



**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE OKANAGAN BASIN WATER BOARD
HELD JANUARY 10, 2023, ONLINE
OKANAGAN, B.C.**

PRESENT

Chair Sue McKortoff	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Vice-Chair Blair Ireland	Regional District Central Okanagan
Director Wayne Carson	Regional District Central Okanagan
Director Charlie Hodge	Regional District Central Okanagan
Director Victor Cumming	Regional District North Okanagan
Director Rick Fairbairn	Regional District North Okanagan
Director Christine Fraser	Regional District North Okanagan
Director Doug Holmes	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Director Rick Knodel	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Director Bob Hrasko	Water Supply Association of B.C.
Director Scott Boswell	Okanagan Water Stewardship Council (OWSC)

REGRETS

Director Tim Lezard	Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA)
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GUESTS

MLA Dan Ashton	Riding of Penticton
Alt. Dir. Adrienne Fedrigo	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Alt. Dir. Matt Taylor	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Laurie Cordell	City of Armstrong Manager of Planning Services

STAFF

Anna Warwick Sears	Executive Director
Nelson Jatel	Water Stewardship Director
James Littlely	Deputy Administrator
Carolina Restrepo-Tamayo	Office and Grants Manager
Corinne Jackson	Communications Director

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Exec. Dir. Sears called the meeting to order at 10 a.m.

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

Staff, directors and guests were invited to introduce themselves.

2. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

Dr. Sears welcomed directors appointed for 2022.

Directors appointed to the board:
From **Regional District of North Okanagan**
Mayor Victor Cumming
Director Rick Fairbairn

Mayor Christine Fraser
Alternate – Bob Fleming

Regional District of Central Okanagan

Director Wayne Carson
Director Charlie Hodge
Mayor Blair Ireland
Alternates – Gordon Lovegrove, Patrick Van Minsel, Kevin Kraft

Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen

Director Doug Holmes
Director Rick Knodel
Mayor Sue McKortoff
Alternates – Adrienne Fedrigo, Subrina Monteith, Matt Taylor

Water Management Appointments

Okanagan Nation Alliance

Coun. Tim Lezard
Alternate – TBD

Water Supply Association of BC

Mr. Bob Hrasko
Alternate – TBD

Okanagan Water Stewardship Council

Chair Scott Boswell
Alternate – Vice-chair Jeremy Fyke

Dr. Sears requested nominations for chair. Dir. Fraser nominated Dir. McKortoff. Dir. McKortoff accepted the nomination. There being no other nominations, Dir. McKortoff was re-elected chair.

Dir. McKortoff offered her thanks to the board and staff.

Dir. McKortoff requested nominations for vice-chair. Dir. Cumming nominated Dir. Ireland. Dir. Ireland accepted the nomination. There being no other nominations, Dir. Ireland was elected vice-chair.

Dir. Ireland offered thanks and noted his interest in joining the board and being a voice for water in the Okanagan.

3. INTRODUCTION OF LATE ITEMS

No late items were brought forward.

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

“THAT the agenda of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of Jan. 10, 2023 be approved.”

CARRIED

5. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

5.1 Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of Oct. 4, 2022, held online.

“THAT the minutes of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board on Oct. 4, 2022, held online, be approved.”

CARRIED**6. STAFF PRESENTATIONS****6.1 Executive Director presentation: OBWB overview**

Recognizing that there are several new faces on the Board of Directors, Dr. Sears provided an overview of the OBWB, noting that staff will each be providing presentations on the various Water Board programs they are involved in.

The board was told that the OBWB's purpose and vision is to provide a sustainable and healthy water supply in perpetuity. Background was provided on the board's structure, and how the organization was designed to support local government collaboration.

The mandate includes; defining water problems and priorities; communicating and coordinating between levels of government for water use and management; participating in surveys, investigations or projects on behalf of Okanagan local governments; establishing a liaison committee (the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council); contributing to the cost of constructing and upgrading sewage facilities; and, administering a milfoil control program within the basin.

The OBWB was set up to pool valley-wide funding, where everyone pays and everyone benefits, the board was told. It was structured to receive grants from senior government and provide grants to local partners, assist local partners to get external funding, and provide a platform for joint initiatives.

In July 2021, the board agreed to work towards establishing a working group to implement the spirit of UNDRIP and Syilx rights and responsibilities into the OBWB and work on other approaches to strengthen the relationship with the Syilx community. And, in 2022, a change was formally made to OBWB governance, ensuring the Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) board representative had equal voting powers as regional district directors.

Current board priorities, added Dr. Sears, include: efforts to protect Okanagan waters from invasive zebra and quagga mussels, Okanagan Lake level management, studies and work to reduce flood and drought risks, the build out of stream flow (hydrometric) monitoring, and source protection. Challenges include: extreme weather, population growth and the need for upgraded infrastructure, legislative uncertainty with reorganizations and overlapping strategies, and lack of capacity in senior, local government and ONA. Strengths include the Water Board's structure for collaboration, diverse partnerships and supporters, and the fact that the agency has become a hub for valley-wide strategic planning with long-term vision.

6.2 Deputy Administrator presentation: Highlights of the OBWB's SFA and Milfoil Programs

Mr. Littley provided an overview of the Eurasian Watermilfoil Control Program, which began in 1976 as a cost-shared program with the Province of B.C. until they stopped funding it in 1996. The invasive plant was introduced in the early 70s and had spread throughout the Okanagan's lakes by 1974.

The plant causes a number of issues including blocking out light for native plants, prevents water from mixing which creates warmer surface water and colder water in the bottom. Its thought to promote algae blooms and impact native species while potentially helping some invasive species. The milfoil control program is important to ensuring a healthier local ecosystem and economy. Rototillers operate in the fall and winter and can reach down 18-20 feet. Harvesters operate in summer and can reach about five feet down. Current issues include: weed control made difficult

with increased in-lake/shoreline development, access to boat launches to deposit and truck the milfoil away, as well as concern for protected native Rocky Mountain Ridged Mussels. Recent research has suggested that the milfoil itself can be a problem for the local mussels and that weed control may be a solution.

Mr. Littley also explained how, under the OBWB's Letters Patent, the agency operates a Sewerage Facilities Assistance (SFA) Grant Program, contributing to the cost of constructing or upgrading sewage facilities in the valley. The current requisition is well-below the cap, Mr. Littley added. The program is currently undergoing a review which includes mapping areas still eligible for SFA funding under the current Terms of Reference.

7. **STAFF REPORTS**

7.1 Executive Director Report

Dr. Sears told directors that they will receive board meeting invites soon, with some being in-person and others online. Board training will also continue next month, she added.

Over the last couple of months, staff attended water policy consultations with the province on the B.C. Flood Strategy and B.C. Watershed Security Strategy. Staff are also beginning to look at long-term water indicators for the valley to track water quality and climate changes– a stated interest from members of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council and directors, added Dr. Sears.

Directors were provided an update on snow conditions and told that the province is having problems with the equipment used to collect Mission Creek snow pillow data and that the data is expected to be unavailable for the rest of the year.

“THAT the Executive Director's Report, dated Jan. 4, 2023, be received.”
CARRIED

7.2 Deputy Administrator Report

Mr. Littley updated the board on development of an invasive mussel vulnerability toolkit for local water utility use, and a request for proposal for an amphibious harvester to tackle milfoil. After some discussion about the benefits of an amphibious vs. traditional harvester, the board directed staff to initiate an RFP.

“THAT staff issue a Request for Proposals for the supply of an amphibious milfoil harvester, with options for a conventional milfoil harvester, and following that process, bring a recommendation to the board for approval.”
CARRIED

The board was told that the SFA grant program review is moving forward with a technical advisory committee that includes staff from a number of provincial ministries, Interior Health, local governments and Westbank First Nation.

“THAT the Deputy Administrator Report, dated Dec. 12, 2022, be received.”
CARRIED

7.3 Water Stewardship Director Report

Dr. Jatel reported that the current Okanagan Water Stewardship Council 18-month term ends in March and then member groups will be invited to reassign representatives for the new term.

An update was given on the hydrometric station program which began in 2021, reactivating and adding new stations, and run in partnership with Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) and Okanagan Nation Alliance. In response to a question, Mr. Jatel added that ECCC is looking to add two more stations in 2023, bringing their number to six (added through this initiative). Currently there are 16 being operated by the ONA with the intention of expanding these to 24. The real-time data is public and available through the province's data warehouse.

The board was told that updated flood-risk mapping is being completed and maps should be available for local government planning by April 1.

Directors were also updated on a project that looks at the value of agricultural water use, being conducted in partnership with UBC Okanagan, BC Fruit Growers Association and others.

"THAT the Water Stewardship Director's Report, dated Dec. 16, 2022, be received."
CARRIED

7.4 Office and Grants Administrator Report

Ms. Restrepo-Tamayo told the board that the OBWB's Water Conservation and Quality Improvement Grant Program issued its call for proposals on Dec. 1st. Several categories are available for funding, but the board in October approved the theme of "from data to action for community resilience," to encourage the use of open data developed by the OBWB, and others, to address Okanagan water challenges. The application deadline is Feb. 24, 4 p.m. Successful applicants can receive between \$3,000 and \$30,000.

The board was also updated on the Osoyoos Lake Water Science Forum, held Oct. 27 to 29, hosted by the Osoyoos Indian Band and Town of Osoyoos, and presented by OBWB, the International Joint Commission and Okanagan Nation Alliance, and others. This was the fourth such conference with earlier ones held in 2007, 2011 and 2015. The theme of the most recent conference was bridging Indigenous and western approaches to knowledge, science and management. The event was well-attended and feedback was positive. A film and final report are being developed.

"THAT the Office and Grants Manager's Report, dated Dec. 14, 2022, be received."
CARRIED

7.5 Communications Director Report

Ms. Jackson provided directors with wrap-up reports for the valley-wide "Make Water Work" (MWW) outdoor residential water conservation campaign, and "Don't Move a Mussel" (DMM) campaign to raise awareness regarding invasive mussels and promote water protection.

Campaign highlights included 7,162 new visitors to the MWW website and millions more reached with billboards, TV and bus ads, social media ads and more. It also leveraged almost \$59,000 in funding to deliver a campaign worth \$127,000 thanks to in-kind support. DMM had 7,919 new visitors and reached millions more with similar advertising, and leveraged \$46,800 in funding to deliver a campaign worth \$78,000.

The board was told that additional recent communication efforts included support to the OLWSF and WCQI grant application program.

"THAT the Communications Director's Report, dated Jan. 4, 2023, be received."
CARRIED

8. CORRESPONDENCE

- 8.1 Letter cc'd to the OBWB from the Shuswap Watershed Council re: resources needed to prevent invasive mussels

The board was provided with a letter from the Shuswap Watershed Council to the province regarding invasive mussel prevention and cc'ed to the OBWB. There was some discussion regarding the letter and Dr. Sears was asked to follow up with the council.

"THAT the letter from Shuswap Watershed Council to the B.C. government and cc'ed to the OBWB, re: resources to prevent invasive mussels, be received."

CARRIED

9. NEXT MEETING

- 9.1 The next meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board will be held Tuesday, February 7, 2023 at 10 a.m., online.

10. ADJOURNMENT

"THAT there being no further business, the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of January 10, 2023 be adjourned at 12:33 p.m."

CARRIED

Certified Correct:		
Chair		Executive Director