mr. Siddon noted that without laws in place, people have been known to deliberately do their environmentally damaging work quickly, before they get in trouble. Sometimes the stakeholder process is working far behind what is already happening. Mr. Fitch agreed and noted that it's not just about maintaining riparian areas for birds and fish, but for us too. It needs to be explained in terms that people understand – in terms of future generations, and providing a sustainable future for people's children.

Mr. Hesketh said that he believes stewardship comes down to being a good neighbour and that it requires fostering a sense of community.

Mr. Fitch agreed and went on to warn against financial incentives for change because when the taps turn off, the question is, "Will people continue to work in stewardship?" It is vital that we create a sense of community and awareness because, if this is missing, once funding stops, the work may not continue.

Cows and Fish does not provide funding because it doesn't have the capacity, Mr. Fitch added, but he said his group did re-evaluate its programs and looked at whether or not funding created change in attitudes. Of those surveyed, 95% who made management changes said they did it for reasons others than economics; 5% said they did it because Cows and Fish found them another funding source. So money is not the only inducement to change, Mr. Fitch argued.

Mr. Watt of the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance spoke next. When he started with the organization, he said, there was a lot of talk about the importance of partnerships, and Water for Life was introduced in 2003 as Alberta's plan for water stewardship.

As a result, the *Alberta Water Council* was created with 25 sectors engaged and makes recommendations to the province (that may or may not be adopted). There are also 10 *Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils*, and a number of *Watershed Stewardship Groups*, which are landowners doing the on-the-ground work (e.g. fixing problems in their creek).

Mr. Watt noted a number of the issues facing the North Saskatchewan River Basin, explaining it is a very rich area with agriculture, oil and gas, and includes Edmonton. The river is naturally silty, but there is a push to keep it as clean as possible because of treatment costs, explained Watt. As well, a number of wetlands have been lost in the basin and it has changed the hydrology, so there is an effort to try and restore them.

Bison ranches and agriculture in the area have caused an increase in nutrients entering the river, causing algae blooms. Road density and pipes for oil and gas have caused issues for fish.

Mr. Watt noted that his group is in the process of developing an Integrated Watershed Management Plan for the North Saskatchewan Watershed. Successes seen so far include municipalities developing clustered watershed plans because of the engagement. We're also seeing the development of "good neighbours," (e.g. people working together on fencing to keep cattle out of the water).

Motorized back-country use is also a problem in North Saskatchewan area watersheds, he added. The good news is that recreation groups are beginning to restore these areas, replant them, place signs asking people to be careful in the area, and building proper bathrooms. The alliance is trying to educate people on what a healthy watershed entails and the importance of this, and the interconnection between parcels of land within a watershed, said Mr. Watt.

Mr. Baker and Mr. Hrasko exited the meeting.

Mr. Watt opened the floor up to questions. Mr. Edwards noted that government needs local champions to help with this work and that it doesn't happen otherwise.

Anna Page exited the meeting at 3:48 p.m.

Mr. van der Gulik agreed with Mr. Edwards and added that these types of initiatives need local people behind them because there is so much movement within government.

Ms. Bennest noted that it is hard to hear about collaborative processes, that seem to work, getting cancelled, referring to the earlier report from the City of Vernon. Mr. Dickenson added that Vernon has forwarded a resolution to the Union of BC Municipalities on this matter. However, he noted, if OBWB directors take it back to their councils/boards to discuss and make it known that they support the process being reinstated, such a call would be much more effective.

There was some discussion about the best way to bring such matters to the Water Stewardship Council for debate and action.

Mr. Siddon exited the meeting at 4:15 p.m.

## **7. DISCUSSION – SOURCE WATER PROTECTION**

Mr. Jatel told council that the Source Water Protection Committee is looking at source protection in four areas: upper watersheds, urban protection, mainstem lakes and foreshore, and groundwater. Each of these have various issues that need to be addressed, he explained.

The intention, added committee member Mr. Dobson, is to present something to the Water Board of Directors for discussion and help the province protect these areas.

Mr. Jatel said that the committee is also looking at holding a workshop on source protection in the fall, and developing a position paper.

In response to a question, Dr. Warwick Sears noted that the Terms of Reference on the Sewage Facility Grants has been updated. There will have to be an increase in the tax requisition to the regional districts to expand the grant program but it could be in place within a year, she added.

## **8. NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

### **8.1 Position paper development**

Mr. Jatel noted that position papers are being developed on groundwater, source water protection, and an Agricultural Water Reserve. The papers will be created based on the discussions by the various committees and then presented to council. Once the papers have been discussed and any required revisions are made they would be forwarded to the Water Board of Directors for input.

Mr. Dickenson suggested that it is important that these documents be presented to the board, noting that they are the position papers of council – a collaborative group – and the importance of not watering them down.

### **8.2 Hydrometric monitoring – committee formation**

Mr. Jatel said that a committee is needed to work on hydrometric monitoring in the Okanagan. Dr. Warwick Sears added that a provincial representative mentioned that there could be funding to assist this project, operating like the groundwater well monitoring program, but would require the support of water suppliers.

Dr. Guy suggested that a committee already exists that could take this on, consisting of himself, Mr. van der Gulik, Mr. Dobson, and Drs. Neilsen and Bauer.

**9. NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council will be held June 9, 2011.

**10. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:38 p.m.

Moved by Rob Dickenson

*“That there being no further business, the meeting of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council of May 12, 2011 be adjourned.”*

**CARRIED**

**CERTIFIED CORRECT:**

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Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Executive Director