

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE OKANAGAN BASIN WATER BOARD  
HELD April 1, 2025, AT THE OFFICES OF THE REGIONAL DISTRICT OF THE NORTH OKANAGAN,  
9848 ABERDEEN RD., COLDSTREAM, B.C.**

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**PRESENT**

Chair Blair Ireland	Regional District Central Okanagan
Vice Chair Doug Holmes	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Director Rick Fairbairn	Regional District North Okanagan
Director Victor Cumming	Regional District North Okanagan
Director Bob Fleming	Regional District North Okanagan
Alt-Director Kevin Kraft	Regional District Central Okanagan
Director Wayne Carson	Regional District Central Okanagan
Director Sue McKortoff	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Director Subrina Monteith	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Director Jeremy Fyke	Okanagan Water Stewardship Council (OWSC)
Director Bob Hrasko	Water Supply Association of B.C.

**REGRETS**

Director Tim Lezard	Okanagan Nation Alliance
Director Charlie Hodge	Regional District Central Okanagan

**STAFF**

Anna Warwick Sears	Executive Director
James Littley	Chief Operating Officer
Nelson Jatel	Water Stewardship Director
Carolina Restrepo-Tamayo	Office and Grants Manager
Carmen Weld	Communications Manager
Sandra Schira	Water Science Specialist
Amanda Burnett	Communications Coordinator

**1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

Chair Ireland called the meeting to order at 10:07 a.m.

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**

- 2.1 Chair Ireland, as a late item, introduced a motion to direct staff to draft a letter from the OBWB to the B.C. Ministers on the value of water to the economy in the Okanagan.

***"THAT staff be directed to draft a letter from the OBWB to B.C. Ministers on the value of water to the economy in the Okanagan."***

**CARRIED**

- 2.2 James Littley submitted a late memorandum titled Executive Director Appointment. This was submitted as item 6.1.1.

**3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

*“THAT the agenda of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of April 1, 2025, be approved.”*

**CARRIED**

**4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

4.1 Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of March 4, 2025, held online.

*“THAT the minutes of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board on March 4, 2025, held online, be approved.”*

**CARRIED**

**5. DELEGATION**

5.1 There were no delegations at this meeting.

**6. STAFF REPORTS**

6.1 Executive Director Report – Dr. Anna Warwick Sears

Dr. Sears reminded the board that she is now on leave from her position as the Executive Director of the OBWB. She told the Board that she will continue to work closely with Chief Operating Officer, James Littley and incoming Executive Director Melissa Tesche on the transition

*“THAT the Executive Director’s report, dated March 26, 2025, be received.”*

**CARRIED**

6.2 Chief Operating Officer - James Littley

Mr. Littley provided the Board with an update on the OBWB’s milfoil control program. Mr. Littley informed the Board that the ongoing low water conditions in the Okanagan are affecting milfoil control operations this winter. De-rooting is now complete in Okanagan and Wood Lakes, however Osoyoos Lake levels have been too low to launch the machine there this season. With increased precipitation expected, it may be possible to launch before April 1, putting operations a few weeks behind schedule in Osoyoos. Mr. Littley has directed operators to prioritize public beach areas, as per board policy, while areas adjacent to public property may not receive treatment this winter. Drought conditions are also affecting operations in Kalamalka Lake, as de-rooting causes short-term turbidity spikes at Greater Vernon Water’s (GVW) Kalamalka Lake intake. Kalamalka Lake drains during freshet, and most of the turbidity is carried away from the intake and toward Vernon Creek; however, with the current low flows in Vernon Creek, the turbidity is moving toward the intake. The OBWB is coordinating closely with GVW to do as much milfoil control as possible without affecting drinking water quality.

Mr. Littley also provided Board Directors with updates to various aspects of the OBWB’s ongoing efforts to prevent the spread of invasive mussels. On March 21, the OBWB submitted feedback to the BC Wildlife Act Review as they work to amend the Act to enable future regulations requiring all watercraft entering the province to be inspected before launching in B.C. waters. This step will help prevent invasive mussels, whirling disease, and other aquatic invasives and pathogens. The aim is to create robust legislation to stop boats from launching and to establish quarantine protocols, drawing from examples of other jurisdictions.

Alberta has improved its invasive mussel defense program, by committing \$18.2 million over five years to enhance prevention efforts. This is equivalent to \$3.64 million per year. The funding will support inspection stations, two mussel-sniffing dog teams, and a pilot tank decontamination project. B.C.’s Invasive Mussel Defence Program funding remains the same, despite OBWB calls

to increase funding to the program.

Mr. Littley reported that he has been working with UBCO 4th-year engineering students on a modular drive-through watercraft decontamination tank design, with a final report detailing components, costs, and maintenance; the project will be showcased at the KF Centre for Excellence on April 9.

***“THAT the Chief Operating Officer’s report, dated March 25, 2025, be received.”***  
**CARRIED**

### 6.3 Water Stewardship Director’s Report – Dr. Nelson Jatel

Dr. Jatel provided the Board with a summary of the latest Okanagan Water Stewardship Council (OWSC) meeting. At the March 13 OWSC meeting, UBCO student Zailie Hoff, co-supervised by Dr. Jatel and UBCO professor Dr. Craig Nichol, presented her research on the connection between groundwater and surface water in Mission Creek. Her study of 12 wells along the creek confirmed that groundwater and surface water are directly connected—meaning that well pumping near the creek can lower creek water levels. She found that excessive summer pumping can significantly reduce environmental flows, affecting fish habitats, ecosystems, and community water supplies. James Littley also presented on invasive species prevention, highlighting back-casting analysis that several thousand of boats may have entered British Columbia without undergoing mandatory inspection, posing a serious risk to local waterways.

Melissa Tesche entered the Board meeting at 10:23 a.m.

Dr. Jeremy Fyke informed the Board that his two-year term as official Chair of the OWSC and OWSC appointee to the OBWB is concluding, making this his final meeting in the roles. OBWB Directors expressed their thanks and appreciation to Dr. Fyke for his leadership and contributions during his term. A new Chair will be elected at the next OWSC meeting, scheduled for Thursday, April 10, 2025, at the Kelowna Coast Capri Hotel.

Dr. Jatel previewed the upcoming speaker for the April 10 OWSC meeting; Deborah Curran, Executive Director of the Environmental Law Centre and Hakai Professor in Environmental Law and Sustainability at the University of Victoria. Curran will address the Council on how Canadian legal systems can better support community-led watershed governance. Her presentation will explore how legislative reforms could strengthen ecological resilience, with a focus on the co-existence of Indigenous and settler legal traditions in protecting water.

In response to concerns from Okanagan local governments about the increasing presence of cyanobacteria in drinking water sources—at times of year when it was not previously observed—Dr. Jatel is leading a collaborative effort with local governments and First Nations to apply for a grant from Environment and Climate Change Canada. The initiative aims to improve understanding of cyanobacteria in Okanagan lakes, where significant uncertainty still exists. The OBWB, in partnership with the City of Kelowna and Westbank First Nation Utilities & Public Works, is leading efforts to address harmful algal blooms (HABs), which threaten drinking water quality, wildlife, and recreational activities. The project will be incorporated into the OBWB’s Water Quality Program and will deliver a shared monitoring database, integration of satellite and sensor data with laboratory analysis, emergency response plans, treatment method guidelines, and a specialized training program. Supported by more than 40 experts and local water professionals, the project is designed to benefit not only the Okanagan but potentially other regions facing similar challenges.

An economic analysis and cost-benefit assessment of irrigation water use in the Okanagan, led by Dr. Alberto Ceccacci and Dr. John Janmaat, is currently underway. The study aims to better understand the economic impacts of irrigation on local governments and the regional economy. Through a survey of the agricultural community, local and senior governments, and several water professionals, the project is identifying practical opportunities to improve irrigation practices and

enhance overall water use efficiency. The findings will help guide future water management policies and strategies in the region.

The 13<sup>th</sup>-Annual Okanagan Water Supply Webinar will take place on Friday, April 11, 2025, from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., hosted by Dr. Jatel via Zoom. The webinar will provide important updates on reservoir levels, snowpack conditions, groundwater trends, and seasonal weather forecasts to support informed water management decisions. The session is open to local governments, farmers, businesses, and the public.

***"THAT the Water Stewardship Director's report, dated March 24, 2025, be received."***  
***CARRIED.***

#### 6.1.1 Executive Director Appointment – James Littlely

##### **OATH OF OFFICE**

***"THAT effective April 21, 2025, the appointment of Anna Warwick Sears as the Executive Director be rescinded;***

***"AND THAT effective April 22, 2025, Melissa Tesche be appointed as Executive Director to assume the powers, duties and functions under section 235 (Chief Administrative Officer) and Section 237 (Financial Administration) under the Local Government Act."***  
***CARRIED***

In accordance with the Local Government Act Section 238, and the Local Government Oath of Office Regulation, Water Board Directors and staff witnessed the formal swearing-in of Melissa Tesche as the new Executive Director of the Okanagan Basin Water Board. The Oath of Office was administered by the exiting Executive Director, Dr. Anna Warwick Sears. Ms. Tesche's appointment will take effect April 22, 2025.

The signed Oath of Office document will be retained on file with the Office Manager.

Also witnessed was the formal swearing-in of James Littlely as the new OBWB Chief Operating Officer of the Okanagan Basin Water Board – Appointed in March 2025. The newly appointed Executive Director Melissa Tesche administered the Oath of Office.

The signed Oath of Office document will be retained on file with the Office Manager.

#### 6.4 Water Science Specialist Report – Sandra Schira

Ms. Schira provided the Board with a monthly update on weather. Okanagan snowpack numbers as of March 1 for the Okanagan were 82 per cent of normal, holding steady since February and consistent with the rest of the province. Rainfall in March was above normal, and as of March 24, there had been a small increase, with each station showing varying measurements. The region is coming out of a light La Niña and is currently experiencing neutral weather conditions. The precipitation outlook does not show a clear trend in either direction.

Ms. Schira answered a question from the Board regarding the apparent missing water in Short's Creek near Fintry in the Central Okanagan. She explained that while she is not sure of the exact cause of low water levels in that specific creek, different types of drought might mean that the water is recharging in one area but not another.

Dr. Jatel spoke about a new hydrometric station, the first in the country led by First Nations, with a new transmission mode on Shorts Creek. Survey Canada hydrometric stations are on GHOST (Globally Harmonized Dataset of Surface Atmospheric Composition Measurements).

Ms. Schira presented the Board with preliminary findings from the nearly completed 2024 Water Rates Survey, a follow-up to a similar survey from 2017. The 2024 Water Rates Survey aims to provide an understanding of the metering practices and pricing structures for residential and agricultural water across the valley. Early findings indicate that every utility is different in balancing current use with ongoing and future demand and costs, and in budgeting for current operational costs and planning for future capital replacement. Since 2017, almost all water providers have shifted to metering their residential customers and have typically moved to some form of consumption-based pricing. The most common form of residential water pricing is a flat base fee plus a charge per cubic meter (m<sup>3</sup>) of consumption. Some providers increase the per-m<sup>3</sup> charge with consumption, while others use a flat rate. No communities have a specific drought pricing policy but use the consumption rate to encourage water conservation. Agricultural metering is more varied, with only five suppliers metering 100 per cent of farming customers. Pricing also varies, but the most common form is a per-acre allocation rate, charged annually, with an overconsumption rate for customers exceeding their allotment. The most common billing rate is quarterly, though this varies by location.

***“THAT the Water Science Specialist’s report, dated March 26, 2025, be received.”***  
***CARRIED.***

#### 6.5 Communications Manager Report – Carmen Weld

Ms. Weld sought feedback from the Board Directors on the various public outreach brands; Make Water Work, Don’t Move a Mussel, and Okanagan WaterWise, as well as the branding of the Okanagan Basin Water Board. She recommended to consolidate messaging from Okanagan WaterWise under the Okanagan Basin Water Board branding to provide a more cohesive branding strategy. Directors provided feedback to staff, who will move forward with changes in the coming months.

Directors also received a summarized report of earned media featuring the Okanagan Basin Water Board and its outreach programs between March and April 2025.

***“THAT the Communications Manager’s report, dated March 24, 2025, be received.”***  
***CARRIED.***

#### 7. NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

7.1 There was no new and unfinished business at this meeting.

#### 8. CORRESPONDENCE

8.1 Letter from OBWB Chair Blair Ireland to the province to provide input on the proposed amendments to the Wildlife Act, dated March 21, 2025.

8.2 Email reply to the OBWB letter regarding changes to the Wildlife Act from Lori Halls, Deputy Minister to the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, dated March 26, 2025.

***“THAT the OBWB receives the communications as outlined above.”***  
***CARRIED***

#### 9. IN-CAMERA

The Board entered an in-camera session (under sec. 90(1)(a) and 90(2)(b) of the Community Charter) at 12:25 p.m.

***“THAT the Okanagan Basin Water Board enter into an in-camera session.”***  
***CARRIED.***

The board exited the in-camera session at 12:32 p.m. to rise and report.

**9A. RISE AND REPORT FROM IN-CAMERA**

***"THAT the OBWB approve the 2025 grant funding as presented; AND THAT the OBWB rise and report the 2025 grant funding as approved."***

**CARRIED**

**10. NEXT MEETING**

10.1 The next meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board will be an abbreviated meeting on Tuesday, May 6, 2025, at 10 a.m. at the Coast Capri Hotel, 1171 Harvey Ave, Kelowna, followed by a joint Board-Okanagan Water Stewardship Council meeting.

**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](mailto:communications@obwb.ca) for further details.

**11. ADJOURNMENT**

***"THAT there being no further business, the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of April 1, 2025, be adjourned at 12:35 p.m."***

**CARRIED**

Certified Correct:		
Chair		Executive Director