



**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE OKANAGAN BASIN WATER BOARD  
HELD FEB. 3, 2026, ONLINE**

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**PRESENT**

Chair Blair Ireland	Regional District of Central Okanagan
Vice Chair Doug Holmes	Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen
Director Brian Guy	Regional District of North Okanagan
Director Bob Fleming	Regional District of North Okanagan
Director Rick Fairbairn	Regional District of North Okanagan
Director Kevin Kraft	Regional District of Central Okanagan
Director Ron Cannan	Regional District of Central Okanagan
Director Sue McKortoff	Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen
Director Subrina Monteith	Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen
Director Sheena Spencer	Okanagan Water Stewardship Council (OWSC)
Director Bob Hrasko	Water Supply Association of B.C

**REGRETS**

Director Tim Lezard	Okanagan Nation Alliance
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**STAFF**

Melissa Tesche	Executive Director
James Littley	Chief Operating Officer
Nelson Jatel	Water Stewardship Director
Carolina Restrepo Tamayo	Office and Grants Manager
Carmen Weld	Communications Manager
Sandra Schira	Water Science Specialist
Amanda Burnett	Communications Coordinator

**1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

Executive Director Melissa Tesche called the meeting to order at 10:25 a.m.

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

**2. ELECTION OF BOARD CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR**

- 2.1 Ms. Tesche welcomed Directors appointed to the Okanagan Basin Water Board for 2026:

**Regional District of North Okanagan**

Brian Guy, City of Vernon, Councillor  
Rick Fairbairn, RDNO Electoral Area 'D', Director  
Bob Fleming, RDNO Electoral Area 'D', Director  
Alternate Directors: Christine Fraser, Shirley Fowler, Victor Cumming

**Regional District of Central Okanagan**

Blair Ireland, District of Lake Country, Mayor  
Kevin Kraft, RDCO Electoral Area 'Okanagan East', Director

Ron Cannan, City of Kelowna, Councillor  
Alternate Director: Patrick Van Minsel

### **Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen**

Doug Holmes, District of Summerland, Mayor  
Subrina Monteith, RDOS Electoral Area '1', Director  
Sue McKortoff, Town of Osoyoos, Mayor  
Alternate Directors: Adrienne Fedrigo, Mark Pendergraft, Matt Taylor

She noted that new appointments had not yet been received for the Water Management Appointments, so they remain:

Tim Lezard, Okanagan Nation Alliance, Penticton Indian Band, Councillor  
Bob Hrasko, Water Supply Association, Chair  
Sheena Spencer, Okanagan Water Stewardship Council, Chair

Ms. Tesche requested nominations for position of Chair of OBWB for 2026. Dir. McKortoff nominated Dir. Ireland. Dir. Ireland accepted the nomination. Dir. Cannon seconded the nomination. There being no other nominations, Dir. Ireland was elected Chair by acclamation.

Ms. Tesche requested nominations for Vice-Chair of OBWB for 2026. Dir. McKortoff nominated Dir. Holmes and he accepted the nomination. Chair Ireland seconded the nomination. There being no other nominations, Dir. Holmes was elected Vice-Chair by acclamation.

***"THAT Dir. Blair Ireland be elected as Chair and Dir. Doug Holmes be elected as Vice Chair of the Okanagan Basin Water Board for the year 2026."***

**CARRIED**

### **3. INTRODUCTION OF LATE ITEMS**

A request from the Regional District of Central Okanagan for the Board to reconsider the OBWB's 2026 requestion increase was introduced as a late item. The matter was added to the agenda for discussion under New and Unfinished Business Item 10.1.

### **4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

***" THAT the agenda of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of Feb. 3, 2026 be approved."***

**CARRIED**

### **5. ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

5.1 Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board held Nov. 4, 2025, held online.

***"THAT the minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board on Nov. 4, 2025, held online be approved."***

**CARRIED**

### **6. BOARD CHAIR REMARKS**

No Chair remarks.

### **7. DIRECTOR REPORT**

7.1 Director Bob Fleming shared a video that detailed progress on the OBWB-funded Hogg's Gulch Restoration project.

### **8. DELEGATION**

8.1 Lisa Scott – Executive Director, Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society (OASISS).

Ms. Scott presented OASISS's work on aquatic invasive species prevention in 2025, with a focus

on their work as the delivery partner for the OBWB-funded Don't Move a Mussel outreach campaign. The OASSIS team reached more than 2,800 people through school presentations, community events, and online platforms, while distributing educational materials to nearly 200 businesses. Staff conducted 1,073 watercraft surveys across 15 boat launches – finding high awareness of invasive species and/or Clean-Drain-Dry practices (91%), but lower familiarity with the Pull the Plug legislation (46%). Monitoring efforts across six lakes and the Similkameen River included 174 plankton tow samples, 12 substrate monitor pairs and invasive clam surveys, all showing no invasive mussels or clams detected. A citizen science program involving 18 volunteer dock owners expanded monitoring capacity by 150%.

The Board thanked Ms. Scott for her presentation and she exited the meeting at 11:18 a.m.

## 9. STAFF REPORTS

### 9.1 Executive Director Report – Melissa Tesche

Ms. Tesche reported to the Board that the first draft of the 5-year Strategic Direction would be delivered at the end of February. She noted that the milfoil crew had passed their mandatory crane operation and rigging training, and she applauded the work of Office and Grants Manager Carolina Restrepo Tamayo, who secured a grant that offset 60% of the training costs. She updated the Board on year-end audit planning and preparations for the Water Management Program's 20th anniversary celebration – scheduled for Friday June 5, 2025, timed with the launch of the new milfoil harvester machine.

Ms. Tesche encouraged the Board to attend the upcoming March siwłk<sup>w</sup> Water & Climate Forum, noting that OBWB would register any directors who were not already registered through the Collaborative Leadership Table. She updated on recent discussions with provincial staff about the new drought-rating systems and its impact on communications and the progress of Bill M216. Ms. Tesche also confirmed the WCQI grant timeline and noted that the locations for the finalized 2026 meeting schedule had now been confirmed.

***“THAT the Executive Director's Report, dated Jan. 26, 2026, be received.”***  
**CARRIED**

### 9.2 Chief Operating Officer Report - James Littlely

Mr. Littlely reported that OBWB had received federal and provincial responses to its invasive mussel Calls to Action, noting that the federal reply reiterated existing programs but provided a new staff contact for follow-up, while the provincial letter affirmed progress under recent Wildlife Act amendments without committing to timelines for mandatory inspection-station regulations. He also updated the Board on the upcoming release of Version 2 of the Vulnerability Assessment Guide for Raw Water Infrastructure, newly expanded to include golden mussels, and confirmed it would be presented publicly in early February. He briefly summarized the province's 2025 Invasive Mussel Defence (IMDP) inspection season results and monitoring efforts.

Mr. Littlely reported on the completion of winter rototilling, planned spring work, and preparations to deploy the amphibious harvester in Duck Lake due to heavy milfoil growth. He also updated the Board on ongoing UBCO Capstone collaborations supporting milfoil operations, invasive-species response planning, and decontamination-technology development.

Director Subrina Monteith entered the meeting at 11:34 a.m.

Mr. Littlely additionally noted that as the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) directs watercraft to provincial inspection stations, operational costs shift to the Province, underscoring the importance of seeking continued federal funding support for provincial invasive-mussel prevention efforts. He also clarified differences in ecological risk among invasive species during Board questions and provided a brief update on the Snake River mussel treatment effort and outcomes.

***"THAT the Chief Operating Officer's Report, dated Jan 27. 2026, be received."***

**CARRIED**

9.3 Water Stewardship Director Report – Dr. Nelson Jatel

Dr. Jatel reported on the January meeting of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council (OWSC), noting strong attendance and improved member engagement using new interactive tools. He summarized 2025 water stewardship priorities and regional updates. He highlighted preparations for the Feb. 12, 2026 meeting, which will feature a panel on beaver-based wetland restoration.

Dr. Jatel confirmed that the Cyanobacteria Working Group had met several times to advance early-warning tools and coordinated monitoring across the mainstem lakes.

Director Spencer reported on OWSC committee progress, including ongoing review of blue-green algae risk, improvements to climate-station access, policy-committee work, and the resumption of the Ethical Space Committee meetings following a busy fall. She confirmed momentum across OWSC committees.

***"THAT the Water Stewardship Director's Report, dated Jan 26. 2026, be received."***

**CARRIED.**

9.4 Communications Manager Report – Carmen Weld

Ms. Weld reported on recent local government partner visits for the Make Water Work and Don't Move a Mussel campaigns and noted strong continued support for both programs, including positive feedback on the multi-channel outreach approach. She summarized key communications since November, including drought bulletins, media coverage, grant announcements, and high-engagement social media posts.

***"THAT the Communication Manager's Report, dated Jan 27. 2026, be received."***

**CARRIED.**

9.5 Water Science Specialist Report – Sandra Schira

Ms. Schira reported that January temperatures had briefly dropped before rebounding and that the region continued to experience below-normal precipitation, with snowpack levels remaining low across most monitoring stations. She noted that seasonal forecasts from Environment and Climate Change Canada indicated a likelihood of slightly warmer and wetter conditions through early spring.

From the meeting, Ms. Schira added that despite some provincial stations showing "above normal" readings, the Okanagan remained significantly low overall and may follow patterns observed in recent dry years. She confirmed that hydrologic conditions would continue to be monitored and that no major system changes were anticipated at this time. There was discussion about the unusual disconnect between high-elevation and mid-elevation snow pack levels, with almost no snow received at mid-elevations.

***"THAT the Water Science Specialist's Report, dated Jan 27. 2026, be received."***

**CARRIED.**

10. **NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

- 10.1 Ms. Tesche noted that OBWB had received a request from the Regional District of Central Okanagan to consider reducing the OBWB requisition. She noted that the request was not unique to OBWB, that RDCO was investigating ways to reduce their proposed increase both internally and across external partnerships and programs. Staff recommended maintaining the OBWB approved increase of 2%, noting the increase was

fiscally responsible, just below the Consumer Price Index, and helps the program keep up with inflation. Directors discussed the importance of prudent budgeting and agreed to support the already-approved requisition increase.

***“THAT the OBWB proceed with the 2026-27 requisition as outlined in the budget.”***  
**CARRIED**

**11. CORRESPONDENCES**

***“THAT correspondences to and from the OBWB, dated Nov. 14, 2025 through Jan. 13, 2026, be received.”***

**CARRIED**

**12. NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board will be Tuesday, Mar. 3, 2026, held at 10:00 a.m. 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](mailto:Communications@OBWB.ca) for further details.

**13. ADJOURNMENT**

***“THAT there being no further business, the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of Feb. 3, 2026 be adjourned at 12:32 p.m.”***

**CARRIED**

Original signed by:

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 Blair Ireland, OBWB Chairperson

Original signed by:

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 Melissa Tesche, OBWB Executive Director