

OKANAGAN WATER STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

A Technical Advisory Body to the Okanagan Basin Water Board

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD THURSDAY, JANUARY 10, 2013, AT BEST WESTERN INN, 2402 HWY. 97N, KELOWNA, B.C.

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Present

UBC Okanagan	Bernie Bauer, Chair
Assoc. of Professional Engineers & Geoscientists of B.C.	Don Dobson, vice-chair
Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada, Agri-Enviro. Branch	Doug Edwards
Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada, Research Branch	Denise Neilsen
BC Agriculture Council	Hans Buchler
BC Cattlemen's Association	Lee Hesketh
BC Fruit Growers Association	Christine Dendy (alt.)
BC Ground Water Association	Remi Allard
BC Wildlife Federation – Region 8	Doug Flintoft
B.C. Ministry Forests, Lands, Natural Res. Ops. (Resource)	Ken Cunningham
Canadian Water Resources Association	Rod MacLean (alt.)
Environment Canada – Pacific & Yukon Region	Kendall Woo
Interior Health Authority	Mike Adams (alt.)
Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program	Aaron Deans (alt.)
Okanagan Nation Alliance	Zoe Masters
Regional District of Central Okanagan	Margaret Bakelaar
Regional District North Okanagan	Renee Clark
Shuswap Okanagan Forestry Association	Kerry Rouck
Water Supply Association of BC	Bob Hrasko
City of Vernon	Rob Dickinson

Regrets

B.C. Ministry of Agriculture	Ted van der Gulik
B.C. Ministry Forests, Lands, Natural Res. Ops. (Fish/Wildlife)	Mike Burwash
City of Kelowna	
Okanagan College	Leif Burge
Okanagan Mainline Real Estate Board	David O'Keefe
Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen	Evelyn Riechert

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
BC Wildlife Federation – Region 8	Lorne Davies (alternate)
B.C. Ministry FLNRO, Research Hydrologist	Rita Winkler
B.C. Ministry FLNRO, Resource Manager	Ray Campton
B.C. Ministry FLNRO, Range Officer	Rob Dinwoodie
B.C. Ministry FLNRO, Tenures Officer	Richard Toperczer
Opus Dayton Knight	Timothy Phelan
Regional District of North Okanagan	Anna Page (alternate)
Technical Writer	Craig Baptie
Water Supply Association of BC	Patti Hansen
Westbank First Nations, Forestry	Grant Thompson
Western Water Associates	Laurie Welch

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair Bernie Bauer called the meeting to order at 1:11 p.m. and welcomed members and guests.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Moved by Don Dobson

Seconded by Doug Edwards

“That the agenda for the Jan. 10, 2013 meeting of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council be approved.”

CARRIED

3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

3.1 Minutes of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council held Dec. 13, 2012, at the Best Western Inn in Kelowna.

A couple small amendments were noted.

Moved by Don Dobson

Seconded by Bob Hrasko

“That the minutes from the Dec. 13, 2012 meeting of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council be approved as amended.”

CARRIED

4. BOARD REPORT

Dr. Anna Warwick Sears noted there was no meeting in January. Next meeting is February 5 at the RDCO office in Kelowna.

Chair Bauer invited council members to attend any of the board meetings.

5. OKANAGAN WATER MANAGEMENT PLAN (WMP)

Mr. Jatel said the board has asked council to explore the possibility of a WMP for the Okanagan. A backgrounder is available. Over the next while the council will be focusing on various key issues and today's is forestry.

Chair Bauer added that discussions are just starting to determine if we want to pursue a plan. Even if council decides against it at some point, the discussions are useful, he said.

6. GUEST PANEL: FORESTRY & OKANAGAN WATER MANAGEMENT

Ray Crampton, B.C. Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (FLNRO) – Resource Manager

Grant Thompson, Westbank First Nation (WFN)'s Heartland Economics LP – Forestry Manager

Rita Winkler, FLNRO – Research Hydrologist

Rob Dinwoodie, FLNRO – Range Officer

Richard Toperczer, FLNRO – Tenures Officer

Kerry Rouck, Gorman Bros. Lumber – Operations Forester

Don Dobson, Urban Systems - Senior Water Engineer

The panel was introduced noting they would each be speaking to their involvement in forestry and how it relates to a potential Water Management Plan.

Mr. Crampton began and spoke to the legislative framework and decision-making process for managing forestry and recreation around watersheds.

Mr. Dinwoodie, responsible for range management in watersheds, noted that at one time his department's only concern was with ensuring a healthy cattle supply. Today, it considers water, fish, forage, and more. Best management practices (BMPs) have been developed for herd health but also communication with water purveyors, monitoring, recording and reporting of issues, range infrastructure (e.g. fencing) and the introduction of silvopasture, luring cattle upland for forage and away from important drinking water sources.

Mr. Thompson noted that Westbank First Nation (WFN) was awarded a licence in the 1980s, began harvesting in 2005 and began planting first seedlings in 2007. Today the WFN's forestry company works with partners on source protection issues, including those not affecting the band directly. For example, after the Rose Valley fire the company worked with the Provincial Emergency Program and consultants to capture erosion which threatened a neighbouring community's drinking water sources. Mr. Thompson went on to describe a number of initiatives to protect water and fish, including bridges. The company has started building wind rows.

Mr. Rouck said that as a forestry company, Gorman's regards water protection as very important. The company is governed by the Okanagan-Shuswap Land and Resource Management Plan and has implemented a land-based sustainable management plan that meets the Canadian Standards Association requirements. Among the company's various efforts to be sustainable, it has installed fish habitat signage and bridges, trying to encourage backcountry enthusiasts to respect waterways. Staff also conduct road inspections and maintenance in an effort to protect water and wildlife.

Ms. Winkler told council that the province is working on a number of hydrologic research projects, including three large ones in the Okanagan (e.g. in Upper Penticton Creek). One of the projects in the province looks at forest disturbance effects on hydrologic processes including pine beetle. Research has found that it takes about four years to change the canopy. With loss of pine and forest canopy other ground cover came up holding the snow cover, she added.

The Upper Penticton Creek Watershed research is looking at logging, forest re-growth, and climate change effects on hydrologic processes and water supplies. Findings suggest tree removal in small to medium watersheds increase water supplies and that high water events should be expected. Climate change may compound these effects, she added. At the same time, riparian vegetation mitigates the effects of disturbance on water quality, channel stability and aquatic habitat, noted Ms. Winkler. In considering a WMP for the Okanagan, she said it's important to consider the landscape as a whole and to protect areas connected to each other. Maintain natural flows, build bridges and keep out of creeks, she added.

Mr. Dobson explained that with a 800,000 ha basin, 550,000 of this is forested of which 220,000 is considered a snow zone. Average annual precipitation in the basin is 53 cm. About 80% of this (44cm) is lost to evapotranspiration and evaporation, 7% goes back into the ground and 13% accounts for surface flows. Very little of that 53 cm is available, he added, noting climate variability and fluctuating inflow into Okanagan Lake makes water management all the more challenging.

Mr. Hrasko exited the meeting at 3:20 p.m.

7. DISCUSSION

Chair Bauer opened the discussion on the presentations.

In reference to a comment about the importance of keeping livestock out of creeks, it was noted that the province is looking at legislation around this. The B.C. government is also still looking at resource road legislation.

There was discussion about the importance of educating the public about the reasons people, pets and recreational vehicles need to stay out of creeks.

In reference to a question as to whether a percentage can be allocated to harvesting, several answered that a simple answer would be inappropriate and forestry must be guided by principles.

It was noted that when a licence is granted there is an expectation it won't have a deleterious effect on water quality, quantity and timing. But harvesting, in addition to fires and pine beetle, impact the hydrology of an area. Having a hydrologist make recommendations can help prevent problems.

There was discussion around the use of harvesting to increase water supplies and protect water (e.g. the fire guards used in 2003 as forest defence zones protected water sources too). Using forestry to increase water supplies could also increase groundwater, it was noted.

Removing the forest canopy means more snow in open areas, but early melt means you lose it earlier too, added Ms. Winkler. Ranchers have reported less water on highly exposed windy slopes.

Ms. Clark added that RDNO staff have noticed significant tree removal will impact the amount of water entering streams, in turn impacting flow for fish.

Chair Bauer suggested the development of the Okanagan-Shuswap Land and Resource Management Plan may hold lessons in the creation of a WMP. Dr. Neilsen said the forestry plan was a joint planning exercise where all constituents came together which is what will be needed with a WMP. Mr. Crampton added that the teeth in the LRMP came from being legislated. Legislation and bylaws are effective, he said, noting that the higher water rates in Vernon have prompted people to let their lawns turn brown.

Mr. Rouck exited the meeting at 3:42 p.m.

Additional comments:

- If legislation is lacking then develop it, but in many cases it's there and we need to enforce it.
- It may be useful to look at a water plan in three components: those responsible for groundwater, crown/public land (surface water mostly), and private land.
- Chapters for various sub-basins may be effective.
- We need to include all the players at the table, including the people watering their lawns, but agree this is the biggest hurdle.
- We have the vision but we still need to determine the scope so have something to guide us.
- Ms. Clark: helped with the LRMP as a rep from WSABC and we used various strategies for discussion that may be useful (e.g. with range we pushed for healthy calves – unhealthy calves could spread cryptosporidium). We also used strategies for working with recreation in watersheds.
- Mr. Woo: the federal government requires that with each new regulation one be removed. People don't want more regulations, they want the ones we have enforced. A gap analysis might be helpful to see what strategies line up with the objectives, and see how the OBWB can help people voluntarily comply or how communities can enforce the legislation.
- The LRMP is legislated but it is also a consensus document which could be useful here. The players are obligated by consensus.
- Perhaps BMPs could be used in helping draft a WMP since many refer to the OBWB and there would be consistency. Without consistency there will be problems.

Ms. Page, Ms. Clark, Dr. Neilsen and Mr. Smith exited the meeting.

8. ROUNDTABLE – MEMBER UPDATES

Council members and guests were invited to provide an update:

- Mr. Jatel: The Council of the Federation is providing national awards for water stewardship (one in each province) and the OBWB is nominating the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council. Letters of support from agencies represented at the council would be appreciated.
- Ms. Jackson: Over the next few months staff will be looking to create and launch a public information campaign to prevent introduction of invasive zebra mussels in the Okanagan, and re-launching the Make Water Work conservation campaign with partners.
- Mr. Littley: The deadline for the OBWB's Water Conservation and Quality Improvement grants is Feb. 22. For more information visit www.obwb.ca.

- Mr. Buchler: Work is continuing with a federal group on a national strategy for agriculture. More information should be available by the end of March.
- Mr. Woo: Despite Environment Canada cuts, the ministry considers the Okanagan a high priority and will be continuing to work with the OBWB, the council and its members to meet joint objectives. Regional director Paul Kluckner is also looking to re-engage.
- Mr. Flintoft: The BC Wildlife Federation has support for its Okanagan wetlands strategy and is now looking to have clubs join in and support on-the-ground wetland rehabilitation projects.
- Mr. Adams: IHA has had external and internal audits done and is now developing a strategic plan and will be looking for stakeholder input.
- Dr. Guy: The CWRA BC branch annual conference is March 5-7 in Vancouver. The work conducted in the Okanagan basin will be highlighted.
- Ms. Bakelaar: Applications to the OBWB's WCQI grant program that require an RDCO board resolution should bring applications to Ms. Bakelaar to coordinate. Work is continuing on a foreshore structures bylaw. The regional district is going through a reorganization. The new community services department now includes planning.
- Ms. Welch: Work is being conducted with AgCanada on a framework, looking at water's movement from bedrock to groundwater.
- Mr. Hesketh: BC Cattleman's Association is holding its annual conference May 23-25 in Vernon. Part of it includes a focus on "Grass, Trees and Water," looking to educate producers and the public.
- Ms. Dendy: BC Fruit Growers are happy to see a healthy snowpack. As a director with South East Kelowna Irrigation District, we are waiting to hear what is going to happen to help pay for needed system upgrades. BC Cherry Growers are working on a drought management plan.
- Mr. Crampton: FLNRO staff have already spoken with the OBWB board about its plans to tackle docks in 2013, looking at the cumulative impact of the docks and making sure they meet protocol to mitigate impacts on the environment. Local governments should be aware they have influence on dock size. Staff are working with dock builders and realtors so they know the dos and don'ts of moorage.
- Mr. Deans: The OCCP is looking to develop biodiversity and foreshore mapping educational materials for Okanagan Basin educators. It is also developing a network to connect educators, non-profits, business and government, based on the Columbia Basin educators network model.
- Mr. Cunningham: The snowpack is about normal at this time which is good news.

9. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council will be held Feb. 14, 2012 at the Best Western Inn.

10. ADJOURNMENT

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

Moved by Doug Flintoft

"That there being no further business, the meeting of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council of January 10, 2013 be adjourned."

CARRIED

CERTIFIED CORRECT:

Chair

Executive Director