



**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE OKANAGAN BASIN WATER BOARD
HELD FEBRUARY 6, 2024, ONLINE
OKANAGAN, B.C.**

PRESENT

Chair Blair Ireland	Regional District Central Okanagan
Vice-chair Doug Holmes	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
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 Rick Knodel	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Director Sue McKortoff	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Director Tim Lezard	Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA)
Director Bob Hrasko	Water Supply Association of B.C.
Director Jeremy Fyke	Okanagan Water Stewardship Council (OWSC)

GUESTS

Simone Runyan	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
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STAFF

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

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Exec. Dir. Sears called the meeting to order at 10 a.m.

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

2. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

Dr. Sears welcomed directors re-appointed for 2023.

Directors appointed to the board:

From **Regional District of North Okanagan**

Mayor Victor Cumming
Director Rick Fairbairn
Mayor Christine Fraser
Alternates – Bob Fleming, Shirley Fowler

Regional District of Central Okanagan

Director Wayne Carson
Director Charlie Hodge

Mayor Blair Ireland
 Alternates – Gordon Lovegrove, Patrick Van Minsel, Kevin Kraft

Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen

Director Doug Holmes
 Director Rick Knodel
 Mayor Sue McKortoff
 Alternates – Adrienne Fedrigo, Subrina Monteith, Matt Taylor

Water Management Appointments

Okanagan Nation Alliance

Coun. Tim Lezard
 Alternate – TBD

Water Supply Association of BC

Mr. Bob Hrasko
 Alternate – TBD

Okanagan Water Stewardship Council

Chair Jeremy Fyke
 Alternate – Vice-chair Sheena Spencer

Dr. Sears requested nominations for chair. Dir. Cumming nominated Dir. Ireland. Dir. Ireland accepted the nomination. Dir. McKortoff was also nominated but declined. There being no other nominations, Dir. Ireland was elected chair.

Chair Ireland requested nominations for vice-chair. Dir. Holmes was nominated and accepted the nomination. There being no other nominations, Dir. Holmes was elected vice-chair.

3. INTRODUCTION OF LATE ITEMS

No late items were brought forward.

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

“THAT the agenda of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of Feb.6, 2024 be approved.”

CARRIED

5. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

5.1 Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of Dec. 5, 2023, held online.

“THAT the minutes of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board on Dec. 5, 2023, held online, be approved.”

CARRIED

6. STAFF PRESENTATION

Ms. Schira, OBWB’s Water Science Specialist presented an update on the Okanagan Climate Indicators project. The project looks at temperature, precipitation, streamflow and lake flow data during various seasons in the last 30 to 100 years.

In analyzing the data, Ms. Schira noted a clear pattern shows that Kelowna, Vernon (measured at Coldstream Ranch), and Penticton are warming. Research shows that the baseline period, 1951-1980, was colder in the valley, and the trend from 1991-2020 shows that there is a marked shift

to warmer temperatures with the number of days over 30 degrees increasing and the days under 0 degrees dropping. The growing season is also longer by about 2 weeks, added Ms. Schira. Cold days still occur, but less frequently.

Dir. Lezard entered the meeting at 10:15 a.m.

If we compare precipitation between the baseline period (1951-1980) to what we have experienced since then, the 1980s and 1990s were wetter, but since then we have seen a drying trend, especially in the last three years, Ms. Schira said. Precipitation is known to be more erratic.

In response to questions, Ms. Schira explained that temperature changes are an easier indicator to show change, whereas precipitation is more difficult since there are other factors that may be influencing patterns. However, being able to look at the two factors together helps create a clearer picture. This is consistent with indications that increasing temperatures are causing more extreme weather events, the total amount of precipitation is decreasing, and winter precipitation that used to fall as snow is beginning to fall as rain.

Dr. Sears added that the Okanagan has long depended on snowpack melting slowly and filling up Okanagan Lake, making it easier to ensure supply throughout the growing season. Liquid water is harder to hold. Ultimately, she said, communities will need to plan for more floods and droughts.

In the case of Mission Creek, Ms. Schira added, freshet is coming earlier. Historically, freshet would begin around May 24, but this has shifted in the last few years to mid to early May. Recognizing what is happening and what flows are required for ecosystem health and fish can help water managers prepare. Okanagan Lake freshet is also occurring earlier, which again has implications for management, she noted.

7. STAFF REPORTS

7.1 Executive Director Report

Dr. Sears gave the board an update on local water supply conditions, noting that although Okanagan Lake was low during the fall and through winter, it is now almost normal for this time of year. However, this is due to melting snow and rainfall which means there is less snow on the hills. The Brenda Mines snow pillow is a concern, she added, noting that it is currently sitting near its minimum range.

In response to questions, Dr. Sears noted that water supply deficits depend on when irrigation starts and when water managers have to rely on their reservoirs to feed demand.

“THAT the Executive Director’s Report, dated Jan. 31, 2024, be received.”
CARRIED

7.2 Deputy Administrator Report

Mr. Littley told the board that correspondence was sent from the OBWB to the federal government requesting an increase in funding to the Province of B.C.’s Invasive Mussel Defence Program. A submission was also sent to the B.C. government’s Wildlife Act Review, requesting that pull-the-plug legislation be introduced.

There was some discussion among board members about what they were hearing from various electeds on the issue, including that MP Dick Cannings had offered to follow-up with the OBWB’s request to the federal government.

B.C. Green Party House Leader Adam Olsen also said he would follow up. There was also discussion about additional ways to bring awareness to the issue. Dr. Sears said that staff would look at options and that the March 8 Invasive Mussel Working Group may also have some ideas.

Mr. Littley reported that the milfoil control program is mostly on track, but there have been some issues with equipment breakdowns and low lake levels. Work is also continuing on a new permitting process with the province to allow more flexibility with the program while considering habitat and species concerns.

“THAT the Deputy Administrator Report, dated Jan. 31, 2024, be received.”
CARRIED

7.3 Water Stewardship Director Report

Dr. Jatel gave an update on the previous month’s Okanagan Water Stewardship Council (OWSC) meeting and a presentation from the Province of B.C.’s James Telford, Assistant Water Manager and Senior Authorizations Specialist, and Nicole Pyett, Manager of Resource Management. The two presented on the provincial government’s response to last year’s drought and lessons learned. At the next meeting, City of Kelowna’s Rod McLean and District of Lake Country’s Kyle Wilkie will be presenting on local government watershed security planning. Ms. Schira will also be presenting on the OBWB’s climate indicators project.

Work on the upcoming Environmental Flows (EF) conference is continuing. Board directors are encouraged to attend, Dr. Jatel added. On Feb. 1, the OBWB teamed up with the BC Institute of Agrologists to host a webinar on integrating agrology and watershed governance. All proceeds are going to the EF conference.

The board was told that the Okanagan Hydrometric Monitoring Program’s technical advisory committee will be meeting in mid-February to determine plans for the coming year. The committee includes staff from OBWB, Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA)’s Fisheries Department, federal and provincial government.

Dr. Jatel noted a workshop held in January for Teck Cominco and Fisheries and Oceans Canada. ONA staff and others involved in the Okanagan’s environmental flow needs work presented on the local project and Teck and DFO staff shared their efforts.

Dir. Fyke, OWSC chair, added that the council has a committee looking at developing a proposal to update the OBWB’s water supply and demand data project. Other committees are looking at the economics of agriculture irrigation, as well as educational materials for ag water users. Dir. Lezard asked whether Okanagan Nation’s water rights and B.C.’s Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act will be considered as part of this work. Dir. Fyke responded that, yes, he would raise this at the council.

“THAT the Water Stewardship Director’s Report, dated Jan. 31, 2024, be received.”
CARRIED

7.4 Office and Grants Manager Report

Ms. Restrepo Tamayo told the board that the call for applications to the Water Conservation and Quality Improvement Grant Program closes Feb. 23 and the OBWB’s website has been updated to accept applications online.

Work on the upcoming EF conference is continuing and 120 people have now registered. There is room for 200, Ms. Restrepo Tamayo added, noting that the planning committee has also nearly reached its fundraising goal. Discounts are available for various attendees. More information can be found at <https://environmentalflows2024.ca/>.

“THAT the Office and Grants Manager’s Report, dated Jan. 31, 2024, be received.”
CARRIED

7.5 Water Science Specialist Report

Ms. Schira provided an update on climate change indicators for last year noting very dry conditions and one of the hottest years on record for Kelowna, Vernon and Penticton, and a longer than normal growing season. The warming trend is consistent across the valley and across all seasons. And, the trends are in line with what was seen globally, Schira added.

“THAT the Water Science Specialist’s Report, dated Jan. 29, 2024, be received.”
CARRIED

7.6 Communications Director Report

Ms. Jackson presented some of the results from a water survey of Okanagan residents conducted in December, noting 90% of respondents said they conserve water. Awareness for the OBWB’s outreach and education program, Okanagan WaterWise, increased from 37% in 2020 to 46% in 2023. Awareness regarding invasive mussels among respondents was 86%. Top water-related issues of concern that were identified include forest fires, ensuring enough water for fish and other ecosystems needs, and water shortages, Ms. Jackson added.

It was noted that although 31% of respondents said they own a watercraft, local residents share a much larger portion of the burden – compared to those who merely come to the Okanagan to recreate - should mussels arrive in the Okanagan.

The survey results will help inform OBWB efforts to engage Okanagan residents on local water issues.

“THAT the Communications Director’s Report, dated Jan. 31, 2024, be received.”
CARRIED

8. CORRESPONDENCE

8.1 Letters from OBWB to federal government re: invasive mussel program funding, letter from B.C. Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS) Nathan Cullen to OBWB, Westbank First Nation and City of West Kelowna re: invasive mussels, and letter from Mins. Cullen and Heyman to OBWB re: B.C. Wildlife Act review

“THAT the letters from B.C. Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS) Nathan Cullen to OBWB, Westbank First Nation and City of West Kelowna re: invasive mussels, and letter from Min. Cullen and B.C. Environment and Climate Change Strategy Min. George Heyman to OBWB re: B.C. Wildlife Act review be received.”
CARRIED

9. NEXT MEETING

9.1 The next meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board will be held Tuesday, March 5, 2024 at 10 a.m., online.

10. ADJOURNMENT

"THAT there being no further business, the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of March 5, 2024 be adjourned at 12:22 p.m."

CARRIED

Certified Correct:		
Chair		Executive Director