



**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
Alt. Director Gord Lovegrove	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 Tim Lezard	Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA)
Director Bob Hrasko	Water Supply Association of B.C.
Director Scott Boswell	Okanagan Water Stewardship Council (OWSC)

GUESTS

Simone Runyan	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
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STAFF

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

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

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

Chair McKortoff 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. INTRODUCTION OF LATE ITEMS

No late items were brought forward.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

“THAT the agenda of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of Feb. 7, 2023 be approved.”

CARRIED

4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

4.1 Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of Jan. 10, 2023,

held online.

“THAT the minutes of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board on Jan. 10, 2023, held online, be approved.”

CARRIED

5. FILM PRESENTATION

The board was shown a pre-release screening of the short film “Nk’mip (Osoyoos Lake) – The Heart of the Watershed,” providing an overview of the October 2022 Osoyoos Lake water science forum.

6. STAFF PRESENTATIONS

6.1 Water Stewardship Director presentation: Overview of Water Management Projects

Dr. Jatel provided background on the OBWB’s Water Management Program, including the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council. The council is the technical advisory body to the board and was included in the original 1970 mandate of the OBWB, to be a connection back to the community. The council is a multidisciplinary body that can make recommendations to the board, and the board can also ask the council to look at issues. The council begins a new term in April 2023 and has a number of committees, looking at various local water issues, including agriculture and irrigation, wetlands, climate change, and more.

Additional water management projects include the OBWB’s Okanagan Hydrometric Service, re-introducing and installing new hydrometric stations in the valley with Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) and Environment and Climate Change Canada; and the Environmental Flow Needs (EFN) work with ONA, looking at the water needs of fish and helping ensure these needs are met. The EFN project has been ongoing for a few years and is now helping the Province of B.C. and local water managers make better decisions to ensure proper flows. The OBWB also worked with the province and local governments a few years back to bring a number of groundwater monitoring wells back online. The purpose was to better understand what water was available and help local government staff make better planning and development decisions. Two additional monitoring wells, one near Vernon and one west of Osoyoos, are set to come online in the spring, Dr. Jatel added. As well, staff are looking to revisit the Mission Creek groundwater study.

Other projects include a two-year study with UBC Okanagan and other partners to look at the value of irrigation for agriculture, continued wetlands mapping and planning initiatives, and an Okanagan Lake water quality monitoring initiative.

In response to questions, the board was reminded that, as of March 1, 2022, the B.C. Government requires farms and water utilities using groundwater to license their well-water extractions. If land is sold without a well being licensed the new owner may lose their water rights. The importance of wetlands in helping address groundwater and stream temperatures was also discussed.

6.2 Communications Director presentation: Overview of Communications Program

Ms. Jackson provided an overview of the OBWB’s communications program, including an update on the board’s external communications protocol. Additional communications, she added, can be divided into internal and external efforts.

Internal communications currently conducted include: monthly board agendas, minutes, and board reports with highlights from the board meetings. Here is where internal and external communications crossover in an effort to promote transparency, Ms. Jackson added. The minutes

and board agendas are posted on the OBWB website. Agendas are also sent to local and senior government elected officials and staff, and media. The Board Reports (with highlights from the board meetings) are provided as an external communications piece to local and senior government electeds and staff, media, and OBWB-Okanagan WaterWise social media channels. Staff put out an annual report, hold an annual meeting, and during drought will put out Okanagan Drought Bulletins which are provided to all those noted above.

External communications include: the OBWB website with information on the history of the organization, its programs and projects, and more. Okanagan WaterWise is the OBWB's outreach and education program which has a website that includes information on where our water comes from, how it's used, the importance of being WaterWise and how to protect water in and outside the home, in business, in schools and in nature. There are several online and printed resources available for free to the public, business community, educators and students. OkWaterWise also has two spring-summer outreach campaigns: "Make Water Work" to address outdoor residential water conservation and "Don't Move A Mussel" to help protect Okanagan waters from an invasive mussel infestation.

Additional communication efforts include news conferences and news releases, presentations to various government agencies and the public. The Communications Director also responds to media requests, public information requests, and manages the board's social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn).

In response to questions, it was noted that the OBWB has also contributed Op-ed articles, and writes and sends letters to government regarding pressing water concerns, as well as letters of support for organizations that are working on OBWB-related issues.

6.3 Office and Grants Manager Presentation: Overview of Water Quality & Conservation Improvement (WCQI) Grants Program

Ms. Restrepo-Tamayo provided an overview on the WCQI program noting its purpose it to encourage collaborative approaches to water management, promote uniform standards and best practices, knowledge-sharing, innovative solutions, and help local organizations address water issues and enhance valley-wide sustainable water use.

The program began in 2006 and today provides grants between \$3,000 and \$30,000 with a total of \$350,000 available. Proposals can be multi-year projects, Ms. Restrepo-Tamayo added.

Since its beginning, the program has awarded \$5.5 million to 315 projects, including drought and flood preparation efforts, groundwater studies, water metering, education, irrigation, xeriscaping, mapping, water treatment studies, and more.

Groups and projects that are not eligible for funding include private utilities, for-profits, those located outside the basin and retroactive funding for past projects.

Each application is rated looking at whether project methods are appropriate for objectives, the potential outcome for water protection, valley-wide benefit, use of best practices, collaboration, budget and timeline and quality of proposal. The board also approves an annual theme that is eligible for bonus points.

7. STAFF REPORTS

7.1 Executive Director Report

Dr. Sears noted a couple staff updates, with Ms. Garcia rejoining the OBWB as part-time Policy

and Planning Director, and the hiring of Sandra Shira as an intern for OBWB's new climate indicators project.

The board was told that the BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy was able to bring the Mission Creek snow pillow data back online in mid-January which will help water managers plan for water use throughout the irrigation season and for returning salmon.

"THAT the Executive Director's Report, dated Feb. 1, 2023, be received."
CARRIED

7.2 Deputy Administrator Report

Mr. Littley told the board that winter milfoil rototilling in Okanagan and Wood Lake is now complete, and the crew is monitoring water levels on Osoyoos Lake to launch the machine and conduct weed control there as soon as its possible.

Directors were also updated on the Water Board's topobathymetric LiDAR being used by a range of diverse partners for projects beyond its original intent – demonstrating the extensive value of gathering these kind of data and making them open and available to the community.

"THAT the Deputy Administrator Report, dated Jan. 31, 2023, be received."
CARRIED

7.3 Water Stewardship Director Report

Dr. Jatel explained that the current term for the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council ends in March and provided the board with a list of potential organizations to be invited to send a representative for the new 18-month term. Directors had some questions about the organizations and the ability to include others in future years. Both Drs. Jatel and Sears noted that a review is possible with each term.

"THAT the Board approves the slate of organization members for the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council's 11th term (April 2023 – March 2025), as provided by staff."
CARRIED

The board was told about a presentation by Dir. Hrasko at the previous meeting on polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), an emerging class of contaminants for drinking water. The next meeting will include a presentation from Patrick Riley, Research and Environmental Projects Manager with Okanagan Indian Band.

"THAT the Water Stewardship Director's Report, dated Feb. 1, 2023, be received."
CARRIED

7.4 Communications Director Report

Ms. Jackson updated the board on plans for a screening and panel discussion to celebrate UN World Water Day (WWD). The event will take place online in the evening of March 21 (a day ahead of WWD) and more details will be provided in the coming days.

Directors were also told about Make Water Work campaign planning and interest from several Okanagan local government and utility partners, as well as garden centres, that are interested in continuing to partner on the initiative.

The board was also briefed on additional communication efforts, supporting the WCQI program and more.

“THAT the Communications Director’s Report, dated Jan. 31, 2023, be received.”
CARRIED



8. NEXT MEETING

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

9. ADJOURNMENT

“THAT there being no further business, the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of February 7, 2023 be adjourned at 12:14 p.m.”

CARRIED

Certified Correct:		
		
Chair		Executive Director