



**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE OKANAGAN BASIN WATER BOARD
HELD NOVEMBER 5, 2024, ONLINE**

PRESENT

Chair Blair Ireland	Regional District Central Okanagan
Vice Chair Doug Holmes	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Director Sue McKortoff	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Director Charlie Hodge	Regional District Central Okanagan
Director Victor Cumming	Regional District North Okanagan
Director Wayne Carson	Regional District Central Okanagan
Director Bob Fleming	Regional District North Okanagan
Director Rick Knodel	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Director Rick Fairbairn	Regional District North Okanagan
Director Jeremy Fyke	Okanagan Water Stewardship Council (OWSC)

REGRETS

Director Tim Lezard	Okanagan Nation Alliance
Director Bob Hrasko	Water Supply Association of B.C.

STAFF

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

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair Ireland called the meeting to order at 10:00 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

No late items.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

“ THAT the agenda of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of November 5, 2024 be approved. ”

CARRIED

4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

4.1 Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of October 1, 2024, held at the Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen in Penticton, B.C.

“ THAT the minutes of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board on October 1, 2024, held at the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen in Penticton, B.C., be approved. ”

CARRIED

5. STAFF REPORTS

5.1 Executive Director Report – Dr. Anna Warwick Sears

Dr. Sears gave an update to the Board Directors about the ongoing process of hiring a Communications Manager. Directors also heard about the upcoming Okanagan-Similkameen Leadership Table Signing Event, where OBWB staff have been invited to attend as guests. The historic agreement is focused on bringing Sylix and local government leaders together to protect and restore water at the watershed level. Dr. Sears also provided the Board with an update on ongoing drought conditions in the Okanagan as the region heads into late fall and winter – highlighting that although predictions for La Niña conditions call for lower temperatures and increased precipitation, the Okanagan has yet to receive much snow.

“THAT the Executive Director’s Report, dated November 5, 2024, be received.”

CARRIED

5.2 Deputy Administrator - James Littley

Mr. Littley spoke to the Board about his attendance at the International Osoyoos Lake Board of Control (IOLBC)’s annual meeting in Osoyoos and Oroville, which included presentations on Osoyoos Lake levels, drought declarations and ice jams. Another top issue discussed at the meeting was about the feasibility of the IOLBC to transform from a Control Board to a Watershed Board, which would expand the mandate of the organization from monitoring Osoyoos Lake levels to also include monitoring water quality and aquatic ecosystem health among other potential things.

Board Directors received three updates on invasive zebra/quagga mussels:

- Quagga mussels have been detected for the second year in a row in the Snake River, Idaho, which is connected to the Okanagan via the Columbia River system. After a 2-week treatment of copper chelate last fall, the State of Idaho repeated the pesticide treatment this fall and will continue to monitor the situation. The area will only be considered free of quagga mussels after 5 consecutive years of negative samples.
- Staff’s recent presentation to the B.C. Health Officer’s Council (HOC) about the potential negative public health impacts of invasive mussels. The HOC passed a resolution to support the OBWB’s calls to action requiring all watercraft entering the province to be inspected prior to launching in B.C. waters, and for the Provincial Government to allocate permanent, stable funding for inspection and decontamination.
- In response to the Department of Fisheries and Ocean’s (DFO) report “National Aquatic Invasive Species Risk Assessment for Zebra and Quagga Mussels”, OBWB Staff are raising concerns about the report’s methods and conclusions. In response, OBWB staff will continue to work with partners to consider a more thorough critique of this DFO Risk Assessment and provide feedback to DFO based on that review.

The Board also heard three updates about the year-round Milfoil Program:

- Following a procurement process the OBWB will be receiving a new milfoil harvester from Aquarius Systems for \$277,000 USD, which is scheduled to be delivered summer 2025. The new harvester has a larger cutting head and larger storage capacity than our existing 1978 harvesters and will also have height-adjustable operating platforms that will accommodate travelling under the Osoyoos Lake bridge.
- The new five-year rototilling permit received by OBWB from the province is now in effect, allowing staff to better respond to milfoil infestations while avoiding sensitive ecological habitats.
- A new high-definition underwater camera is being tested to help differentiate between plant

species and to avoid hazards in the water.

“THAT the Deputy Administrator’s Report, dated November 5, 2024, be received.”
CARRIED

5.3 Water Stewardship Director Report – Dr. Nelson Jatel

Dr. Jatel presented to the Board with updates from the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council (OWSC)

- The October OWSC meeting featured a presentation on the Flood Hazard Identification and Mitigation Program by Dr. Joel Trubilowicz from the ECCC National Hydrological Service. The Program seeks to balance safety and cost-effectiveness in flood risk management, considering changing flood patterns like rain-on-snow events.
- The Policy Committee reported progress on the Okanagan Water Infrastructure Discussion Paper and completed a drought report. The Supply and Demand Committee is developing a proposal for water demand modelling. The Building Ethical Space for Water Stewardship Committee is advancing on a literature review and guide. And the Water Quality & Health Committee continued its focus on water health issues, with a particular emphasis on the impact of blue-green algae.
- The OWSC discussed foundational questions aimed at improving management practices, water sourcing, and use. Strategies for enhancing water availability through precision irrigation and soil management during heat events were suggested. The importance of exploring diverse water sources beyond Okanagan Lake for long-term security and the need for detailed data collection on actual water use were highlighted.
- The next OWSC meeting is scheduled for November 14th, featuring Stephen Morrison speaking on "Co-management: Engagement Isn't Enough."

Board Directors heard from Dr. Jatel about resources available to help water purveyors to understand and manage the risks associated with blue-green algae (aka. Cyanobacteria). These include guidelines on public beach monitoring by Interior Health and strategies for local governments and health authorities to assess and mitigate risks, highlighted in the "Decision Protocols for Cyanobacterial Toxins in B.C. Drinking Water and Recreational Water." Dr. Jatel noted that with the rise in water temperatures, the Okanagan will likely have to respond to an increase in blue-green algae, and manage its impacts on drinking water.

“THAT the Water Stewardship Director’s Report, dated November 5, 2024, be received.”
CARRIED.

5.4 Water Science Specialist Report – Sandra Schira

Ms. Schira’s report to the Board highlighted continued improvements to drought communications through the summer, specifically through the OBWB’s Drought Bulletin. Ms. Schira sought and received feedback from Directors around communications that would benefit Okanagan governments and water utility providers during drought.

“THAT the Water Science Specialist Report, dated November 5, 2024, be received.”
CARRIED.

5.5 Communications Coordinator Report – Amanda Burnett

Directors heard about OBWB’s third quarter news coverage and reach, noting that news article reach was at a significantly high point in the week of July 22-28th, when the province announced the Okanagan’s increase in drought from level 2 to level 3 and the subsequent Drought Bulletin

was released by the OBWB. This peak in reach is important to note, as it reinforces the importance of our ongoing drought communications efforts.

“THAT the Communications Coordinator Report, dated November 5, 2024, be received.”
CARRIED.

6. **NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

- 6.1 Budget Features Memo – Proposed Budget 2025-26 – Dr. Anna Warwick Sears
 - 6.1.1 2025-2026 Provisional Assessment and Segmented Budget
 - 6.1.2 August 2024 Reserves Memo – for Information

The Board reviewed the 2025-26 budget as presented in the November agenda package. The 2025-2026 Budget focuses on priority programs and services. The most recent audited financial statements (2023-24) are provided in the OBWB annual report posted on the OBWB website.

The draft 2025-26 budget has the following features:

- The overall OBWB requisition is \$4,053,176, up 3.65% from the 2024-25 requisition of \$3,910,386, as a result of necessary increases to our milfoil and sewage facilities grants programs.
- In total, this is equivalent to 2.7 cents/\$1,000 assessment, unchanged from last year’s rate.

“THAT the OBWB adopts the 2025-2026 budget as presented in principle and bring it back for discussion in December.”

CARRIED.

6.2 Director Remuneration Policy – James Littlely

Mr. Littlely presented a review of the OBWB Director’s Remuneration policy based on the UBCM 2019 Best Practices Guide. The review found that there had been no net change in director’s remuneration since 2007, and that best practice was to also offer compensation for travel time to attend meetings in geographically large areas. The review compared remuneration policies for five regional districts, including the three Okanagan Regional Districts, and calculated a simple inflation adjustment since the original remuneration rate was set in 2007. The final recommendation was based on an average remuneration found using these review methods. The review also recommended providing compensation for travel time, an annual inflation adjustment, and an automatic 5-year review period for director remuneration policy. Changes were recommended to take effect on April 1, 2025.

Following discussion around the travel-time policy, and the significant role of the Board Chair, Director Cumming made two motions to change the policy as recommended by staff:

- Motion to amend the Director Remuneration Policy so that the proposed Chair pay per meeting is doubled from the recommended amount, from \$262 to \$524.
- Motion to amend so that directors can opt out of being paid for travel time.

“THAT the OBWB adopts the Director Remuneration Policy as follows:

- ***Starting with the 2026 fiscal year (April 1, 2025) OBWB director remuneration be adjusted to \$190 per meeting and Chair remuneration to \$524.***
- ***Director’s travel time over 1-hour be remunerated at \$23.75 per half-hour, calculated to the nearest half-hour, and that directors may opt-out of the travel time remuneration.***

- *Director remuneration rates, including travel time be adjusted annually based on the B.C. CPI to the nearest dollar, taking effect on April 1st.*
- *OBWB Remuneration Policy be reviewed every five years.*

CARRIED.

Director Holmes opposed

6.3 2025 Water Conservation and Quality Improvement (WCQI) Grant Program Memo – Carolina Restepo-Tamayo

Ms. Restrepo presented on the 2025 WCQI Grant Program, which offers funding between \$3,000 and \$30,000 for projects in the Okanagan Basin. This year, the call for applications will go out on November 7th, with the application deadline set for Friday, Feb. 21st at 4 p.m.

“THAT the process and scoring criteria for the grant competition be approved as outlined; AND THAT for the 2025-2026 WCQI grant competition, up to 10 bonus points will be awarded for projects in any category related to Source Water Protection.”

CARRIED.

7. **CORRESPONDENCE**

The OBWB received a letter from Ministry of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Director General, Biodiversity Management regarding invasive mussels.

“THAT correspondence to the OBWB, dated November 5, 2024, be received.”

CARRIED.

8. **IN-CAMERA**

In-camera session (under sec. 90(1)(c) of the Community Charter) at 12:00 p.m.
The board exited the in-camera session at 12:45 p.m.

9. **RISE AND REPORT**

“THAT the OBWB receives the Executive Director’s verbal report of her impending retirement.”

CARRIED

10. **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board will be held online on Tuesday, December 3rd, 2024 at 10:00 a.m.

11. **ADJOURNMENT**

“THAT there being no further business, the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of November 5, 2024 be adjourned at 12:50 p.m.”

CARRIED

Certified Correct:		
Chair		Executive Director