

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE OKANAGAN BASIN WATER BOARD
HELD TUESDAY OCT. 7, 2025 AT 10 A.M. AT THE OFFICES OF THE REGIONAL DISTRICT OF
OKANAGAN-SIMILKAMEEN, 101 MARTIN ST., PENTICTON, B.C.**

PRESENT

Chair Blair Ireland
Vice Chair Doug Holmes
Director Rick Fairbairn
Director Victor Cumming
Director Bob Fleming
Alternate Director Kevin Kraft
Director Wayne Carson
Director Sue McKortoff
Director Subrina Monteith
Director Tim Lezard
Director Bob Hrasko

Regional District Central Okanagan
Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Regional District North Okanagan
Regional District North Okanagan
Regional District North Okanagan
Regional District Central Okanagan
Regional District Central Okanagan
Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Okanagan Nation Alliance
Water Supply Association of B.C.

REGRETS

Director Sheena Spencer

Okanagan Water Stewardship Council (OWSC)

STAFF

Melissa Tesche
James Littley
Nelson Jatel
Carolina Restrepo-Tamayo
Carmen Weld
Christina White
Sandra Schira
Amanda Burnett

Executive Director
Chief Operating Officer
Water Stewardship Director
Office and Grants Manager
Communications Manager
Water Quality Project Manager
Water Science Specialist
Communications Coordinator

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair Ireland called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

He respectfully acknowledged that we work on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded tm̓x̓w̓úlaʔx̓w̓ (land) of the syilx (Okanagan) people who have resided here since time immemorial. We honour and respect this land and the siw̓l̓k̓ (water) which flows through the valley and connects us all.

2. INTRODUCTION OF LATE ITEMS

No late items.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

“THAT the agenda of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of Tues. Oct. 7, 2025 be approved.”

CARRIED

4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

- 4.1 Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board held Sept. 5, 2025 at the Rotary Centre for the Arts, 421 Cawston Ave, Kelowna, B.C.

"THAT the minutes of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of Sept. 5, 2025 held at the Rotary Centre for the Arts in Kelowna, be approved."

CARRIED

5. BOARD CHAIR REMARKS – OBWB CHAIR BLAIR IRELAND

Chair Ireland acknowledged the Directors recent participation in the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) convention, noting their advocacy efforts for Okanagan water priorities and described the meetings as productive. The chair also extended appreciation to Director Bob Hrasko for hosting the OBWB on a recent tour of the Black Mountain Irrigation District.

6. DELEGATION/PRESENTATIONS

Danielle Paydli, Executive Director of the Cowichan Watershed Board (CWB), presented remotely about the Cowichan Watershed Board. Paydli explained the CWB, its mission, its origin story from the 2003 drought crisis, and key elements of their work. When describing the governance model, Paydli highlighted the decision to move away from the stakeholder model that was initially proposed. Instead, the CWB went with a co-governance model that is widely credited for the organization's success.

The Board asked follow-up questions about the Cowichan Watershed Board's structure, work, and technical advisory group. Paydli was thanked for the presentation and disconnected from the meeting.

7. STAFF REPORTS**7.1 Executive Director Report – Melissa Tesche**

Ms. Tesche thanked the Board for their support during the recent UBCM convention and expressed appreciation for the introductions provided by Dr. Anna Warwick Sears at the meeting.

She noted that budget preparations for 2026–27 are underway and that there have been staffing changes at RDCO. Cody Troutman is replacing Lori White as the Manager of Financial Services and will be the main financial point of contact for the OBWB going forward. The Board discussed budget priorities and organizational capacity.

Ms. Tesche reminded the Board that Allan Neilson of Neilson Strategies Inc. will be conducting interviews with Directors throughout October ahead of the strategic planning workshop scheduled for December.

The Board the discussed the looming water infrastructure challenges ahead for our communities and how OBWB could provide support. Staff will consider the best path for a project that would be driven by community needs.

"THAT the Executive Director's Report, dated Oct. 1, 2025, be received."

CARRIED

7.2 UBCM Strategic Priorities Grant Application Memo

The Okanagan Basin Water Board is applying for \$390,000 from the Strategic Priorities Fund to modernize its Hydrology Model across all 18 sub-basins, enhancing water and climate data for long-term planning and resilience. The project builds on prior work and includes a Mission Creek

technical demonstration pilot. This work will support the development of a new Water Use Plan for Mission Creek, a project that will be led by the Okanagan Nation Alliance.

“THAT OBWB Board of Directors support the OBWB application to the Strategic Priorities Fund Capacity Building Stream for the project ‘Updating the necessary science required to modernize Okanagan Water Use Plans to promote resilience and reduce conflicts.’

AND THAT OBWB commit to adjusting future financial plans as necessary to reflect grant funding and ensure successful project completion.

AND FURTHER THAT the OBWB authorize the Executive Director to execute any necessary contribution agreements in the case of a successful application.”

CARRIED

7.3 Chief Operating Officer Report - James Littlely

Mr. Littlely provided an update on the proposed Rapid eDNA Detection Tool for invasive mussel biosecurity, led by Dr. Michael Russello of UBC Okanagan. The project budget has been refined, with a remaining funding gap of \$400,000. OBWB staff recommended a partial contribution of \$200,000 over two years and emphasized the need to support fundraising efforts to fund the remaining funding gap.

“THAT OBWB provide \$200,000 (\$100,000 per year, starting April 2026) to UBCO for the Rapid eDNA Detection Tool for Invasive Mussel Biosecurity Project pending full project funding commitments from other sources.

AND THAT OBWB support and seek fundraising efforts to secure the remaining project funding.”

CARRIED

Mr. Littlely also reported on a recent trip to Victoria, where and Ms. Tesche met with provincial representatives from Ministry of Water Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS) on the invasive mussel file.

“THAT OBWB send letters to appropriate federal and provincial ministers calling for the actions outlined in the Chief Operating Officer’s Sept. 29, 2025 report.”

CARRIED

Mr. Littlely informed the Board that OBWB and the Okanagan Nation Alliance are preparing to co-host the second meeting of the Okanagan-Interior Invasive Mussel Working Group in Kelowna this fall. The session will focus on developing consensus-based recommendations for provincial inspection regulations, rapid response strategies, and long-term mussel management.

The Board also received an update on the Milfoil Control Program, including recent enhancements to the Occupational Health and Safety Policy.

“THAT the board endorses the OBWB milfoil control program Health and Safety Policy Statement.”

CARRIED

“THAT the Chief Operating Officer’s Report, dated Sept. 29, 2025, be received.”

CARRIED

7.4 Water Stewardship Director Report – Dr. Nelson Jatel

Dr. Jatel provided a brief update on the September meeting of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council (OWSC), where members reviewed the 2023 provincial drought response and began work

on a discussion paper examining the professional reliance model in wastewater. The upcoming October OWSC meeting will feature a presentation on remote sensing applications for water stewardship, including potential in blue-green algae detection and evapotranspiration analysis. He noted ongoing OWSC priorities include hydrologic modelling, climate adaptation, Indigenous knowledge integration, and policy development related to drought and watershed protection.

“THAT the Water Stewardship Director’s Report, dated Sept. 29, 2025, be received.”
CARRIED.

7.5 Communications Manager Report – Carmen Weld

Ms. Weld provided a brief update to the Board on the conclusion of the Make Water Work campaign, noting strong engagement and media coverage. She also reported increased interaction with the Don’t Move a Mussel campaign and reported that staff will be reviewing marketing strategies and platforms to optimize future outreach.

“THAT the Communications Manager Report, dated Oct. 1, 2025, be received.”
CARRIED.

7.6 Water Science Specialist Report – Sandra Schira

Ms. Schira briefed the Board on recent weather and water conditions in the Okanagan. September saw an intense heatwave with record-breaking temperatures and minimal rainfall, contributing to persistent drought conditions and low streamflows, particularly in fish-bearing systems. While seasonal forecasts suggest warmer and wetter conditions ahead water supply remains a concern.

“THAT the Water Science Specialist Report, dated Sept. 29, 2025, be received.”
CARRIED.

8. NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

No new items.

9. CORRESPONDENCE

No correspondence attached.

10. IN-CAMERA

No in-camera session held.

11. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board will be Tuesday, Nov. 4, 2025, held online.

***NOTE:** Meetings of the Okanagan Basin Water Board are open to the public, and only closed for in-camera sessions as set out in the B.C. Community Charter. From time-to-time, the board will be holding its meeting online. If you are interested in attending an online meeting, please contact Communications@OBWB.ca for further details.

12. ADJOURNMENT

"THAT there being no further business, the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of Oct. 7, 2025 be adjourned at 12:32 p.m."

CARRIED

Original signed by:

Blair Ireland, OBWB Chairperson

Original signed by:

Melissa Tesche, OBWB Executive Director