

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE OKANAGAN BASIN WATER BOARD
HELD JULY 7, 2026 AT THE REGIONAL DISTRICT OF NORTH OKANAGAN**

PRESENT

Chair Blair Ireland
Vice Chair Doug Holmes
Director Brian Guy
Director Bob Fleming
Director Rick Fairbairn
Director Kevin Kraft
Director Ron Cannan
Alt-Director Adrienne Fedrigo
Alt-Director Jeremy Fyke
Director Bob Hrasko

Regional District of Central Okanagan
Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen
Regional District of North Okanagan
Regional District of North Okanagan
Regional District of North Okanagan
Regional District of Central Okanagan
Regional District of Central Okanagan
Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen
Okanagan Water Stewardship Council (OWSC)
Water Supply Association of B.C

REGRETS

Director Tim Lezard
Director Sue McKortoff
Director Subrina Monteith
Director Sheena Spencer

Okanagan Nation Alliance
Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen
Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen
Okanagan Water Stewardship Council (OWSC)

STAFF

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

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

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair Ireland called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m.

- 1.1 He respectfully acknowledged that we work on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded tm̓xʷúlaʔxʷ land of the syilx Okanagan people who have resided here since time immemorial. We honour and respect this land and the siwl̓k 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 July 7, 2026 be approved.”

CARRIED

4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

- 4.1 Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board held June 2, 2026.

"THAT the minutes of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board on June 2, held at the offices of the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen, be approved."
CARRIED

5. BOARD CHAIR REMARKS

No Board Chair remarks.

6. DELEGATION/PRESENTATION

- 6.1 Okanagan Watershed Security: Yesterday's Infrastructure, Today's Data, and Tomorrow's Climate. Presented by Rod MacLean, P.Eng. Department Manager - Utility Services, City of Kelowna.

Directors received a presentation from Rod MacLean, Department Manager of Utility Services for the City of Kelowna, on water security in the Okanagan and the role of infrastructure, data, and climate adaptation in managing the region's water resources.

He provided an overview of the Okanagan Lake Regulation System, the importance of reliable local data for water management, and current drought conditions affecting lake levels, reservoir storage, and streamflows across the region.

Mr. MacLean emphasized the need for evidence-based decision-making, continued investment in aging water infrastructure, expanded data collection and monitoring, and greater collaboration among governments and water managers to support long-term water security in the Okanagan.

The Board thanked Mr. MacLean for his presentation and he exited the meeting.

7. STAFF REPORTS

7.1 Executive Director Report – Melissa Tesche

Ms. Tesche updated the Board on ongoing drought and water scarcity concerns across the Okanagan and discussed challenges related to provincial drought messaging. She noted that recent changes to the provincial drought rating system have not been reflecting conditions being experienced in many communities and this messaging could contribute to confusion regarding water conservation efforts and local water restrictions.

Ms. Tesche advised that the OBWB communications strategy will continue directing residents to their local water providers for information on restrictions and drought response measures. She also noted that staff will resume regional meetings with water suppliers to support information sharing and coordination throughout the drought season. Preparations are also underway for the 2027-28 OBWB budget, with a draft budget to be presented to the Board in September.

"THAT the Executive Director's Report, dated June 26, 2026, be received."
CARRIED

7.2 Chief Operating Officer Report - James Littlely

Mr. Littlely updated the Board on invasive milfoil removal activities, noting that the amphibious harvester had recently been deployed to Duck Lake to support invasive milfoil management efforts ahead of the B.C. Summer Games. He advised that the machine would soon be redeployed

to other areas of the valley as part of the annual harvesting program and noted that staff are exploring operational options to address increasingly early-season aquatic plant growth associated with longer and warmer summers.

The Board was also updated on invasive mussel prevention efforts, including reports of a single dead quagga mussel shell discovered at a reservoir in central Oregon and confirmation of zebra mussels in Lake of the Prairies, which spans the Saskatchewan-Manitoba border, which would be the first incursion of invasive mussels into the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Littley noted these developments continue to highlight the importance of prevention and early detection efforts throughout Western Canada. He further updated the Board on the ongoing development of a prototype watercraft decontamination system for Alberta that would allow high-risk watercraft to be treated before entering the province.

Mr. Littley also provided an update on work related to onsite septic systems and provincial Sewerage System Regulations (SSR). He noted that staff are exploring options, including the potential development of a best-practices guide for local governments while also encouraging the Province to undertake a comprehensive review and modernization of the regulations to best support modernization of the SSR in the future.

“THAT the OBWB send a letter to appropriate provincial ministries requesting that the province undertake a comprehensive review and modernization of the Sewerage System Regulations.”

“THAT the Chief Operating Officer’s Report, dated June 26, 2026, be received.”
CARRIED

7.3 Water Stewardship Director Report – Dr. Nelson Jatel

Dr. Jatel updated the Board on recent activities, including participation in the Canadian Water Resources Association National Conference in Winnipeg, where he presented on stream temperature monitoring and forecasting and on how social network analysis can influence water management. He noted that the conference provided an opportunity to highlight Okanagan water management initiatives and promote the upcoming Environmental Flows 2026 conference in Kelowna.

Dr. Jatel also provided an overview of the June meeting of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council, noting discussion around data-driven drought management and the importance of reliable local information to support water restriction decisions and public communication.

Dr. Jatel acknowledged the passing of former federal cabinet minister and former OBWB Chair Tom Siddon, noting his significant contributions to water stewardship and leadership in the Okanagan.

“THAT the Water Stewardship Director’s Report, dated June 26, 2026, be received.”
CARRIED.

7.4 Communications Manager Report – Carmen Weld

Ms. Weld updated the Board on communications initiatives and outreach activities since the previous meeting. She reported that the winning name for the invasive milfoil harvester had been selected and would be officially unveiled following the Board meeting at a public launch even at Paddlewheel Park in Vernon. She also noted ongoing efforts to promote the Environmental Flows 2026 Indigenous Youth Logo Contest and upcoming Make Water Work campaign videos featuring updated messaging and local participants.

The Board heard that pilot Don’t Move a Mussel boat ramp stencils had been installed in Peachland and West Kelowna, with positive early feedback from participating communities.

Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society (OASISS) will be conducting surveys to evaluate the effectiveness of the initiative. Ms. Weld also highlighted a new co-branded Don't Move a Mussel digital campaign developed in partnership with the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association to help reach more visitors travelling to the region.

Staff noted that information on costs and implementation options for the stencil initiative could be shared with interested local governments, and the two initial stencils could be considered a trial for other areas in the Okanagan.

"THAT the Communications Manager's Report, dated June 26, 2026, be received."
CARRIED.

7.5 Water Science Specialist Report – Sandra Schira

Ms. Schira reported on ongoing drought conditions across the Okanagan, noting the cumulative impacts of multiple years of drought, extremely low freshet conditions, and continued precipitation deficits.

She advised that streamflows remain well below normal in many areas, while Okanagan Lake, Kalamalka Lake, and many groundwater monitoring wells are at exceptionally low levels for this time of year, reflecting the year-over-year effects of continued dry conditions across the basin.

"THAT the Water Science Specialist's Report, dated June 26, 2026, be received."
CARRIED.

8. NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

No new or unfinished business.

9. CORRESPONDENCE

No correspondences.

10. NEXT MEETING

10.1 The next meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board will be Sept. 11, 2026, held at the Manteo at Eldorado Resort, 3762 Lakeshore Rd., Kelowna, B.C. as an abbreviated meeting ahead of the Water Management Program's 20th Anniversary celebration.

***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.

11. ADJOURNMENT

"THAT there being no further business, the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of July, 7, 2026 be adjourned at 12:05 p.m."
CARRIED

Original signed by:

Blair Ireland, OBWB Chairperson

Original signed by:

Melissa Tesche, OBWB Executive Director