

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE OKANAGAN BASIN WATER BOARD  
HELD MAY 6, 2025 AT THE KELOWNA CAPRI HOTEL, 1171 HARVEY AVE, KELOWNA, 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       |
| Director Charlie Hodge    | 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 Sheena Spencer   | Okanagan Water Stewardship Council     |
| Director Bob Hrasko       | Water Supply Association of B.C.       |

**REGRETS**

|                     |                          |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Director Tim Lezard | Okanagan Nation Alliance |
|---------------------|--------------------------|

**STAFF**

|                          |                               |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Melissa Tesche           | Executive Director            |
| Nelson Jatel             | Water Stewardship Director    |
| Carolina Restrepo-Tamayo | Office and Grants Manager     |
| Carmen Weld              | Communications Manager        |
| Christina White          | Water Quality Project Manager |
| Amanda Burnett           | Communications Coordinator    |

**GUESTS**

James Telford  
Kristina King  
Zee Marcolin  
Rob Birtles  
Denise Neilsen  
Kirsten Hanam

**1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

Chair Ireland called the meeting to order at 10:04 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 siwłk (water) which flows through the valley and connects us all.

**2. INTRODUCTION OF LATE ITEMS**

- 2.1 Melissa Tesche submitted a late correspondence from the Okanagan Nation Alliance to the B.C. Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship. This was submitted as item 9.3.

**3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

*"THAT the agenda of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of May 6, 2025, be approved."*

**CARRIED**

**4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

- 4.1 Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of April 1, 2025, at the offices of the District of Coldstream.

*"THAT the minutes of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board on April 1, 2025, held at the offices of the District of Coldstream, be approved."*

**CARRIED**

**5. BOARD CHAIR REMARKS**

- 5.1 Chair Ireland provided an update after his recent attendance at the Okanagan Similkameen Collaborative Leadership Table, held on April 24, 2025 at the offices of the Okanagan Indian Band in Lake Country, B.C. At the meeting, the Terms of Reference were unanimously adopted, and Westbank First Nation Chief Robert Louie and Lake Country Councillor Tricia Brett were appointed as Co-Chairs. Chair Ireland reported the meeting was marked with a sense of cooperation and respectful exchange of ideas.

**6. DELEGATION**

- 6.1 There were no delegations at this meeting.

**7. STAFF REPORTS**

- 7.1 Executive Report – Melissa Tesche

Ms. Tesche reminded the Board that this meeting will be abbreviated to allow for an extended, annual joint meeting with the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council (OWSC). Comprehensive staff reports are scheduled for the next regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) on June 3, 2025.

Ms. Christina White was introduced as OBWB's new Water Quality Project Manager. Ms. White is a Registered Professional Biologist with 12 years of experience in aquatic biology. Her responsibilities will encompass planning and permitting for the watermilfoil program, management of invasive mussel prevention initiatives, support for water quality research and restoration, and policy analysis.

Board Directors were informed of the ongoing preparations for the fiscal year-end and the upcoming audit with BDO. The draft financial statements are expected to be circulated for Board review and approval prior to the June meeting, where auditors will deliver the presentation and address inquiries.

Ms. Tesche spoke to the board about the miscellaneous statutes amendment act, 2025, introduced to the legislative assembly on April 29 (Correspondence 9.1). The amendments, proposed under the Wildlife Act, targeted for implementation during the 2025 summer boating season, include requirements for draining water from watercraft ("Pull the Plug") and as well as clarifying the legal basis for mandatory stops at watercraft inspection stations. Furthermore, the amendments could enable mandatory inspections for watercraft entering British Columbia from other jurisdictions before launching starting in the 2025 boating season.

*"THAT the Executive Report, dated April 29, 2025, be received."*

**CARRIED**

## 7.2 Water Stewardship Director Report – Dr. Nelson Jatel

Dr. Jatel provided an update on the OWSC. At the April 10 OWSC meeting, Ms. Deborah Curran presented on strategies for Canadian legal systems to better support community-led watershed governance. Her presentation explored legislative reform opportunities to enhance ecological resilience and highlighted the potential for Indigenous and settler legal traditions to co-exist in water protection efforts.

Dr. Jatel shared that the Special Joint Board-Council Meeting following that day will be an opportunity for collaboration and communication between the Council and the Board. Presentations from the Chairs of the OWSC committees will provide updates on current activities and priorities, with the aim of supporting strategic alignment for the 2025-2029 planning cycle.

Directors heard from Dr. Jatel on the collaborative funding application submitted to Environment and Climate Change Canada for a project titled "Collaborative Monitoring and Early-Warning System for Harmful Algal Blooms". This initiative, in partnership with the City of Kelowna and Westbank First Nation, seeks to address the increasing prevalence of cyanobacteria blooms in Okanagan Lake. Since the presence of cyanobacteria in Okanagan drinking water is seen as an emerging threat, the project's objectives include establishing a regional monitoring network, developing predictive modeling tools, creating an early-warning system and response dashboard, providing training for water suppliers, and strengthening collaboration among stakeholders. Key deliverables will feature a shared data hub, predictive models for bloom forecasting, tables on treatment effectiveness, and a training module for water utility operators. The project is anticipated to span from September 2025 to August 2027 with an estimated budget of \$180,000. The proposed system is designed for scalability and transferability.

***"THAT the Water Stewardship Director Report, dated April 29, 2025, be received."***  
***CARRIED***

## 7.3 Sole-Source Contract Approval with Okanagan Nation Alliance – Dr. Nelson Jatel

Dr. Nelson Jatel asked for Board approval to continue the sole-source contract with the Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA) for the operation and maintenance of hydrometric stations within the OBWB Hydrometric Information Network Program for the 2025-26 fiscal year. The contract also incorporates the installation and maintenance of nine new manual stations on Mission Creek as part of a joint study on surface-groundwater interactions. The ONA has been involved since the program's inception in 2020 and is the preferred service provider due to their technical expertise, cost-efficiency, regional understanding, and alignment with the OBWB's Indigenous partnership goals. It was noted that transitioning to the program to a full federal management contract would result in an approximate 40% increase in annual costs to the program. The proposed contract for 2025-26 has a total value of \$344,080, allocated within the approved Water Management Program budget, and covers the maintenance and operation of 23 real-time and three manual stations.

***"THAT the OBWB Board to approve awarding a sole-source contract to the Okanagan Nation Alliance for \$344,080 to deliver hydrometric station operation and maintenance services for the 2025-26 fiscal year."***

***CARRIED.***

## 7.4 Communications Manager Report – Carmen Weld

Ms. Weld reported on the ongoing efforts to streamline public outreach efforts, which includes informative creative pieces about the OBWB and its various programs that were recently debuted at the annual Southern Interior Local Government Association conference tradeshow held in Merritt, B.C. Directors also heard about the upcoming launch of the 2025 Make Water Work and Don't Move a Mussel campaigns. An official partnership with FireSmart™ for the Make Water Work campaign was announced; this partnership will emphasize WaterWise landscaping that is fire

resilient.

The Make Water Work campaign is scheduled to commence on May 21, 2025, in Armstrong. The Don't Move a Mussel campaign will prioritize messaging regarding the importance of stopping at inspection stations and will introduce a Responsible Recreation Checklist. Billboards and digital, print, and social media advertisements are planned to begin in late May. Collaboration with the Okanagan Xeriscape Association and the Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society will continue for educational outreach. The Communications Manager report also included a summary of media coverage received between March 24 and April 28, 2025.

***"THAT the Communications Manager Report dated April 29, 2025, be received."***

***CARRIED.***

#### 7.5 Water Science Specialist Report – Christina White for Sandra Schira

Ms. White provided the weather update on behalf of Sandra Schira. Directors were informed that snowmelt is occurring at lower elevations, with April precipitation within normal ranges and temperatures cooler and steady. Most streams are entering the freshet period, with peak flows anticipated in the next two months. Okanagan Lake levels are presently high due to precipitation in March, suggesting a potential earlier start to the lake's freshet. No flood warnings have been issued by the Province. Long-term forecasts, while variable, indicate a high probability of hot and dry summer conditions over the next three months.

The Okanagan snowpack on April 1 was slightly below normal at 82%. While April precipitation was variable and did not significantly increase snowpack, it was within normal conditions for the month. The Okanagan will require consistent precipitation to fully recover from ongoing drought conditions. Temperatures remained relatively consistent in April after a cooler shift in the middle of the month. Stream flows across the valley are increasing, signaling the start of freshet, and are generally within normal ranges for this time of year, representing an improvement compared to the previous year. Lake levels remain high.

Directors discussed observations of current flows in Short's Creek, Mission Creek and other Okanagan creeks.

***"THAT the Water Science Specialist Report dated April 30, 2025, be received."***

***CARRIED.***

### 8. NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

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

### 9. CORRESPONDENCE

9.1 Information Bulletin from the Ministry of Attorney General, dated April 29, 2025. The bulletin describes the introduction of miscellaneous statutes amendment act, 2025. If passed by the legislature, the amendments include changes to the Wildlife Act to enact pull the plug requirements and could include mandatory stops at watercraft inspection stations, targeted for the 2025 summer boating season.

In response Directors discussed sending a letter of thanks to Hon. Minister Randene Neill, Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship.

Directors also discussed encouraging a more rapid timeline on the proposed amendments to the Wildlife Act in response to the rapidly approaching boating season.

9.2 Letter from Columbia Shuswap Regional District Board Chair Natalya Melnychuk to the province to Honourable Randene Neill, M.P. Minister of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship in support of the Okanagan Basin Water Board's Calls to Action – Preventing

Invasive Mussels in BC. Dated April 4, 2025.

- 9.3 Correspondence from the Okanagan Nation Alliance to the B.C. Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship on behalf of the Syilx Okanagan Nation's Chiefs Executive Council and Natural Resources Committee with a statement strongly opposing the recent federal and provincial approval of chemicals for use in open water including an aquatic herbicide "ProcellaCOR FX" to treat milfoil, and an aquatic pesticide Potash to treat invasive mussels. The letter was sent in support of the OBWB's opposition and recent official statement against the use of chemical pesticides and aquatic herbicides in Okanagan lakes, streams, and reservoirs. Directors discussed thanking the ONA for their letter; and Ms. Tesche responded that staff will follow through.

***"THAT correspondences to the OBWB, dated May 6, 2025, be received."***  
***CARRIED.***

#### 10. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board will be Tuesday, June 3, 2025, at 10:00 a.m., at the offices of the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen, 101 Martin St. Penticton.

**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 May 6, 2025 be adjourned at 10:31 a.m."***  
***CARRIED***

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| Certified Correct: |  |                    |
|                    |  |                    |
| Chair              |  | Executive Director |