



**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE OKANAGAN BASIN WATER BOARD
HELD MARCH 2, 2021, ONLINE
OKANAGAN, B.C.**

PRESENT

Chair Sue McKortoff	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Vice-Chair Cindy Fortin	Regional District Central Okanagan
Director Victor Cumming	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 Doug Holmes	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 Christopher Derickson	Okanagan Nation Alliance
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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
Carolina Restrepo-Tamayo	Special Projects Coordinator
Kellie Garcia	Planning Specialist

TECHNICAL OBSERVER

Tessa Terbasket	Okanagan Nation Alliance
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GUESTS

Lisa Scott	Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society
Kevin Rothwell	107.5 Beach Radio

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair McKortoff called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

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

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

“THAT the agenda of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of March 2, 2021 be approved as amended.”

CARRIED

3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

3.1 Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of Feb. 2, 2021 held

online.

“THAT the minutes of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board on Feb. 2, 2021 held online be approved.”

CARRIED

4. DELEGATION

- 4.1 Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society (OASISS)’s Lisa Scott with overview of their 2020 Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Program

Ms. Jackson introduced Ms. Scott, noting that the OBWB’s Okanagan WaterWise program has provided funding to OASISS since 2012 to extend the reach of its “Don’t Move A Mussel” campaign with water recreationists.

Ms. Scott provided an overview of OASISS’s work, noting that in addition to invasive mussel prevention the society is also working to address invasive clams, insect pests and invasive plants. Invasive aquatic species account for about 15-20% of OASISS’s work, she added.

This past year, with COVID and concerns about the usual face-to-face outreach, the group focussed more of its mussel outreach effort to providing online support to businesses in an effort to get the word out. A variety of digital DMM materials were provided to OASISS, including posters, a boat checklist, rack card, web badge and more. This was supplemented by OASISS developed materials such as articles for newsletters and social media posts. Some 200 water-recreation related businesses were approached and asked if they were interested in the materials, and 109 requested the resource package.

Three summer students were hired and some face-to-face outreach was done mid-June to August, reaching 361 boats at 11 launches. Despite travel restrictions, the lakes were noticeably busy with locals and many Albertans, said Ms. Scott. Staff also conducted lake monitoring for the mussels with funding from DFO and the province, administered through the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund, and from OBWB-OkWaterWise. Some 156 water samples were taken on eight lakes. Substrate monitors were also deployed in partnership with marinas, yacht clubs and local governments at 13 locations in five lakes. As well, an RBC grant and funding from OBWB-OkWW helped expand a citizen science initiative, working with private dock owners to monitor for the mussels and residents to monitor beaches for invasive clams. An additional 19 volunteers were added.

Reviewing boater survey stats, Ms. Scott noted awareness for invasive mussels and Clean, Drain Dry has increased. Interestingly, an increasing number of boaters said they did not stop at inspection stations because they “didn’t see” the stations, or because they were “closed.”

There was some discussion about the province’s decision to close the Laidlaw inspection station. Ms. Jackson noted this was also noted by the public this summer. However, in asking the province about the decision, staff stated that - although it was a high visibility location - it did not have enough at-risk boats coming through to warrant staying open, especially with Canada Border Services was catching incoming watercraft at the Sumas crossing. Also, the border closure meant there were fewer incoming watercraft and any that did come in were commercially-transported, in which case the province was given prior notice to ensure inspection when necessary.

It was noted that once the border reopens, the provincial line of defence will be important. Mr. Littley noted that the province has said it is continuing to collaborate with its western provincial and U.S. counterparts, including through the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region.

5. STAFF REPORTS**5.1 Operations and Grants Manager Report**

Mr. Littley presented the board with a letter to the province, requesting stronger action on invasive mussels and the inclusion of six calls to action. The board agreed to send the letter and issue a news release.

An update was provided on milfoil control efforts. De-rooting is underway in Kalamalka and Okanagan Lake near Kelowna and operators are waiting for higher water levels to launch in Osoyoos Lake. It was noted that in past years, when rototilling was not done, there have been issues with algae blooms.

The board was presented with a Sewage Facilities Assistance Grant application from City of Vernon for a community sewer line.

“THAT the SFA notification for the City of Vernon Bella Vista Rd. Extension project be approved in principle as outlined above.”

CARRIED

Mr. Littley told the board that 24 applications were received to the Water Conservation and Quality Improvement Grant Program by the Feb. 26 deadline. The combined request is for \$575,000 with \$350,000 available. The applications will be reviewed and recommendations presented to the board at the next meeting.

“THAT the Operations and Grants Manager Report, dated Feb. 22, 2021, be received.”

CARRIED

5.2 Communications Director Report

Ms. Jackson presented an update on the *Our Relationship with Water in the Okanagan* – Education guides, noting an Okanagan valley-wide presentation to teachers at a Feb. 12 Zonal Professional Development Day Conference. Feedback was positive and there has been a number of requests for more information and resources. However, she added, not all requests are the result of the presentation, indicating the demand for such materials. A news release was also issued.

A discovery meeting was held March 1 between Habit Creative Marketing and local government and utility partners in the “Make Water Work” campaign. A similar roll-out will be held for the “Don’t Move A Mussel” campaign.

Other projects have included working with the RDCO’s Waste Reduction Office for the sale of rain barrels and composters with the sale starting March 1. Additional communications assistance was provided with the letter to the province on a review of the Okanagan Lake Regulation System, provincial mussel response, and the OBWB’s submission to the federal government on the proposed Canada Water Agency.

“THAT the Communications Director’s Report, dated Feb. 24, 2021, be received.”

CARRIED

5.3 Special Projects Coordinator Report

Ms. Restrepo-Tamayo told the board that planning for the Osoyoos Lake Water Science Forum is continuing and organizers are looking for additional funders to help with costs.

The Western Canada AquaHacking Challenge has 60 participants registered (65% male; 35 female) and organizers are looking at ways to encourage more female participation. They are also close to meeting their budget goal. There are now four water issues that participants will be invited to help solve. After considerable discussion with a potential water issue leader, it was decided that the fifth issue of improving water systems for Indigenous communities required a different approach than the current program offered. AquaForum, which leads the challenge, is looking at a separate challenge event for Indigenous water issues.

“THAT the Special Projects Coordinator Report, dated Feb. 21, 2021, be received.”
CARRIED

5.4 Policy and Planning Specialist

Ms. Garcia updated the board on the source water protection (SWP) project and a number of related meetings with groups which will help inform the work, including with RDNO's Regional Growth Management Advisory Committee and a watershed stakeholder meeting hosted by City of West Kelowna.

In response to a question about SWP issues often involving multi-jurisdictional use, Ms. Garcia noted that the SWP toolkit includes information about collaborating between various governments and licensees.

Work is also underway on the final year of the Agricultural Water Supply Communications Project, supporting local utilities in sharing water supply information to their agricultural customers. An update on the project will be provided at the April board meeting.

“Slow It! Spread It! Sink It! An Okanagan Homeowner’s Guide to Using Rain as a Resource,” has been a popular guide and was originally published in 2011. An updated 2nd edition is now available and online on the Okanagan WaterWise website, resources page (<https://okwaterwise.ca/resources.html#sss>).

“THAT the Policy and Planning Specialist’s Report, dated Feb. 24, 2021, be received.”
CARRIED

5.5 Water Stewardship Director Report

Mr. Jatel provided an update on the Feb. 11 Okanagan Water Stewardship Council meeting and a presentation by Natalia Moudrak with University of Waterloo’s Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation, regarding flood risk guides. The March meeting will look at local efforts to address microplastics. Planning is also now underway for the annual joint board-council meeting in May.

Work is continuing on the Okanagan Basin Hydrometric Information Network program. A map is being developed of current stations to be used as a benchmark for future expansion and can be shared at the April meeting.

Mr. Jatel reported on a presentation on the OkanaganFloodStory.ca website to the Association of Interior Realtors. A follow-up presentation will be provided by ONA and include some discussion about the benefits of flooding.

Discussions are underway with UBC Okanagan to expand on the Okanagan Wetland Project in 2021-22, including using the OBWB’s LiDAR data. Students are updating wetland maps and looking at how wetlands can be carbon sinks and sources of greenhouse gases. Additional

projects being considered include cattle-exclusion fencing in the South Okanagan and Mill Creek restoration.

“THAT the Water Stewardship Director’s Report, dated Feb. 24, 2021, be received.”
CARRIED

5.6 Executive Director Report

Dr. Sears explained that the joint board-council meeting in May would be 9 a.m. to noon and include a presentation by Ted Zimmerman, Executive Director of the Water Protection & Sustainability Branch of B.C.’s Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy. He has been tasked with developing a watershed security strategy, she added.

A letter from the OBWB, urging the province to undergo a review of the Okanagan Lake Regulation System, with letters of support from local governments has now been sent. A new release will also be going out soon. Dr. Sears added that she has been working with provincial staff and a consultant to review what studies have been done to-date and what studies are needed to help develop new regulations. This will be completed by April.

In response to a question from the board about water commodification, staff contacted UBCO’s Dr. John Janmaat who specializes in water resource economics for more information. His response indicates that this will not be an issue in the Okanagan.



“THAT the Executive Director’s Report, dated Feb. 24, 2021, be received.”
CARRIED

6. **NEXT MEETING**

6.1 The next meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board will be held Tues. April 6, 2021 at 10 a.m. at location TBD.

7. **ADJOURNMENT**

“THAT there being no further business, the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of March 2, 2021 be adjourned at 12:04 p.m.”
CARRIED

Certified Correct:		
		
Chair		Executive Director