

OKANAGAN WATER STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

A Technical Advisory Body to the Okanagan Basin Water Board

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD THURSDAY, MARCH 8, 2012, AT BEST WESTERN INN, 2402 HWY. 97N, KELOWNA, B.C.

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Present

UBC Okanagan	Bernie Bauer, Chair
Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada, Research Branch	Denise Neilsen
Assoc. of Professional Engineers & Geoscientists of B.C.	Don Dobson
BC Agriculture Council	Hans Buchler
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
City of Vernon	Rob Dickinson
Interior Health Authority	Rob Birtles
Kelowna Fish and Game Club	Doug Flintoft
Oceola Fish and Game Club	Rick Simpson (alternate)
Regional District North Okanagan	Anna Page
Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen	Evelyn Riechert

Regrets

B.C. Ministry of Agriculture	Ted van der Gulik, Vice Chair
Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada, Agri-Enviro. Branch	Doug Edwards
BC Cattlemen's Association	Lee Hesketh
Canadian Water Resources Association	Brian Guy
City of Kelowna	Mark Watt
Environment Canada – Pacific & Yukon Region	Kendall Woo
Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program	Aaron Deans (alternate)
Okanagan College	Douglas MacLeod
Okanagan Mainline Real Estate Board	Howard Neufeld
Okanagan Nation Alliance	James Pepper
Osoyoos Lake Water Quality Society	Mark McKenney
Regional District of Central Okanagan	Chris Radford
Shuswap Okanagan Forestry Association	Kerry Rouck
South Okanagan Real Estate Board	Scott Rowlands
Urban Development Institute	Robert Evans
Water Supply Association of BC	Bob Hrasko

STAFF:

OBWB, Executive Director	Anna Warwick Sears
OBWB, Water Stewardship Director	Nelson Jatel
OBWB, Communications and Research Coordinator	Corinne Jackson
OBWB, Water Policy and Research Intern	Michelle Cook
OBWB, First Nations Liaison Intern	Kyla Lavalee

GUESTS:

Agriculture & Agri-Food Can., Pacific Agri-Food Research Ctr.	Scott Smith
District of Coldstream Council	Maria Besso
Nisqually River Council	Justin Hall
Member of the public	Glenn Sinclair

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair Bernie Bauer called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. and welcomed members and guests.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Moved by Don Dobson

Seconded by Hans Buchler

“That the agenda for the March 8, 2012 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 Feb. 9, 2012, at the Best Western Inn, Kelowna.

A small amendment was noted.

Moved by Hans Buchler

Seconded by Lorraine Bennest

“That the minutes from the Jan. 12, 2012 meeting of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council be approved as amended.”

CARRIED

4. BOARD REPORT

Dr. Anna Warwick Sears reported on the latest Board meeting noting a Strategic Planning Session will be held in June and there will be a request for council input. There was also discussion around the environmental compliance required to conduct milfoil work and the Water Board will be revising its milfoil program’s management plan in response.

The OBWB is still waiting to hear when Washington State files its application for the renewal of Operating Orders on Osoyoos Lake.

Dr. Glenn Sinclair entered the meeting at 1:11 p.m.

Dr. Warwick Sears noted that she and Mr. Jatel would be attending a Technical Advisory Committee meeting for the B.C. Water Act Modernization March 27 in Vancouver.

The Water Board is also working with the provincial and federal governments, UBC Okanagan and FORREX to hold a drought tournament with water utilities and others in October. A Climate Change Workshop is also being discussed, geared to CAOs and elected officials in local government. The workshop is intended, in part, to allow the OBWB to report out on the latest climate modeling results from the Okanagan Water Supply and Demand study.

The Similkameen Valley is doing a Water Management Plan and has asked the OBWB to assist with technical advice. The board agreed to assist.

The board also approved a nine-month internship at the OBWB for a First Nations liaison who will work with the agency to enhance communications between the Okanagan indigenous community and the Water Board.

5. ROUNDTABLE – MEMBER UPDATES

Council members and guests were invited to provide an update:

- Ms. Cook: Staff are continuing to work with local utilities to get them comfortable using the water-use web-reporting tool (formerly SWURT, now BC Water Use Reporting Centre).

- Mr. Buchler: Farmers in Oliver are concerned about a possible strike in Oliver. It has been suggested that agriculture water is not an essential service. Perhaps council wants to look at whether it should be deemed essential. On a personal note, our well fluctuates but it is the highest it has been in 15 years.
- Ms. Nielsen: Pacific Climate Impacts Consortium has the provincial mandate to look at climate change impacts. A former Environment Canada employee is working with the consortium and will also be running climate models. Staff with AAFC, Natural Resources Canada and Environment Canada will be meeting with representatives from China to look at mainstreaming climate change information.
- Mr. Matthews: Mr. Mike Burwash, a senior ecosystem biologist with Ministry of Environment, will be replacing Mr. Matthews when he retires at the end of March. The priorities for the coming year are on water management planning for Peachland, Trepanier, Vernon Middle Creek and many others, trying to rectify flow issues. Chair Bauer acknowledged Mr. Matthews' service in the community and on the council and was joined by others in wishing Mr. Matthews the best in his retirement.
- Mr. Dickinson: Vernon's Liquid Waste Management Plan is almost complete. The city also won a grant for Phase 1 of 4 of a wetlands project.
- Ms. Besso: Coldstream water rates are going up 17% which is causing some concern. The reason for the Greater Vernon Water increase is to address domestic use. GVW is reviewing its Water Master Plan and water separation projects which are costly.
- Ms. Page: RDNO is assisting in the Shuswap Lake Integrated Planning Process (SLIPP) process to develop a Shuswap watershed plan. Working groups (including residents) are meeting and looking at policy recommendations. The work is being funded in part through the Gas Tax Fund. Dr. Warwick Sears noted that it would be useful to have Ms. Page present on the process at an upcoming council meeting.
- Mr. Birtles: The B.C. Ministry of Health is reviewing the Drinking Water Team (DWT) structure. In the interim, the Southern Interior DWT is continuing its work. Interior Health is now looking at priorities for the coming year.
- Mr. Dobson: The Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of BC presented a Climate Change workshop last week with the OBWB for local government engineers on the Public Infrastructure Engineering Vulnerability Committee Protocol (PIEVC). The protocol is uniquely Canadian and recognized world-wide, helping local governments assess their vulnerability to climate change and integrate this into their work.
- Mr. Flintoft: Kelowna Fish and Game Club is looking to do habitat restoration work with the Oceola Fish and Game Club in the coming year.
- Mr. Simpson: Oceola Fish and Game Club is looking to address water shortages in Middle Creek.
- Mr. Allard: BC Ground Water Association is looking to address geothermal drilling issues. The BCGWA annual convention is March 26 to 30, at the same time as the BC Water Supply Association spring conference. On personal business, Western Water has been busy studying the water issues related to oil and gas exploration in Northern B.C.
- Ms. Riechert: RDOS is hosting the OBWB's water supply webinar at its office tomorrow and has invited local farmers and others to attend. RDOS' professional engineer in public works, Liisa Bloomfield, will be the alternate at Water Stewardship Council meetings.
- Ms. Jackson: OBWB staff are organizing a public forum for UN World Water Day and Canada Water Week on March 20 at Summerhill Pyramid Winery. The theme is water for food. Panelists include council vice-chair Ted van der Gulik, the OBWB's Anna Warwick Sears, UBC-O's John Wagner, permaculturalists Javin Bernakevitch and Michael Nickels, and Yehalem Metiku from Partners in the Horn of Africa. Each of the panellists will appear on AM1150's Early Edition as feature interviews throughout the week. The Okanagan WaterWise Challenge is being held for classrooms across the Okanagan. Classes are invited to enter multimedia submissions. The topic is "save water for what matters most." Details are at www.okwaterwise.ca. The contest runs until May 4 with winners announced May 16, during Drinking Water Week. Those holding an open house or some other event for DWW were asked to contact Ms. Jackson so she can help promote and provide materials for the event.

Mr. Cunningham entered the meeting at 1:55 p.m.

- Dr. Warwick Sears: The OBWB has been invited to attend and present at a Federation of Canadian Municipalities conference in Ottawa next week regarding water and wastewater issues for First Nations. There is interest in the OBWB's sewage facility grants program as one potential solution for communities.
- Mr. Jatel: Updates were provided by members who were unable to attend. Mr. Hesketh noted that the BC Cattlemens Association's Farmland - Riparian Interface Stewardship Program (FRISP) will soon be working with RDCO on a project. Dr. Guy noted that the CWRA is partnering with Engineers without Borders and holding a World Water Day – water and food security discussion. The OBWB's water supply webinar is tomorrow at 10 a.m. The Groundwater Monitoring Project has finished its ninth well with the latest installed in West Kelowna. Staff are working with Summit Environmental Consultants on the hydrologic connectivity project and are using modeling software to help with drought modeling and Agriculture Water Reserve work.
- Mr. Cunningham: Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Ops have hired two new people. The snowpack is at 100% normal for March in some regions of the Okanagan.

6. GUEST PRESENTATIONS – COLLABORATION AND CLEAR COMMUNICATION

6.1 Nisqually River Council Justin Hall, Executive Director

Mr. Hall noted that the purpose of the Nisqually River Council is to encourage and support sustainability in the Nisqually watershed, which stretches from the Nisqually Glacier on Mount Rainer to its delta at the Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge. The watershed is 202 sq. km with a population of 24,000.

The Nisqually River Management Program was created with the goal of providing an effective forum to address watershed issues, he said, providing a history of the program. There was an attempt to create a plan in the early 1970s, he said, and in 1974 the Boldt Decision recognized the Nisqually Tribe as a key player. In 1985 the Nisqually River Task Force convened at the request of the Washington legislature. The legislature directed the task force to create a plan. The result was a bottom-up process that included key stakeholders and early consensus-based decisions on significant issues.

The council has had great success over the last 25 years. A watershed community has been created with an atmosphere of respect and trust. It is understood around the council table that that a healthy watershed means a healthy economy.

He spoke to the importance of getting people to the table and talking who wouldn't normally meet together, adding that this is important in breaking down barriers and opening up discussion and understanding. The Nisqually River Council has representatives from government, universities, and it has advisory committees that include citizens and non-profits, and others.

This collaborative approach has benefited salmon recovery and other projects. It has also created direct access to on-the-ground managers and ensured greater coordination between agencies and community. There have also been challenges, he said, naming participation, staffing and funding.

Some of the pros and cons of the council's structure, Hall said, is that the body is legislature approved, it is not a regulatory authority, it has volunteer participation, and operates through influence and incentives,

6.2 Tradition and history of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council Dr. Glenn Sinclair

Dr. Warwick Sears introduced Dr. Sinclair, noting he was part of the team that helped with the

Okanagan Basin Study that was released in 1974 and was the precursor to the formation of the OBWB.

Dr. Sinclair presented to council a history of the issues that resulted in the formation of the Water Board (which mostly involved water quality concerns), the community consultation process and a look at the early years of the Board's existence.

7. NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

7.1 Discussion: Irrigation in the Okanagan – Board policy

Mr. Jatel thanked council members for their feedback on the draft irrigation policy adding that the committee will meet to review it, further develop the policy and bring it back to council. Once the document is finalized and approved by the board it will become a position paper for the OBWB.

8. STRATEGIC PLANNING – POLICY PRIORITIES FOR 2012-13

8.1 Input and feedback on proposed council priorities for 2012-13

Council members were asked to vote on what they saw as council priorities for the next term. The votes were tallied and Mr. Jatel noted that the top choices were:

1. A Source Protection Strategy
2. Hydrometric Stations
3. Water Use Plans for all major fish-bearing watercourses, and
4. Develop a groundwater pilot program

3. OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Jatel reminded council members of the March 9 water supply update webinar, and invited them to attend the March 20 Water Week event at Summerhill.

Chair Bauer thanked council members for their service during the last 18 months.

4. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council will be held April 12, 2012 at the Best Western Inn, Kelowna.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:23 p.m.

Moved by Steve Matthews

“That there being no further business, the meeting of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council of March 8, 2012 be adjourned.”

CARRIED

CERTIFIED CORRECT:

Chair

Executive Director