



**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE OKANAGAN BASIN WATER BOARD
HELD MARCH 7, 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 Rick Fairbairn	Regional District North Okanagan
Director Christine Fraser	Regional District North Okanagan
Alt. Director Adrienne Fedrigo	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.
Alt. Director Jeremy Fyke	Okanagan Water Stewardship Council (OWSC)

REGRETS

Director Victor Cumming	Regional District North Okanagan
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GUESTS

Simone Runyan	District of Coldstream
Lisa Scott	Okanagan & Similkameen Invasive Species Society

STAFF

Anna Warwick Sears	Executive Director
Nelson Jatel	Water Stewardship Director
Carolina Restrepo-Tamayo	Office and Grants Manager
Corinne Jackson	Communications Director
Kellie Garcia	Planning and Policy Director

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.

2. INTRODUCTION OF LATE ITEMS

The board was provided with the province's Watershed Security Strategy and Fund Intentions Paper.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

"THAT the agenda of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of March 7, 2023 be approved as amended."

CARRIED

4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

- 4.1 Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of Feb. 7, 2023, held online.

“THAT the minutes of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board on Feb. 7, 2023, held online, be approved.”

CARRIED

5. DELEGATION

- 5.1 Lisa Scott, Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society (OASISS) – 2022 invasive mussel prevention efforts overview

Ms. Scott provided an update to the board noting that when OASISS began 27 years ago it was mainly addressing invasive plants. In recent years they expanded to deal with aquatic invasive species.

Core funding for its aquatic invasive efforts is provided by OBWB’s Okanagan WaterWise program where OASISS’ focus is on education and outreach, mainly tackling invasive mussels and helping deliver the Don’t Move A Mussel (DMM) program. In addition to outreach, the group does sampling in waterways for mussels and in Osoyoos, specifically, for invasive clams. Additional funders include the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund (with funds provided by the Province of B.C. and federal government), and RBC. Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen provides additional funds for invasive plant efforts.

Funding from the OBWB went to hiring an aquatic invasive program supervisor from May to October, and three summer staff from June to August. Outreach included boat launch surveys, community events and presentations, distribution of DMM materials (hard copy and digital items).

With COVID restrictions relaxing last year, staff interacted with about 3,500 people, an increase from the previous year. Some 150 Okanagan water recreation-related businesses requested DMM materials, staff attended 13 community events and presented to 116 youth at nine summer camps. This year, there are already invitations to attend events including boat shows which are returning for the first time since 2019. An interactive video about invasive mussels was developed with RBC funding. This is being uploaded to iPads and will be included in 2023 outreach.

In addition to outreach, water monitoring for invasive mussels was done in valley lakes, and shoreline surveys for invasive clams were done in Osoyoos with the help of Osoyoos Lake Water Quality Society volunteers. All tests and surveys came back negative.

Surveys conducted with boaters indicates a drop in awareness about invasive mussels. It is not clear why this is, but it may be due to an increase in the number of people with water recreation equipment since the start of COVID-19. The survey reported that 24% did not stop at inspection stations and said they either didn’t have time, didn’t know they were supposed to stop (e.g. non-motorized watercraft), or the line-up was too long. In some cases, they indicated that the inspection station was closed.

There was some discussion about general difficulties hiring and retaining staff and that this also affected the province’s inspection program. Ms. Runyan asked about B.C.’s Early Detection and Rapid Response Plan and was told that an update is expected, along with an updated costing of a potential infestation. In the meantime, the OBWB recommended additional funding for the province’s inspection station program which was approved for the 2023 budget. The water board is also working on developing a vulnerability assessment toolkit for water utilities.

There were additional comments about the Idaho inspection sticker program, concerns about

floatplanes, and the need to continue outreach and education efforts.

6. STAFF REPORTS

6.1 Executive Director Report

Dr. Sears updated the board on the hiring of an intern to work on the OBWB's climate indicators project and a posting that has now gone out to hire a half-time communications coordinator.

The Okanagan Flood Story website is being updated with new maps and to make it more public-user friendly. The updates will include flood hazard maps that show flooding under current operations (how lake levels are currently managed) and under recommended changes to dam operating rules. A simplified set of maps will be added under a "Public User" tab showing what communities should be designing around under current operating conditions. Map layers will show vulnerable areas, including lower-income areas, those with cultural values, and those with high-economic impacts. The website was recently showcased by the Province of B.C. as a case study.

The board was updated on meetings held in February with the Healthy Watersheds Initiative (HWI), a collaboration of B.C. water-groups working to conserve and restore watersheds, including the OBWB. Dr. Sears explained that in 2021-22, the province distributed \$27. mill. to the HWI, with funding administered through the Real Estate Foundation of B.C., as part of its COVID-19 economic recovery. The OBWB received \$50,000 for its Source Water Protection Toolkit and another \$50,000 was awarded to Penticton Indian Band and En'owkin Centre's k'əmcnitkw Floodplain Re-engagement Project. At the most recent HWI meetings, there was much emphasis and consensus on the importance of including Indigenous knowledge and voices at the decision-making table, she added.

The province's recent budget announcement includes a \$100 mill. commitment to establish a Watershed Security Fund. The province has also released a B.C. Watershed Security Strategy and Fund Intentions Paper. First Nations consultation is very intentionally woven into the document, the board was told. The province is now asking for feedback on the paper. Dr. Sears added that recommendations will be brought to the board for consideration and invited directors to provide input in advance.

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

6.2 Policy and Planning Director Report

Ms. Garcia provided an overview of the Source Water Protection (SWP) Toolkit, developed to help water utilities protect drinking water supplies. There are several contamination threats in multi-use watersheds, like in the Okanagan, and protection at the source is one of the most effective ways utilities can ensure a healthy supply. Plus, the benefits extend beyond public health, she added.

Water suppliers are required to have source protection plans and often have an assessment completed, but no action plan. The toolkit is intended to help address the barriers to creating one, including funding, policies, plans and bylaws, education and engagement, and more.

As part of the SWP project, staff held webinars featuring the various topics covered in the toolkit. A "Choose Your Watershed" poster was also created as a public education piece, showing the dos and don'ts for a healthy watershed. A healthy watershed is key to clean, abundant water, Garcia said, adding collaboration is key. Water suppliers can lead through their source protection plans

which can lead to cumulative effects and benefits.

“THAT the Policy and Planning Director’s Report, dated Feb. 28, 2023, be received.”
CARRIED

6.3 Water Stewardship Director Report

Dr. Jatel gave an update on the last and upcoming council meeting. At the upcoming meeting, provincial staff will present on recent changes with the various ministries involved in water and explain the differences. Also, this will be Scott Boswell’s last meeting as chair. As of April, Vice-Chair Jeremy Fyke will become chair.

Work on the Hydrometric Service Program has consisted of monitoring quality assurance and quality control, with no installations over the winter. However, staff are preparing for six new stations in the spring.

The board was told the Okanagan flood risk assessment project is wrapping up soon. Dir. Fraser raised concerns regarding forestry practices in watersheds and was invited to forward any further concerns to the executive director.

“THAT the Water Stewardship Director’s Report, dated Feb. 15, 2023, be received.”
CARRIED

6.4 Office and Grants Manager Report

Ms. Restrepo-Tamayo provided an overview on applications to the Water Conservation and Quality Improvement Grant Program. In all, 22 applications were submitted with a total ask of \$587,637. There is \$350,000 available. Staff will be reviewing the applications based on the board-approved criteria and recommendations will be brought to the next board meeting.

“THAT the Office and Grants Manager’s Report, dated March 1, 2023, be received.”
CARRIED

6.5 Communications Director Report

Ms. Jackson reported on plans for an online film screening of *DamNation* and panel discussion on March 21st, celebrating UN World Water Day which is held March 22nd. The film was chosen as a good jumping off point for discussions around the modernization of the Okanagan Lake Regulation System.

Meetings are being held with partners to begin planning for the OBWB-Okanagan WaterWise’s two outreach and education campaigns, Make Water Work and Don’t Move A Mussel. Both run May to October, coinciding with residential outdoor watering and water recreation.

“THAT the Communications Director’s Report, dated March 1, 2023, be received.”
CARRIED



7. NEXT MEETING

7.1 The next meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board will be held Tuesday, April 4, 2023 at 10 a.m. at the Regional District of North Okanagan, Coldstream B.C.

8. ADJOURNMENT

"THAT there being no further business, the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of February 7, 2023 be adjourned at 12:02 p.m."

CARRIED

Certified Correct:		
		
Chair		Executive Director