



**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE OKANAGAN BASIN WATER BOARD
HELD NOVEMBER 7, 2023
ONLINE**

PRESENT

Chair Sue McKortoff	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Vice-Chair Blair Ireland	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 Wayne Carson	Regional District Central Okanagan
Director Charlie Hodge	Regional District Central Okanagan
Director Doug Holmes	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Director Rick Knodel	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Director Bob Hrasko	Water Supply Association of B.C.
Director Jeremy Fyke	Okanagan Water Stewardship Council (OWSC)

REGRETS

Director Tim Lezard	Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA)
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GUESTS

Krista Derrickson	Westbank First Nation
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STAFF

Anna Warwick Sears	Executive Director
Corinne Jackson	Communications Director
James Littley	Deputy Administrator
Sandra Schira	Water Science Specialist
Amanda Burnett	Communications Coordinator
Carolina Restrepo-Tamayo	Office and Grants Manager

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair McKortoff called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m.

Chair McKortoff respectfully acknowledged that the meeting was being held on the traditional and unceded territory of the Syilx Okanagan Nation.

2. LATE ITEMS

8.1 Correspondence regarding invasive mussels from RDNO and Shuswap Watershed Council.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

“THAT the agenda of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of Nov. 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 Oct. 3, 2023,

held online.

“THAT the minutes of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board on Oct. 3, 2023, held online, be approved.”

CARRIED

5. STAFF REPORTS

5.1 Executive Director Report

Dr. Sears provided an update on a meeting she was invited to attend in Grand Forks on watershed issues with MLA Roly Russell and Premier David Eby. She noted that she used the opportunity to advocate for additional funding in the Watershed Security Fund, the need to address provincial water staffing shortages, increased funding to address invasive mussels and support to replace the Okanagan Lake dam in Penticton. Chair McKortoff added that she also spoke with Premier Eby and MLA Russell and advocated for additional support to address invasive mussels.

11:06 a.m. Dir. Cumming entered the meeting.

The board was updated on the realignment of B.C. ministries, moving most of water policy and management from Ministry of Forests into the new Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS). This is widely considered a positive development, Dr. Sears added, noting that staff are working with the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council on a letter for the board to send, acknowledging the changes and suggesting where additional improvements can be made.

Directors also heard that Okanagan Lake is currently below normal and the province's dam operator is releasing lower-than-normal flows to slow the lake level fall. This cautious approach is being taken to prepare for the possibility of the current drought continuing into next spring and summer.

“THAT the Executive Director's Report, dated Nov. 1, 2023, be received.”

CARRIED

5.2 Deputy Administrator Report

Mr. Littley updated the board on recent activities taken in response to the invasive mussels found in Idaho's Snake River, including letters sent to local governments, chambers and tourism associations in B.C., asking for support for a temporary moratorium on watercraft coming into the province.

Idaho has now completed its treatment of the river with a copper pesticide. Its effectiveness won't be known until spring, however, officials have removed almost seven tons of dead fish, including hatchery sturgeon that were 35 years old, and eight feet long.

In response to questions, the board was told that additional control methods used elsewhere have included draining reservoirs, but this has not always been successful. The board discussed additional ways to get the word out, including development of a professional video, educational poster for schools and beyond. Mr. Littley added that OBWB is convening a working group that will help inform efforts to prevent the mussels from entering B.C., to limit the spread if they arrive, and to determine how to prepare to live with the mussels. There was also discussion about using the OBWB's Don't Move A Mussel campaign to encourage the public to speak out, and for the OBWB to reach out to Alberta to bolster mussel prevention efforts.

“THAT the Deputy Administrator’s Report, dated Oct. 31, 2023, be received.”

CARRIED

5.3 Water Stewardship Director

Dr. Jatel told the board about presentations at the last council meeting from B.C. Ministry of WLRs Water Policy Advisor Natalya Melnychuk and Shuswap Watershed Council’s Erin Viera about shared water concerns and potential efforts to work together. The next meeting will include a presentation from Mr. Littlely with an update on invasive mussels in Idaho and the development of a working group to help the Okanagan prepare for a possible infestation. Dir. Fyke provided an update on council committee work, including: a look at water quality and its connection to mussels and algae blooms; the B.C. Water Sustainability Act and how it was applied during this year’s drought and possible recommendations for the board to forward to the province; development of a set of resources for settler water planners to incorporate First Nations right and title in their work; and, an updated Water Supply and Demand study.

The board was also updated on plans for a 2024 Environmental Flows conference which will include a look at setting environmental flows in light of climate change and the water needs of larger bodied fish like chinook. In response to questions and concerns about meeting the needs of fish during drought, like this year, Dr. Jatel responded that social and economic considerations, including how to prioritize water for agriculture, will be discussed at the conference.

Directors were told that work on the hydrometric station program is continuing with partners wrapping up their field work and reviewing collected data for quality control and assurance. The data will then be made available to those who need it to make decisions about water flows. Dir. Cumming noted that the City of Vernon is installing monitors in local streams and would like the data to be included.

“THAT the Water Stewardship Director’s Report, dated Oct. 30, 2023, be received.”

CARRIED

5.4 Water Science Specialist Report

Ms. Schira provided an update on the climate indicators project, explaining that 30 years of stream data – preferably on unregulated streams – is needed to see what’s happening with water flow and if it may be climate related.

As for drought conditions, the Province of B.C. has lowered the Okanagan region to Level 2 based on current water conditions. Some streams, however, are still at Level 5.

The board was briefed on the recent Water Supply Association of B.C. conference held in Nelson which included discussion around upper basin storage, multi-year droughts, water quality standards, and water supplier priorities and concerns.

“THAT the Water Science Specialist Report, dated Oct. 30, 2023, be received.”

CARRIED

5.5 Communications Director Report

Ms. Jackson briefed the board on various communication efforts to address the ongoing drought, including a shift to promoting indoor conservation. She added that the province's Thompson Okanagan Regional Drought Team is holding a debrief meeting to review challenges this year, including communicating water availability and drought response, and potential improvements for next year. Staff will be attending the meeting to provide local insights. Communications support has also been provided to address the board's invasive mussel concerns, with letters to local governments, chambers and tourism associations requesting support for OBWB's calls to action. A video that outlines the OBWB's concerns now that Idaho has found invasive mussels and includes our calls to action has been produced and posted on our YouTube channel. Staff have been gathering letters of support, responding to media calls, posting about the issue on social media and updating our Don't Move A Mussel website.

"THAT the Communications Director's Report, dated Nov. 1, 2023, be received."

CARRIED

6. NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

6.1 2024 Water Conservation & Quality Improvement (WCQI) Grant Program Memo

Ms. Restrepo-Tamayo presented on the WCQI program, providing a review of the process, scoring criteria, and a recommendation that the board approve "drought resilience" as the 2024 grant theme. The application deadline, she added, will be Feb. 23, 4 p.m.

"THAT the process and scoring criteria for the grant competition be approved as outlined; AND THAT for the 2024-2025 WCQI grant competition, 10 bonus points will be awarded for projects in any category related to drought planning, management and mitigation."

CARRIED

6.2 Budget Features Memo – Proposed Budget 2024-25

Dr. Sears presented the proposed OBWB 2024-25 budget. The overall requisition is up 1.99% mostly due to milfoil expenses with the new harvester, as well as research and permitting costs. However, the requisition for Sewerage Facilities Assistance Grants is down with some grants retiring, and the requisition for the Water Management Program is also slightly down. Directors moved a motion to accept the budget as presented.

"THAT the OBWB adopts the 2024-2025 budget as presented."

CARRIED

7. IN-CAMERA

7.1 In-Camera session (under sec. 90(1)(k) and 90(2)(b) of the Community Charter

Come out at 11:33 a.m.

8. CORRESPONDENCE

8.1 Letters to senior governments, cc'd to OBWB, re: invasive mussels from Shuswap Waterfront Owners Assoc, Shuswap Watershed Council, RDNO

The board reviewed the letters, noting strong support, and the need to continue to work and gather allies. Directors discussed finding new ways to extend the OBWB's reach, including developing a video and creating a public writing campaign. Dir. Ireland noted Lake Country's ability to save costs with a filtration deferral will likely be lost if mussels move in and filtration

becomes required.

“THAT the letters to senior governments, cc’d to OBWB, re: invasive mussels from Shuswap Waterfront Owners Assoc, Shuswap Watershed Council, RDNO, RDCO, District of Peachland and BC Boating Association be received.”

CARRIED

9. NEXT MEETING

9.1 The next meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board will be Tuesday, Dec. 5 from 10 a.m. – 12 p.m., online.

10. ADJOURNMENT

“THAT there being no further business, the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of Nov. 7, 2023 be adjourned at 11:55 a.m.”

CARRIED

Certified Correct:		
Chair		Executive Director