



**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE OKANAGAN BASIN WATER BOARD
HELD JUNE 4, 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
Director Rick Fairbairn	Regional District North Okanagan
Alt. Director Shirley Fowler	Regional District North Okanagan
Director James Baker	Regional District Central Okanagan
Director Colin Basran	Regional District Central Okanagan
Director Toni 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 Victor Cumming	Regional District North Okanagan
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STAFF

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

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair McKortoff called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.

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

2. INTRODUCTION OF LATE ITEMS

- 6.1.1 In-camera LiDAR item
- 6.3.1 Addendum to Office and Grants Manager Memo
- 8.6 and 8.7 Letters for correspondence

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

“THAT the agenda of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of June 4, 2019 be approved as amended.”

CARRIED

4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

- 4.1 Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of May 7, 2019 at the Four Points Sheraton Hotel.

“THAT the minutes of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of Four Points Sheraton Hotel May 7, 2019 be approved.”

CARRIED

Dir. Basran entered the meeting at 10:06 a.m.

5. CHAIR'S REPORT

Chair McKortoff noted a weed harvester on Osoyoos Lake. Mr. Littley provided more detail noting it as a private business to meet demand from homeowners. In response to questions, he added that the business will be required to follow the same regulations as the OBWB as it relates to Rocky Mountain Ridged Mussels (RMRM) and other environmental regulations. The private harvester will provide another option for homeowners while OBWB efforts address public and priority areas.

Directors were offered an opportunity to discuss their meetings at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities conference. Dir. Fairbairn noted that there was discussion about wanting the federal government to work more directly with local governments on Gas Tax funding, rather than working with the province as an intermediary.

A number of directors noted that it was difficult to get meetings with ministers and the Union of BC Municipalities convention offers a much better opportunity. Chair McKortoff said the Southern Interior Local Government Association is also best for these types of meetings. Dir. Basran added that he was one of nine mayors who met with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and he met with an infrastructure manager, but there were not a lot of ministers attending. The focus seemed more on social policy, he said, noting that Kelowna-Lake Country MP Stephen Fuhr seems best able to arrange meetings with ministers.

6. STAFF REPORTS**6.1 Executive Director Report**

Dr. Sears noted that the Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) Chiefs Executive Council is looking to appoint a new representative to the OBWB's Board of Directors.

The OBWB's Annual Public Meeting will be held Fri. Sept. 6.

LiDAR data is now making its way around to Okanagan local governments and the ONA for use by staff. Water Board staff are also continuing to work with ONA on some of their flood planning initiatives. A meeting is also scheduled with Regional Districts to discuss next steps in flood mapping.

Dr. Sears added that the City of Kelowna has said it will be adding their voice on the milfoil rototilling and RMRM issue. MP Fuhr met with the federal fisheries ministry to provide an update and local MLAs have also met with B.C.'s Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations to discuss concerns on this issue.

At the most recent Osoyoos Lake Board of Control meeting it was noted that a drought declaration was likely, given irrigation demand and the forecast for a dry and warmer than normal summer.

"THAT the Executive Director's Report, dated May 29, 2019, be received."

CARRIED

6.1.1 In-camera session (under sec. 90(1)(j) of the Community Charter

"THAT the OBWB move to in-camera under section 90(1)(j) of the Community Charter."

CARRIED

Rise and Report

“THAT the OBWB approve a LiDAR contract extension to Eagle Mapping for \$120,263.”

CARRIED**6.2 Water Stewardship Director Report**

Mr. Jatel reported on the May joint board-council meeting and committee reports. Dir. Neilsen noted the success of the follow-up strategic planning session.

This month provincial limnologist Mike Sokal will present on Okanagan water quality research findings and Kariann Aarup will provide an overview of the AquaHacking Challenge.

A new Okanagan local government wetland guide is being developed by Associated Engineering to assist wetland conservation and restoration initiatives in the valley.

EFN Phase 2 is wrapping up, determining specific flow needs on 18 priority streams in the Okanagan, including flow needs for different times of year. A final report should be ready in September. This work was done in partnership with ONA and the province.

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

CARRIED**6.3 Operations and Grants Manager Report**

Mr. Littley provided an overview of senior government response to invasive mussels since the OBWB began calling for action in 2012. As of 2019, the province now has 12 inspection stations (one open 24-hours), 64 auxiliary officers, 3 full-status officers with the authority to chase down those who don’t stop at the stations, a second mussel-sniffing dog, and some permanent funding that was built into the budget as of last year.

The province is still dependent on additional funding from BC Hydro, Columbia Basin Trust, Columbia Power and Fortis BC. This five-year funding partnership which began in spring 2016 is coming to an end in early 2020. Dr. Sears recently presented in Ottawa to the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans and reiterated the OBWB’s call for matching federal funding to supplement provincial budgets, similar to what is being done in the U.S.

The province’s own numbers indicate 81% compliance at inspection stations with a number of people still not stopping during hours that they’re open. Also, 11 of the 12 stations are open either dawn to dusk, or 10 hours a day, leaving several hours a day when an infested watercraft could come through.

In reviewing the gaps, it was recommended that the OBWB: 1) repeat its call for provincial legislation requiring all watercraft report for an inspection before launching in B.C. waters; 2) call for permanent and sufficient funding for its invasive mussel defence program, including full-status conservation officers to enforce compliance; 3) continue to urge the federal government to provide matching funds to the provinces for the inspection program, and 4) recommend local governments and water purveyors conduct vulnerability assessments on in-water infrastructure and prepare for a potential invasive mussel infestation.

With further discussion, it was noted that some jurisdictions have introduced regulations requiring those travelling with boats to pull their drain plug before travel, which could be recommended. An update to the Wildlife Act was also suggested to close a loophole in current legislation used to ticket someone for not stopping at an inspection station.

The board voted to send a follow-up letter to the province with recommendations for further action and a media release.

“THAT the OBWB send a letter to the province regarding its efforts to address invasive mussels with further recommendations, and follow-up with a media release.”

CARRIED

Mr. Littley updated the board on the RMRM/milfoil rototilling issue, stating that provincial staff have said that winter rototilling will be restricted around any new site found to have the native mussel. Staff are waiting to hear back from the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) regarding the potential listing of the RMRM as endangered. In the meantime, staff will conduct a survey of milfoil beds over the summer.

“THAT the Operations and Grants Manager Report, dated May 28, 2019, be received.”

CARRIED

6.4 Communications Director Report

Ms. Jackson gave an update on the Okanagan WaterWise Challenge, encouraging young people to be Climate Heroes and submit multimedia entries. Submissions were received from North, Central and South Okanagan and all received prizes. Grand prize winners were a Grade 1 class from Vernon’s Ellison Elementary and a Grade 9 class from Rutland Sr. Secondary. Both won a two-hour cruise on Okanagan Lake to learn about water. Entries can be found at www.OkWaterWise.ca/challenge.

Make Water Work launched on May 16 at École Glenmore Elementary in Kelowna. Students unveiled their WaterWise gardens and shared their learnings with Okanagan mayors, media and guests. Mayors pledged to conserve and invited residents to join them. Ms. Jackson also updated the board on the expansion of garden centre partners, from six to nine throughout the valley, carrying and promoting the Make Water Work Plant Collection, encouraging residents to buy plants suitable to the Okanagan’s climate.

Staff have begun work to re-launch the Don’t Move A Mussel campaign with an updated website, advertising and more. Training is also being held with those doing outreach to ensure they have the latest information when speaking with the public.

“THAT the Communications Director’s Report, dated May 29, 2019, be received.”

CARRIED

6.5 Policy and Planning Specialist Report

Ms. Garcia gave an update on the Agricultural Water Supply Communications Project, led by the OBWB to help utilities connect with ag customers regarding supply conditions so that they can plan for crop watering. Eight Okanagan water suppliers are participating in this year’s pilot project, and more than 300 customers have signed up to receive e-alerts with nearly 200 more expected to join.

The province's Thompson Okanagan Regional Drought Response Team has had two conference calls so far this year. On May 30, based on below normal snow pack and limited precipitation, the province elevated the Okanagan to a Level 2 drought rating indicating a potential water supply problem and the need for voluntary water conservation. Any changes in this rating will be determined by weather conditions but the forecast is for a hot, dry summer. In keeping with the OBWB's Drought Response Strategy, a Drought Bulletin was sent to Okanagan local governments and utilities.

There was some discussion about potential upland storage solutions. It was also noted that the Drought Bulletin is also sent to the media to reach the larger public. In response to questions, the board was told that the Make Water Work campaign, developed and delivered by local government and utility partners, includes the MakeWaterWork.ca website with links to watering restrictions for each community and messaging around drought. Specially created advertising is also ready to be rolled out if necessary.

"THAT the Policy and Planning Specialist Report, dated May 28, 2019, be received."
CARRIED

7. NEW & UNFINISHED BUSINESS

7.1 Review and approval of 2019 Audited Financial Statements

Dr. Sears introduced Brennen Giroux who presented the draft financial statements. Mr. Giroux noted the LiDAR project as a significant item this year, as well as the purchase of a new rototiller, adding that there were no concerns.

The board reviewed the statements and brought it forward for a vote.

"THAT the Okanagan Basin Water Board receive the 2019 Audited Financial Statements as presented."

CARRIED

7.2 AquaHacking Challenge Memo

Dr. Sears provided an overview of the AquaHacking Challenge, noting it was started by the De Gaspé Beaubien Foundation five years ago in Eastern Canada to bridge post-secondary students and the technology sector to address some of the most pressing freshwater issues. Past issues have included flooding, blue-green algae blooms, and more.

The students form teams, hear from freshwater leaders in the region about local issues, they then work on solutions and compete for funds in a Dragon's Den-like event and are then placed in a technology incubator to further refine their efforts. This year, the foundation was looking to expand beyond the Great Lakes and hold a challenge in Western Canada as well, and the OBWB recommended the Okanagan. The valley was considered a good fit because of the water research and data that is already available. The OBWB was also considered a good fit as a host based on the partnerships it has already developed in several areas, including with its Water Stewardship Council.

Organizers are hoping to attract participation from universities in B.C. as well as possibly Alberta and western U.S. states. The challenge is nine months and coincides with the school year.

Dr. Sears added that if the board approves participation, Mr. Littley would be named project manager. Funding from Aqua Forum would also hire a part-time temporary project coordinator.

Board directors were pleased with the opportunity to bring the program to the Okanagan.

“THAT the OBWB host 2019-2020 BC Aquahacking Challenge in partnership with Aqua Forum; AND THAT the OBWB Executive Director be authorized to sign a final agreement with Aqua Forum.”

CARRIED

8. CORRESPONDENCE

“THAT the correspondence from Township of Spallumcheen, Town of Osoyoos, District of Summerland, District of Lake Country, City of Vernon, Vernon Chamber of Commerce, and UN Association of Canada be received.”

CARRIED

9. DELEGATION

9.1 Michael Bezener of the Enowkin Centre on the “K’əmcənɪtkw (Alongside the water) Floodplain Re-engagement Project”

Mr. Bezener provided an overview of the K’əmcənɪtkw Floodplain Re-engagement Project, recognizing funding through OBWB’s Water Conservation and Quality Improvement Program, with \$29,000 in 2018, and \$25,000 in 2019.

The project is taking place on Penticton Indian Reserve #1 and is an effort to reconnect the floodplain to restore salmon beds for sockeye (which are currently extirpated) and Chinook (which are on a serious decline), as well as help endangered birds and aquatic life in the area.

Traditional ecological knowledge has shown that a healthy ecosystem requires native insects which require native plants. As such, the project includes working with students to collect seeds from indigenous plants, grow them, and planting them by the river to attract insects for the fish, and planting to provide proper and necessary shelter for the fry.

As part of the project, soil tests were conducted to determine if the area was safe for the fish. An assessment was also done and found that the floodplain re-engagement was planned on an archeological site, so the team is now looking for a more suitable location nearby.

“We’re all Okanagans now,” Mr. Bezener said. “We have to work together and see ourselves as friends and neighbours and family, otherwise we don’t have a future together.” If successful with this effort, he added, “We will all be able to live here for 1000s and 1000s of years because everything is back in balance.”

The board thanked Mr. Bezener for his presentation and the work that is underway.

10. NEXT MEETING

10.1 The next meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board will be an abbreviated meeting on Friday, Sept. 6, 2019 following our Annual Public Meeting at Rotary Centre for the Arts in Kelowna. Exact details to be announced.

11. ADJOURNMENT

“THAT there being no further business, the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of June 4, 2019 be adjourned at 1:55 p.m.”

CARRIED

Certified Correct:		
Chair		Executive Director