



**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE OKANAGAN BASIN WATER BOARD
HELD DECEMBER 4, 2012, AT REGIONAL DISTRICT OF OKANAGAN-SIMILKAMEEN
101 MARTIN ST., PENTICTON, B.C.**

PRESENT

Chair Stu Wells	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Vice-Chair Rick Fairbairn	Regional District North Okanagan
Director Juliette Cunningham	Regional District North Okanagan
Director Doug Dirk	Regional District North Okanagan
Director Doug Findlater	Regional District Central Okanagan
Director Gerry Zimmermann	Regional District Central Okanagan
Director Tom Siddon	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Director Toby Pike	Water Supply Association of BC
Director Bernie Bauer	Okanagan Water Stewardship Council

REGRETS

Director Michael Brydon	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Director Keith Fielding	Regional District Central Okanagan
Director James Pepper	Okanagan Nation Alliance

OBWB STAFF

Anna Warwick Sears	Executive Director
Nelson Jatel	Water Stewardship Director
James Littley	Office and Project Manager
Corinne Jackson	Communications Director

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Vice-chair Fairbairn called the meeting to order at 10:18 a.m.

2. LATE ITEMS

- 5.1 Presentation by Grant Furness with B.C. Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations
- 7.3 Dir. Siddon re: road development at Sickle Point Marsh
- 7.4 Update on the arctic char fish farm in South Okanagan

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

"THAT the agenda of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of December 4, 2012 be approved as amended."

CARRIED

4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

- 4.1 Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of Nov. 6, 2012 at Regional District of Central Okanagan in Kelowna, B.C.

"THAT the minutes of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of Nov. 6, 2012 at Regional District of Central Okanagan be adopted."

CARRIED

Chair Wells entered the meeting at 10:22 a.m.

5. DELEGATIONS

5.1 Grant Furness, B.C. Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (FLNRO)

Dr. Warwick Sears introduced the discussion noting the Water Board has been required to meet provincial permitting requirements for the milfoil control program for the last three years. In the past year, there has also been discussion with the province and federal government around protection of Rocky Mountain Ridged Mussels (RMRM). Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans has since said it is moving away from regulating the mussels. After lengthy discussions, the province has approved OBWB to rototill in all of its regular areas except Kin Beach due to evidence of RMRM.

Mr. Furness noted milfoil control is a concern for FLNRO but there other competing issues the ministry is also looking to address, including endangered RMRM and the apparent North American decline in mussels. As well, the B.C. Wildlife Act and Fisheries Act classify mussels as fish which requires First Nations consultation.

Alternately, he suggested the OBWB find an alternate control method to rototilling.

Chair Wells said he is open to such consultation but added that there may not be consensus among Okanagan bands on these issues either.

Directors asked Mr. Furness a number of questions, including the possibility of the mussels being taken to a hatchery, being reared and re-released. The ministry official responded that finding the mussels is hard but FLNRO staff are looking at the possibility of relocating them.

The ministry appears to be managing specific species rather than managing the entire ecosystem, it was suggested. When asked what responsibility FLNRO has to manage invasive species (e.g. milfoil), Mr. Furness said the province does not have a responsibility in this area.

Chair Wells concluded that he would like to see a long-term solution to these issues and looks forward to continued discussions with the province.

5.2 Lisa Scott, Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society (formerly South Okanagan-Similkameen Invasive Plant Society) – Update on zebra mussel outreach

Ms. Scott provided directors with samples of public outreach materials from this past summer regarding zebra and quagga mussels, developed with financial support from the OBWB.

The introduction of invasive species is the leading cause of biodiversity loss, said Ms. Scott, adding zebra mussels originated in Europe and were introduced into North America in ballast water that entered the Great Lakes. It is now in 24 American states including Colorado and California. They out-compete native mussels including the at-risk RMRM, she added.

Calcium levels are one of the factors in a lake's vulnerability to these mussels. The Okanagan is considered one of B.C.'s most vulnerable regions.

While the mussels are currently an issue in Eastern Canada and the Southeastern U.S., an incident this past summer indicates the risk we face, Ms. Scott added. This past July, a boat carrying quagga mussels made it through various check points between Arizona and the Shuswap and ended up launching in Shuswap Lake. Luckily, the mussels were dead but the young are the size of grains of sand so it's still not known if they were introduced. The province

has committed to keeping an eye on it, she added. The province has also developed a policy paper to address prevention of invasive aquatic species.

For its part, the Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society (OASIS) and its partners are looking to create behaviour change, encouraging recreational boaters to “Clean, Drain and Dry” their equipment to prevent the spread of these mussels. Idaho has introduced a successful program and a similar program is being looked at for B.C., she added.

Prevention is the most cost-effective way to address this issue, said Ms. Scott, adding OBWB funding helped her society hire a student for public outreach this past summer, complimenting the work of the Invasive Species Council of BC. The group also worked with OBWB’s Okanagan WaterWise program to spread the message re: zebra/quagga mussels and outreach events.

OASIS is looking to continue this work in 2013.

Dr. Warwick Sears added the OBWB is looking to assist OASIS’ field/on-the-ground campaign and has been working with aquatic consultant Heather Larratt regarding a study on zebra/quagga mussels in the Okanagan. OBWB will also be developing a public education campaign to promote prevention.

Chair Wells thanked Ms. Scott for the presentation noting the importance of this initiative and how he would like to see these efforts include working with Canadian Border Services and the Government of Alberta.

5.3 Michelle Cook, Urban Systems – Update on BC Water Use Reporting Centre (BC WURC)

Ms. Cook provided an update on BC WURC (formerly the Streamlined Water Use Reporting Tool – SWURT) – an online program developed in part to help local water utilities report their water use which will soon be required by the province. The result was the development of a tool that allows local water utilities to easily report, but also track, their ongoing water use as well as use by other utilities. It is also useful to the OBWB and others in helping plan and manage the water of the Okanagan.

The program was launched in March 2011. Since then, Ms. Cook has been conducting outreach with utilities, helping them sign on to the system, collecting feedback and working with the software programmers to improve the program.

Directors were provided with a tour of the website. It was suggested that a “water supply outlook” showing monthly trends might be useful. Ms. Cook agreed, adding the site can be built out further the more information utilities provide.

Dr. Warwick Sears said the program was also created in response to the OBWB’s Water Supply and Demand Study which showed a lack of accurate water extraction data. This program has greatly improved this, she added.

6. **STAFF REPORTS**

6.1 Executive Director’s Report

IJC – Osoyoos

Dr. Warwick Sears reported that the International Joint Commission has been linking GPS map layers for boundary watersheds and creating some high resolution maps for our region. In

response to requests from Osoyoos residents, she hopes to work with the Town of Osoyoos to develop a web program to let residents and our milfoil crew track water levels in the lake.

Stormwater grant feasibility study

OBWB staff are working with consultant Mark Watt to help develop a plan to expand the Sewage Facilities Grant Program. The report will be brought to the board for review and then go out to regional districts for approval.

There was some discussion about the awarding of contracts.

Dir. Findlater exited the meeting at 1:10 p.m.

“THAT Okanagan Basin Water Board staff report back regarding the current policy on the procurement of consulting services.”

CARRIED

“THAT the Executive Director’s Report, dated November 28, 2012, be received.”

CARRIED

6.2 Water Stewardship Director’s Report

Water Stewardship Council

Mr. Jatel reported on the November Water Stewardship Council meeting and discussion regarding a potential Okanagan Water Management Plan (WMP). The December meeting will include guest speakers talking about source protection issues as they relate to a WMP.

Drought tournament

OBWB partnered with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada to put on a Drought gaming exercise Nov. 16, attended by local government staff and electeds, water utilities, water academics, and other water stakeholders (e.g. ranchers, fruit-growers, biologists). The exercise encouraged participants to recognize the various issues in determining who gets what in a drought. It also built on existing Okanagan partnerships and will be useful in informing the BC Water Sustainability Act, noted Mr. Jatel.

The exercise is being looked at as a potential teaching tool in schools and AAFC is looking to further develop the tool incorporating the improvements made in the Okanagan version. The federal department will be providing a report from the Okanagan event.

Chair Wells, who attended the workshop, said he would like the event held again with more elected officials participating since they will be making the tough choices during drought.

Groundwater monitoring and hydrometric stations

Eleven groundwater monitoring wells have been drilled in the Okanagan to date. Whereas the valley had 35 hydrometric stations at one time, the OBWB is working with partners to reinstall some of them. Two will be established in Lake Country this year at mid-elevation. Staff are also working with First Nations and Regional District of Central Okanagan on others. The establishment of these stations will help provide a better picture of water supplies in the valley.

B.C. Water Use Reporting Centre

The online B.C. Water Use Reporting Centre, developed between OBWB and the province as a way to track water use is now being used by the Nanaimo Regional District and Golden is interested in it. The province is looking at taking over management of the tool so the Okanagan project members are looking at making sure local information is secure.

“THAT the Water Stewardship Director’s Report, dated November 28, 2012, be received.”

CARRIED

6.3 Office and Project Manager’s Report

Sewage Facility Grants

Mr. Littley noted that Vernon has submitted three applications for Sewage Facility Grants and Westbank First Nations has also submitted one.

Water Conservation and Quality Improvement (WCQI) Grants

Directors were provided with a report regarding the call for WCQI applications for 2013.

“THAT the Okanagan Basin Water Board approve the call for applications for the 2013-14 Water Conservation and Quality Improvement Grants.”

CARRIED

There was some discussion about the process and how to approach those who are unsuccessful. Mr. Littley said he will make sure to invite unsuccessful applicants to contact the OBWB for more information which might assist with future applications.

Dir. Siddon suggested a retrospective to the board in the summer on what has been done though the WCQI grants.

“THAT the Office and Project Manager’s Report, dated November 28, 2012, be received.”

CARRIED

6.4 Communication Director’s Report

Ms. Jackson provided a report on various communication initiatives including the Dec. 5 “What the Okanagan can learn from Vegas” workshop. She also briefed the board on a report from McAllister Opinion Research regarding messaging around water issues and focus group results looking at the Make Water Work campaign.

“THAT the Communication Director’s Report, dated November 28, 2012, be received.”

CARRIED

7. **NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

7.1 Milfoil and Mussel Update Memo

Dr. Warwick Sears provided an update on FLNRO’s decision regarding this year’s rototilling season for milfoil. All sites have been approved for rototilling this year except one at Kin Beach in RDNO. Spring harvesting will be conducted at the site as in past years, she added.

7.2 Letter to B.C. Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations re: water licence approval

The board reviewed a draft letter from the OBWB to the province regarding water licence approvals. Directors were asked to send suggested changes and additions to Dr. Warwick Sears.

“THAT the Okanagan Basin Water Board draft, review and forward a letter requesting clarification on water licence approval to the B.C. Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations.”

CARRIED

7.3 Sickle Point Marsh

Dir. Siddon provided an update to the board regarding a proposed road at Sickle Point Marsh and concerns that this is an important area for salmon migration.

7.4 Update on arctic char fish farm proposal in South Okanagan

Chair Wells provided an update on the arctic char fish farm proposed near the Okanagan River channel, noting some concern and frustration with the approval process between DFO, the province and RDOS.

8. CORRESPONDENCE

8.1 Federal Minister of Environment to OBWB re: June 2012 letter about Bill C-38 and amendments to federal environment legislation

“THAT the Okanagan Basin Water Board receive the letter from the Federal Minister of Environment regarding its June 2012 letter about Bill C-38 and amendments to federal environment legislation.”

CARRIED

8.2 City of Vernon to Federal Minister of Environment re: zebra/quagga mussels

“THAT the Okanagan Basin Water Board receive the letter from the City of Vernon to the Federal Minister of Environment regarding zebra and quagga mussels.”

CARRIED

Dir. Pike exited the meeting at 2:15 p.m.

Directors reopened discussion on the letter from the Federal Environment Minister and agreed to bring the issue back to the next board meeting to address fully.

“THAT the Okanagan Basin Water Board reconsider the letter from the Federal Environment Minister re: Bill C-38 at its next board meeting and determine a response.”

CARRIED

9. NEXT MEETING

9.1 The date for the next regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board is February 5, 2012 at Regional District of Central Okanagan in Kelowna, B.C.

10. ADJOURNMENT

“THAT there being no further business, the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of December 4, 2012 be adjourned at 2:16 p.m.”

CARRIED

Certified Correct:		
Chair		Executive Director