

**OKANAGAN WATER STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL**  
*A Technical Advisory Body to the Okanagan Basin Water Board*

**MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2012, AT  
BEST WESTERN INN, 2402 HWY. 97N, KELOWNA, B.C.**

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**COUNCIL MEMBERS:**

**Present**

UBC Okanagan	Bernie Bauer, Chair
Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada, Research Branch	Denise Neilsen
BC Agriculture Council	Hans Buchler
BC Fruit Growers Association	Lorraine Bennest
BC Ground Water Association	Remi Allard
BC Wildlife Federation – Region 8	Doug Flintoft
B.C. Ministry of Agriculture	Ted van der Gulik
B.C. Ministry Forests, Lands, Natural Res. Ops. (Resource)	Conrad Pryce (alternate)
Canadian Water Resources Association	Brian Guy
City of Kelowna	Mark Watt
Environment Canada – Pacific & Yukon Region	Chris Lee (alternate)
Interior Health Authority	Mike Adams (alternate)
Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program	Aaron Deans (alternate)
Okanagan College	Leif Burge
Okanagan Mainline Real Estate Board	David O’Keefe
Okanagan Nation Alliance	Zoe Masters
Regional District of Central Okanagan	Margaret Bakelaar
Regional District North Okanagan	Jen Miles (alternate)
Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen	Evelyn Riechert
Water Supply Association of BC	Bob Hrasko

**Regrets**

Assoc. of Professional Engineers & Geoscientists of B.C.	Don Dobson, vice-chair
Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada, Agri-Enviro. Branch	Doug Edwards
BC Cattlemen’s Association	Lee Hesketh
B.C. Ministry Forests, Lands, Natural Res. Ops. (Fish/Wildlife)	Mike Burwash
Shuswap Okanagan Forestry Association	Kerry Rouck

**STAFF:**

OBWB, Executive Director	Anna Warwick Sears
OBWB, Water Stewardship Director	Nelson Jatel
OBWB, Communications Director	Corinne Jackson
OBWB, Office and Projects Manager	James Littlely

**GUESTS:**

Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada, Research Branch	Scott Smith (alternate)
Friends of Summerland Ornamental Gardens	Eva Antonijevic
Okanagan Basin Water Board (RDCO)	James Baker
Okanagan Basin Water Board (RDNO)	Juliette Cunningham
Okanagan Basin Water Board (RDOS)	Michael Brydon
Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen	Zoe Kirk
Urban Systems	Michelle Cook

**1. ALL MEETING TO ORDER**

Chair Bernie Bauer called the meeting to order at 1:08 p.m. and welcomed members and guests.

## 2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Remove item 7. Lake Country – Water Licence Application

Moved by Denise Neilsen

Seconded by Remi Allard

*“That the agenda for the May 10, 2012 meeting of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council be approved as amended.”*

**CARRIED**

## 3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

3.1 Minutes of the joint meeting of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council and Okanagan Basin Water Board held July 3, 2012, at Head of the Lake Hall in Vernon.

A small amendment was noted.

Moved by Lorraine Bennest

Seconded by Denise Neilsen

*“That the minutes from the July 3, 2012 joint meeting of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council and Okanagan Basin Water Board be approved as amended.”*

**CARRIED**

## 4. BOARD REPORT

Dr. Anna Warwick Sears provided a report on the OBWB’s Annual Meeting. She also noted the formal announcement, with the Province of B.C., of John Janmaat as UBCO Water Research Chair and how the advisory committee for this chair will begin meeting soon.

Dr. Warwick Sears went on to outline a number of other projects underway. The Water Board is working with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to put on a Local Service Agreements workshop on Oct. 23 in Penticton, bringing together Okanagan First Nations bands and local governments to discuss joint initiatives on water, wastewater, and other services.

Liz Williamson from B.C. Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (FLNRO) will be presenting to the board at its next meeting regarding boat lifts on Okanagan lakes.

The OBWB has been working with the South Okanagan-Similkameen Invasive Plant Society to conduct public outreach regarding zebra and quagga mussels this summer. As well, the Invasive Species Council of BC is holding a training workshop on the mussels on Oct. 19 the Kelowna.

Chair Bauer added that the mussels are a real concern to the board and that a letter is being written to the federal government suggesting boat check stations on our highways, similar to the ones operating in the U.S.

Dr. Warwick Sears noted that the Water Board has received a grant to work with Environment Canada on an ecosystems assessment of Okanagan River.

Also, the OBWB is working with the Irrigation Industry Association of BC to put on a workshop in December on “What the Okanagan can learn from Las Vegas.” The workshop is intended for local government electeds and staff, those in the irrigation industry, and other interested community members.

## 5. PANEL DISCUSSION - OBWB

Chair Bauer introduced the discussion and welcomed three board members including Juliette Cunningham from RDNO, James Baker from RDCO and Michael Brydon with RDOS.

Dir. Cunningham began, noting the OBWB's strengths first, including:

- science-based research and collaboration;
- the OWSC;
- ability to access provincial and federal dollars;
- ability to engage media;
- the Okanagan WaterWise program and conservation efforts; and
- knowledgeable and professional staff.

Weaknesses:

- local government staff feel left out of the loop; they are invited to attend meetings, but can't attend so information doesn't always get to them and they are the ones that implement the science;
- lack of cohesive approach to stormwater management; engineering staff are hoping for greater collaboration;
- instead of tackling many issues, the OBWB should look at a couple issues in depth.

Opportunities:

- the Okanagan is positioned to benefit from migration because we are tracking the resource better than most.

Dir. Baker noted the strengths of the OBWB:

- milfoil control program;
- sewage facilities grant program; the way the Water Board is structured, requisitioning the entire basin for pennies per capita has made it easier for communities to address sewage issues; even with funding from province and federal government it would be difficult for communities to do this without OBWB grants; there has been great improvement to water quality thanks to the OBWB's SFG program;
- it is difficult to address provincial water issues, and would like a B.C. water ministry, but think a basin-wide agency is still valuable.

Weaknesses and Opportunities:

- there are some who have felt they have not benefitted from the OBWB but believe that is changing, including with the new Water Research Chair at UBCO.

Dir Brydon noted strengths:

- the fact that the agency already exists... Trying to get such an agency started today would be very difficult;
- OBWB provides an opportunity for North, Central and South Okanagan to work together on water issues on a basin-wide level, rather than as individual jurisdictions;
- professional staff;
- we have a board and council that that understands these are scientific, technological issues, not just political, so structure is solid; and
- bylaw toolkits and very useful for local governments.

Weaknesses:

- no legislative authority; the agency has little power of influence; write letters to senior levels of government and the OBWB is seen as having legitimacy and the letters often hold weight but little more;
- Water Supply and Demand Modeling was important, so was development of Sustainable Water Strategy but need to bring the two projects together and set priorities;
- if a regional district turns down the funding and the OBWB loses its professional staff;

Opportunities:

- the OBWB are in a position to be able to look at, and should be looking, the issue of water markets.

## 6. DISCUSSION

In response to a question from Mr. Watt, Dr. Warwick Sears said that the OBWB is still looking into the possibility of using Sewage Facilities Grant Program funds for stormwater infrastructure projects but that it will require agreement from all three regional districts. If the RDs agree, it would be approved in the 2014 budget at the earliest since the 2013 budget has already been set. Mr. Hrasko added that since the grant payments from the SFG program are expected to end in about 20 years, this is a good time to consider where we want those funds to go.

Dir. Cunningham added that municipal councils need to be more proactive in helping Local Service Areas apply for SFGs. A number of areas are still on septic and as it is now, it seems action is not taken until residents go to council she said.

There was talk about how some areas that require sewage upgrades get passed up by a community because of the cost and so council's are more inclined to do the easier projects first.

Ms. Bennest suggested that data should be collected to see what areas still need doing.

Dir. Brydon said that a pie chart might be useful that shows how the money that comes into the OBWB goes right back out the residents and communities.

There was discussion about the need for a watershed plan for the Okanagan – developed possibly by the OBWB, or some other agency. Dr. Warwick Sears noted that under the current Water Act the plan would get endorsed by cabinet and would be enforced provincially, but a lot of it would be up to local enforcement structures.

Dir. Brydon noted that bylaw harmonization between communities would be important. Dir. Baker added that whereas communities are inclined to act in the best interests of its own citizens, the strength in the OBWB is its ability to look at the entire basin and make recommendations that improve water and protect water for the entire valley.

Mr. van der Gulik said that the Sustainable Water Strategy is a blueprint for the work of the OWSC and the OBWB and a number of projects are based on that plan and this needs to continue. Dir. Brydon added that it may be time to review the Strategy and reevaluate priorities (e.g. sewage), or use it as the basis to encourage directors/councillors in the basin to apply for funds (eg SFGs).

Mr. van der Gulik went on to suggest that the OWSC and its Board needs to continue to refer to the SWS. Some of the recommendations cannot be acted on yet, but we should be moving on those items we can proceed on and this requires leadership from the Board and Council and back out to the Okanagan community.

It noting threats to the OBWB, it was suggested that downloading from other levels of government could be an issue. Also, it was suggested that elected officials and others often want to see something tangible coming out of the work of various agencies and if they don't see this, there could be issues. The Water Board's creation as a body that has no regulatory authority was noted as a benefit, but also a concern.

Mr. Pryce noted the importance of the OBWB and its council, adding that the OWSC allows stakeholders to come together and develop solutions to complicated issues. The council is unique in Canada, agreed Dr. Neilsen, where all four levels of government and various sectors come together.

Mr. Lee listed off good science, professionalism of staff, the stable nature of the agency, its long-term planning as items that Environment Canada likes to see and the reasons why they support the efforts of the OBWB. The work of the Water Board is also a fit with the federal agency's mandate, but it also appreciates participating at the council table, he added.

Ms. Masters added that the Okanagan Nation Alliance has been pleased with some of the partnerships but would like to see more stream habitat projects funded by the OBWB.

Mr. Adams noted that many of the challenges of three years ago continue (e.g. threat to water quality). He suggested the need for more communication to the public on important water issues.

Dr. Warwick Sears suggested that staff come back the next council meeting with a report on ongoing projects and how they fit within the comments noted.

## **7. ROUNDTABLE – MEMBER UPDATES**

Council members and guests were invited to provide an update:

- Ms. Bakelaar: RDCO is continuing its work on the Regional Growth Strategy with discussion papers presented to the board and now a public input phase.
- Ms. Bennest: it was a bad year for B.C. cherry growers with the heat.
- Ms. Masters: Okanagan Nation Alliance has completed, is in the process of, and is planning restoration in sections of Okanagan River and its tributaries. An Economic Valuation Project on Okanagan River is being done and results should be ready in October.
- Mr. Pryce: Ministry of FLNRO is looking at a possible pilot project using the Water Board's WSD study, its hydrologic connectivity work and the WEAP model to make allocation decisions. The province has been reviewing dam operations and is still watching for drought conditions in some areas of province.
- Dr. Neilsen: AAFC hosted a Chilean delegation in various parts of Canada, including the Okanagan, and they are interested in the irrigation scheduler, the WSD modeling, and in proceeding with some of these projects.
- Dr. Guy: The CCWA conference is in Vancouver in March. Some of the OBWB's research will be presented. Council members with issues they want included are invited to contact Dr. Guy.
- Ms. Riechert: RDOS has received funding to complete a wetland restoration project on Vaseaux Lake. The regional district will be discussing a variance on water for the Twin Lakes area at the September board meeting. A water plan for the Similkameen area is moving ahead. RDOS is also introducing groundwater protection and is looking at hillside developments.
- Ms. Kirk: RDOS is looking at replacing some of the water systems in Westbench, Sage Mesa's system was reviewed and issues have been noted. Work is being done on the Apex water system. Metering in Naramata is underway. Ollala is on a boil water advisory.
- Mr. Jatel: The OBWB and AAFC are putting on a drought tournament exercise on Nov 16<sup>th</sup> intended to look at decision-making in times of low water.
- Dr. Warwick Sears: We have been working with UBCO to develop an advisory committee to the Water Research Chair.
- Ms. Jackson: The OBWB's annual report is now up on the website [www.obwb.ca](http://www.obwb.ca). Photos are also available on the Okanagan WaterWise Facebook page at: <http://tinyurl.com/8bfkaeb>. Staff worked with South Okanagan-Similkameen Invasive Plant Society this summer on outreach materials regarding zebra/quagga mussels. The Make Water Work campaign wraps up at the end of September and has included radio, print and Facebook ads, billboards, contests and more. A news conference, wrapping up the Tap by Tap initiative (water saving kits) in the South Okanagan is set for next week. Ms. Jackson noted the many partners in these efforts.
- Mr. Littley: Work is being done to update the OBWB's various systems to improve efficiencies.
- Mr. van der Gulik: The Irrigation Industry Association of BC is partnering with the OBWB to deliver a workshop "What the Okanagan can learn from Las Vegas," on Dec. 5. The workshop is for local government electeds and staff, the irrigation community and other interested stakeholders.
- Mr. O'Keefe – as a representative of the Okanagan Mainline Real Estate Board and a Vernon area resident, there is great interest in hillside development and long-term planning and sustainability. Council members should be aware that the BC Real Estate Foundation funds various environmental projects.

- Mr. Flintoft: the BC Wildlife Federation is concerned with upper lake water storage projects, enlarging reservoirs and the impact this may have on wetlands. The federation is looking at doing an inventory of wetlands.
- Mr. Adams: Interior Health is working on source distribution systems, source water assessments and making improvements to smaller systems. The Emergency Response System, which kicked in with the Johnson Landing slide and Sicamous flood, is winding up its work on these files. IHA participated in a mock disaster in Kelowna this week that included a plane dumping fuel in McKinley Reservoir. Staff are helping address water issues that have followed from the Peachland fire. They are also helping with regional growth strategies.
- Mr. Deans: The OCCP is working on land use planning tools (biodiversity conservation strategy) for the Okanagan, looking at terrestrial but also water habitats. The group is hosting a workshop in late October on biodiversity conservation tools and will be working with the OBWB to help get the tools out to land use planners and others. The Allan Brooks Nature Centre is working with Trout Unlimited Canada to reinitiate the “yellow fish road” project in spring and fall, working with classrooms in the North Okanagan. Bishop Wild Bird Sanctuary is holding an open house Sept. 23 2-4 p.m. on its new xeriscape initiative, funded in part through the OBWB.

**8. NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council will be held Oct. 11, 2012 at the Best Western Inn.

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:36 p.m.

**Moved by Leif Burge**

*“That there being no further business, the meeting of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council of September 13, 2012 be adjourned.”*

**CARRIED**

**CERTIFIED CORRECT:**

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Chair

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Executive Director