



**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE OKANAGAN BASIN WATER BOARD
HELD JUNE 4, 2024, AT REGIONAL DISTRICT OF THE OKANAGAN SIMILKAMEEN
101 MARTIN ST., PENTICTON, B.C.**

PRESENT

Chair Blair Ireland	Regional District Central Okanagan
Director Victor Cumming	Regional District North Okanagan
Director Rick Fairbairn	Regional District North Okanagan
Director Wayne Carson	Regional District Central Okanagan
Director Charlie Hodge	Regional District Central Okanagan
Alt-Director Subrina Monteith	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Alt-Director Matt Taylor	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Director Sue McKortoff	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Director Bob Hrasko	Water Supply Association of B.C.
Alt-Director Dr. Sheena Spencer	Okanagan Water Stewardship Council (OWSC)

REGRETS

Director Christine Fraser	Regional District of the North Okanagan
Director Tim Lezard	Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA)

DELEGATIONS

Shaun Reimer	B.C. Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, Section Head – Public Safety & Protection
Maddison Atwood	BDO Auditor

STAFF

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

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair Ireland called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.

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

2. INTRODUCTION OF LATE ITEMS

None

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

“THAT the agenda of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of June 4, 2024 be approved.”

CARRIED

4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

- 4.1 Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of May 7, 2024, held at Regional District of North Okanagan.

“THAT the minutes of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board on May 7, 2024, held at Regional District of North Okanagan, be approved.”

CARRIED

5. DELEGATION

- 5.1 Presentation by Shaun Reimer, B.C. Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, Section Head of Public Safety and Protection

Mr. Reimer presented on drought management for the Okanagan Lake Regulation System (OLRS) and lake levels in the Okanagan. Mr. Reimer noted that water management decisions consider physical infrastructure and operational targets, and are guided primarily by rainfall and snowmelt that contributes to lake levels.

He underscored the variability and unpredictability of water supplies, drawing on historical data dating back to 1921, to illustrate the fluctuations and recovery periods following drought years.

In 2015, during an exceedingly dry period, provincial staff faced significant challenges to manage the OLRS, prompting closer collaboration with the OBWB to develop comprehensive drought management guidelines. This cooperative approach led to the creation of drought trigger thresholds and a systematic approach to managing water during varying drought conditions, supporting both human and ecological needs.

Furthermore, Mr. Reimer discussed the intricacies of managing water levels when the timing of water inflows doesn't align with peak demands. He showed how the fish water management tool is used for forecasting lake levels, which allows for more strategic water releases, based on seasonal forecasts and inflow predictions, to support diverse uses such as irrigation and fisheries later in the summer season.

Concluding his presentation, Mr. Reimer offered insight into the current water year's status, indicating that we are experiencing below-average cumulative inflow. He highlighted the importance of continued diligence in water conservation and OLRS adaptive management strategies used to navigate these fluctuations effectively.

Shaun was thanked for his presentation and excused himself from the meeting.

- 5.2 Annual Audit Presentation by Maddison Atwood, BDO.

Maddison Atwood presented BDO's annual OBWB audit findings for the year that ended March 31, 2024. Following some brief discussion, the board voted to receive the report.

“THAT the Annual Audit from BDO, dated June 4, 2024, be received.”

CARRIED

6. STAFF REPORTS

- 6.1 Executive Director Report

Dr. Sears discussed the first intake of B.C.'s Watershed Security Fund, noting that while the applications are being processed, there's concern about the lack of professionals experienced in technology and water management within the review team. This could potentially impact the assessment of applications that include technological solutions for water issues. Dr. Sears added that the letter sent by Dir. McKortoff had been received by B.C. Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship Nathan Cullen. The dialogue with the minister was constructive, with discussions on the necessity of further funding.

The board was provided with a copy of the "Mission Creek Report" based on the meeting OBWB convened in December. The report has been well received, offering in-depth information on the current state of Mission Creek, Dr. Sears added.

Lastly, Dr. Sears reported on her attendance at a recent farmer's rally organized by the B.C. Fruit Grower's Association. Discussions at the rally centred around the harsh economic circumstances faced by the Okanagan's agriculture sector due to extreme weather conditions which have led to significant crop losses. These events have intensified concerns over water availability and the potential for widespread farm bankruptcies. The potential conversion of farmlands to non-agricultural uses by external purchasers was also noted as a concern, emphasizing the importance of strategic water management and support for the agricultural community.

"THAT the Executive Director's Report, dated June 4, 2024, be received."
CARRIED

6.2 Water Stewardship Director Report

Dr. Jatel expressed how well-received the May 7 joint OBWB/Okanagan Water Stewardship Council meeting had been. At the June council meeting, several members noted its value, adding it was productive and insightful.

Directors were told that three new hydrometric stations have been installed in the north Okanagan to help enhance data collection. Director Cumming asked that a map of the stations be included in future reports to better understand the distribution of the stations.

"THAT the Water Stewardship Director's Report, dated June 4, 2024, be received."

CARRIED

6.3 Deputy Administrator's Report

Mr. Littley presented a summary of the invasive mussel working group meeting in March and the subsequent action plan, including 55 action items. A number of committees are being considered as a next step. These include a Communications and Outreach Committee, a Funding and Resource Development Committee, a Gap Analysis and Research Committee, and a Regional Emergency Planning Committee.

In reference to previous board discussions around supporting an additional mussel sniffing dog, Mr. Littley proposed the board request that federal government funding equal provincial contributions.

"THAT the board call on federal government to match provincial funding."

CARRIED.

The report moved on to address the Sewerage Facilities Assistance Grants program review, which has been completed with input from local governments. Proposed amendments to the program were put forth, particularly some narrow exemptions to the 1 ha. policy that would not compromise water quality. These would facilitate certain types of road adjustments or park dedications, as well as utility and wildlife uses.

“THAT the OBWB adopt the SFA terms of reference.”
CARRIED

Lastly, Mr. Littley provided an update on milfoil control efforts, including the introduction of a new amphibious milfoil harvester, which is planned to be launched on June 20 at Paddlewheel Park in Vernon. This initiative, along with a new five-year permit program for milfoil control, demonstrates a proactive approach to managing invasive species in local waterways.

“THAT the Deputy Administrator’s Report, dated June 4, 2024, be received.”

CARRIED.

6.4 Communications Director Report

Ms. Jackson reported on the May 29 provincial drought response team meeting. It was noted that the Okanagan region experienced cooler temperatures and precipitation in May, but some streams and aquifers were still running below average. However, with a forecast for more rain and cool temperatures, it was decided to move the region to Level 1 drought. The situation is being watched closely, she added, noting interest from media and the public in the current drought situation.

Next, Ms. Jackson shared about the Make Water Work campaign launch and emphasis on promoting the Make Water Work Plant Collection as WaterWise and, working with FireSmartBC, now also approved with FireSmart designations. The launch was held in a Lake Country neighbourhood that was developed with WaterWise and FireSmart design principles and survived last year’s wildfire. The event included speeches from valley mayors and councillors, the Lake Country fire chief, and Ellison FireSmart coordinator whose team helped protect the neighbourhood from fire. Residents also attended, as well as several news outlets.

The board was also updated on the launch of this year’s "Don't Move a Mussel" (DMM) campaign, using strategically placed billboards and more. A contract is in place with Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society to help promote the DMM message and a variety of materials have been provided to them for distribution. Ms. Jackson added that a call has gone out to local governments in the region with an offer to subsidize additional boat launch signs, like past years.

“THAT the Communications Director’s Report, dated June 4, 2024, be received.”

CARRIED.

6 CORRESPONDENCE

“The only correspondence to note is the letter from the OBWB to Minister Cullen, attached in the agenda package”

7 NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board will be on Tuesday August 6, 2024 at 10 a.m. at the Regional District of North Okanagan.

8 ADJOURNMENT

“THAT there being no further business, the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of June 4, 2024 be adjourned at 1:18 p.m.”

CARRIED

Certified Correct:		
Chair		Executive Director