



**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE OKANAGAN BASIN WATER BOARD
HELD MARCH 5, 2019, AT THE REGIONAL DISTRICT OF OKANAGAN-SIMILKAMEEN
101 MARTIN ST., PENTICTON, B.C.**

PRESENT

Chair Sue McKortoff	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Vice-Chair Cindy Fortin	Regional District Central Okanagan
Alt. Director Christine Fraser	Regional District North Okanagan
Director Rick Fairbairn	Regional District North Okanagan
Director Bob Fleming	Regional District North Okanagan
Director James Baker	Regional District Central Okanagan
Director Colin Basran	Regional District Central Okanagan
Director Tony Boot	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Director Rick Knodel	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Director Bob Hrasko	Water Supply Association of BC
Director Denise Neilsen	Okanagan Water Stewardship Council

REGRETS

Director Lisa Wilson	Okanagan Nation Alliance
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STAFF

Anna Warwick Sears	Executive Director
Nelson Jatel	Water Stewardship Director
James Littley	Operations and Grants Manager
Corinne Jackson	Communications Director
Kellie Garcia	Policy and Planning Specialist

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair McKortoff called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m.

Chair McKortoff respectfully acknowledged that the meeting was being held on the traditional and unceded territory of Okanagan Nation.

2. INTRODUCTION OF LATE ITEMS

5.2 Kari Alex from Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) presenting on Environmental Flow Needs Project

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

"THAT the agenda of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of March 5, 2019 be approved."

CARRIED

4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

4.1 Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of Feb. 5, 2019 at the Regional District of Central Okanagan

"THAT the minutes of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of Feb. 5, 2019 at the Regional District of Central Okanagan be approved."

CARRIED**5. DELEGATION****5.1 Lisa Scott, Exec. Dir. Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society (OASISS)**

Ms. Scott provided some background to the society, noting it was focused on invasive plants until it partnered up with the OBWB to address invasive aquatic species including zebra and quagga mussels. The OBWB and its Okanagan WaterWise program have been providing funding and support to OASISS for the last seven years to extend the reach of the Don't Move A Mussel efforts.

She provided some background on the mussels and then an update on invasive mussel outreach efforts in 2018.

There were questions about how some water bodies, at one time identified as having evidence of mussels, are now noted as water bodies where the invader has been "eradicated." It was explained that in such instances the reservoirs may have been drawn down and allowed to freeze, or perhaps a product like biopesticide Zequanox was used, or there may not have been enough genetic biodiversity to allow the species to take hold.

In reviewing how much is spent by other jurisdictions on prevention, Ms. Scott noted Montana, which had a mussel scare in 2016, has determined that if the mussels were to cross the Continental Divide that an infestation would cost \$243 mill a year. As such, the region is spending \$6.5 mill. annually on prevention.

There are two components to OASISS' efforts: mussel monitoring and public awareness, especially among the water recreation community, encouraging them to Clean, Drain, Dry their equipment. Monitoring was done at 18 stations along Okanagan lakes and checked once a month. Also, HCTF/provincial dollars helped fund plankton tows to conduct water samples, this was done in partnership in 2018 with the Osoyoos Lake Water Quality Society. Such monitoring efforts are part of a much larger Columbia Basin collaboration, Ms. Scott noted.

Looking at OASISS and provincial inspection results, there was some discussion about gaps. Some identified included funding, the need to reach those with non-motorized watercraft to stop at inspection stations, and legislation that requires all watercraft to be inspected before being allowed to launch in B.C. waters. Also, the province has stated that launches without signs should have signs installed.

In response to a question about natural predators, Ms. Scott noted that waterfowl like loons have been known to eat the mussels but would barely impact the mussels were they to establish. As well, the mussels are known to create toxic algae blooms that have results in bird die-offs. Gobi fish have also been found to eat the mussels but they are also a non-native species.

The question of floatplanes and firefighting planes, moving from one water body to another, was also raised. Dir. Basran asked for clarification regarding AIS being covered in federal transportation information.

5.2 Kari Alex, Okanagan Nation Alliance

Ms. Alex provided an update on the Environmental Flow Needs Project which is being conducted in partnership between the OBWB, ONA and the province.

A methods document was developed in 2016 and these methods are now being testing in Okanagan basin creeks identified as having high values (salmon). Under the B.C. Water Sustainability Act, the province is required to consider EFNs before permitting any new water licences. No EFN information currently exists on these creeks and they have water licences or licences pending. The work includes monitoring the life stages of existing fish. Fish are an excellent indicator for the health of a water system, explained Ms. Alex.

Understanding the water needs of fish and the timing and flow of water in a creek, plus irrigation demands, will help determine how much water is available and when, and whether or not there is a surplus or deficit of water on a particular water body.

In response to questions, directors were told that creeks, such as Trepanier in Peachland, that are already fully allocated were not considered for study since no new licences would be permitted.

6. CHAIR'S REPORT

Chair McKortoff asked directors who were going to the upcoming Federation of Canadian Municipalities conference to keep OBWB issues in mind. Dirs. Basran and Fairbairn, who are both going, agreed.

It was noted that Dr. Sears would be presenting on the LiDAR project at the Southern Interior Local Government Assoc. conference in Penticton.

7. STAFF REPORTS

7.1 Executive Director Report

Dr. Sears noted that the May board meeting will be a Strategic Planning Session, looking at the direction of OBWB efforts for 2020 – 2025.

An update was given on various flood protection projects currently underway. LiDAR acquisition is continuing, with the first batch of data expected to arrive in the next couple of days and which will be distributed to local Okanagan government IT departments to download. GeoBC is also creating an online space to access the information, Dr. Sears added. The OBWB held a LiDAR information workshop yesterday with 80 people from various sectors, including those working in Emergency Operation Centres, conservation, forestry and elsewhere, who are interested in accessing the data for flood mapping but also for firesmarting communities, improving habitat for fish, creating wildlife corridors, and more. Dr. Sears also reported on ONA's Flood and Debris Flow Risk and Resilience Assessment watershed tour and workshop she attended.

The board was updated on last month's discussion around Trout Lake. In speaking with two local hydrologists familiar with the area, it is a known saturated groundwater zone. In response to a follow-up question, Dr. Sears added that more information is required.

Directors were given an update on the latest snowpack conditions. Similar to this time last year, the Okanagan has low snowpack. In 2018, this was followed by the wettest March to May on record, which could repeat this year. Considering we are still in an El Nino year, it is likely the Okanagan will experience drought this year.

"THAT the Executive Director's Report, dated February 27, 2019, be received."
CARRIED

7.2 Water Stewardship Director Report

Mr. Jatel noted that the last Water Stewardship Council meeting included a planning session on the Sustainable Water Strategy.

Fraser Basin Council has facilitated an award of \$7,100 to the OBWB project from Natural Resources Canada to help develop Okanagan climate datasets which will be built into an online platform. These will support current flood and hydrology modeling efforts as well as be available to consultants and researchers for future projects.

“THAT the Water Stewardship Director’s Report, dated February 27, 2019, be received.”
CARRIED

7.3 Operations and Grants Manager Report

Mr. Littley gave an update on the milfoil control program, explaining that until 2010 the program did not require a permit. When staff asked to move from annual to a longer approval period in 2013, the province required more information. At the time, endangered Rocky Mountain Ridged Mussels (RMRM) were identified as a species of concern. As a result the province has limited operations in the last five years. Permits are required to work in all areas, and work is restricted in areas where there are RMRM. Staff applied for a permit renewal in August and is waiting to hear back.

There has been some question about the research that has been conducted so far and the actual health of the mussel population, added Dr. Sears.

The province’s current policy is that a mussel survey must be conducted before work in water is allowed, said Mr. Littley, adding that he would report back to the board once he hears more from the province.

The Water Conservation and Quality Improvement Grant Program received 31 applications with an ask worth \$678,000. Some \$300,000 is available. It appears that the change from a regional to a valley-wide program has resulted in several applications that show more coordination and collaboration. Staff will review the applications over next couple weeks and bring recommendations to the board at their next meeting.

“THAT the Operations and Grants Manager’s Report, dated March 1, 2019, be received.”

CARRIED

7.4 Communications Director Report

Ms. Jackson provided the board with the Focus Group results for the Don’t Move A Mussel and Make Water Work campaigns and noted that these would be used in the development of the 2019 efforts. She noted that the Final Report for both campaigns and the OASISS report would also inform efforts.

There was some discussion about next steps with the mussel outreach campaign and policy. Staff noted that they would be reviewing gaps, next steps, and reporting back to the board.

The board was updated on Canada Water Week events, including an upcoming screening of “Beyond Climate” which is sold out. The Okanagan WaterWise Challenge for youth is also re-launching, encouraging young people to “Be a Climate Hero.”

The OBWB's OkWaterWise program is selling rain barrels at cost once again, in partnership with the RDCO Waste Reduction Office's composter sale.

"THAT the Communications Director's Report, dated February 27, 2019, be received."
CARRIED

7.5 Policy and Planning Specialist Report

Ms. Garcia reported on the Ag Water Supply Communications Project, working with water suppliers to communicate water updates to ag users. Meetings are being held with the eight water suppliers who are participating in this year's pilot, she explained.

Ms. Garcia also provided a brief update regarding the two-hour workshop with the WSC on the Sustainable Water Strategy.

"THAT the Policy and Planning Specialist's Report, dated February 28, 2019, be received."

CARRIED

8. NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

8.1 B.C. Water Sustainability Act Groundwater Regulation Update

The board was updated on an OBWB request to the province to extend the March 1, 2019 groundwater licensing deadline to address the low number of applications. There was concern, explained Dr. Sears, that if a groundwater user did not properly license their well that they could be found to be extracting illegally and lose their place in a First-in-Time, First-in-Right system. Part of the issue in getting people to apply for a licence was the cumbersome process and delay in getting applications approved. On Feb. 19 the province, in response to various requests for an extension, agreed to reset the deadline for March 1, 2022.

The board discussed the issue and a recommendation that the OBWB send a letter to the province thanking them for the extension and offering recommendations for moving forward.

It was noted that residents that draw groundwater for their personal domestic use should simply register their well to ensure that it is recognized and noted by the province, but large extracts (e.g. water suppliers) are required to go one step further and apply for a licence.

"THAT the OBWB send a letter to B.C. Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, George Heyman, and B.C. Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development, Doug Donaldson, thanking them for the extension of the Water Sustainability Act groundwater licensing deadline and providing recommendations for better resourcing and next steps."

CARRIED

9. NEXT MEETING

9.1 The next meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board will be Tuesday, April 2, 2019 at 10 a.m. at Regional District of North Okanagan in Coldstream.

10. ADJOURNMENT

"THAT there being no further business, the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of March 5, 2019 be adjourned at 1:32 p.m."

CARRIED

Certified Correct:		
Chair		Executive Director