



**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE OKANAGAN BASIN WATER BOARD  
HELD June 3, 2025 AT THE OFFICES OF THE REGIONAL DISTRICT OF THE SOUTH OKANAGAN,  
101 MARTIN ST. PENTICTON, 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 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
Director Bob Fleming	Regional District North Okanagan

**STAFF**

Melissa Tesche	Executive Director
James Littlely	Chief Operating Officer
Nelson Jatel	Water Stewardship Director
Carolina Restrepo-Tamayo	Office and Grants Manager
Carmen Weld	Communications Manager
Sandra Shira	Water Science Specialist
Amanda Burnett	Communications Coordinator

**GUESTS**

Zoe Eyjolfson	Fluvial Geomorphologist at Okanagan Nation Alliance
Maddison Atwood	Assurance Manager at BDO
Lori White	Regional District Central Okanagan – Finance
Andrew Farmer	Regional District Central Okanagan – Finance

**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 siw̓łk (water) which flows through the valley and connects us all.

**2. INTRODUCTION OF LATE ITEMS**

There were no late items presented at this meeting.

**3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

*"THAT the agenda of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of June 3, 2025, be approved."*

**CARRIED**

**4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

- 4.1** Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of May 6, 2025 held at the Capri Hotel, 1171 Harvey Ave, Kelowna, BC V1Y 6E8.

*"THAT the minutes of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board on May 6, 2025, held at the Capri Hotel, be approved."*

**CARRIED**

**5. BOARD CHAIR REMARKS**

- 5.1** Chair Ireland provided an update to the board about his recent meeting with the Honourable Stephen Fuhr, Kelowna Member of Parliament. Chair Ireland addressed the lack of official representation for the Columbia Basin, and by extension the Okanagan Basin, within the Canada Water Agency's freshwater bodies of national significance. Chair Ireland also has a meeting scheduled next week with Nicole Rustad, Hon. Fuhr's Chief of Staff, to continue this discussion.

**6. DELEGATION**

- 6.1** Zoe Eyjolfson, Fluvial Geomorphologist at Okanagan Nation Alliance presented to the Board regarding the Okanagan Lake Dam East Salmon Passage project.

Ms. Eyjolfson, presented to the Board on the Okanagan Lake Dam East Salmon Passage project in the Penticton channel. She explained that since the early 1900s, fish passage has been blocked to Okanagan Lake, particularly after the 1928 construction of the third dam at the Penticton channel and the channelization of the Okanagan River for flood control and irrigation. The addition of drop structures for stability and the Okanagan Lake Regulation System (OLRS) to regulate flow led to significant habitat loss, reduced instream diversity, loss of riparian vegetation, and disconnection from the floodplain, causing native species to decline. The ONA's clear directive is to "put the river back, put the fish back," and they have collaborated with multiple partners, including the OBWB and the kł cpəlk' stim' Hatchery, to achieve this.

At 10:10 a.m. Director Monteith exited the meeting.

A feasibility study determined that modifying the aging, high-risk structure within the dam itself, especially near residential areas, was impractical. This led to the proposal for the Okanagan Lake East Passage project on the east side. The project aims to provide passage for all native salmonids during all migration times, while ensuring no negative impact on the Okanagan Lake Dam, maintaining flood control and public safety.

At 10:18 a.m. Director Cumming exited the meeting.

At 10:19 a.m. Director Cumming returned to the meeting.

The new passage will feature high-flow and low-flow entrances, native vegetation, grade-level access for public safety, and visual views into the fishway. Thousands of fish are expected to be visible.

Ms. Eyjolfson answered questions from Board Directors about project progress, and confirmed a mid-July expected finish date. The Penticton Indian Band plans to host an opening celebration once the project is completed, with the date to be announced at a later time.

The Board thanked Ms. Eyjolfson for her presentation.

6.2 Maddison Atwood, CPA, on behalf of Mario Piroddi, CISA, CPA, CA, Partner, BDO; presenting on the OBWB's 2024 Audited Financial Statements.

- 6.2.1 OBWB 2024 Management Letter
- 6.2.2 OBWB 2024 Representation Letter
- 6.2.3 OBWB Draft 2024 Financial Statements
- 6.2.4 OBWB Audit Final Report to the Board

At 10:26 a.m. Director Monteith returned to the meeting.

Highlights from the presentation indicated that BDO tested the appropriateness of financial records, with nothing significant to report. Internal control matters were found to be normal. The Independent Auditor's Report was a clean audit report. Directors inquired about the materiality threshold, wondering if it was set too high. BDO clarified that while the materiality threshold is \$125,000, BDO does investigate a set percentage of randomized transactions below that threshold.

***"THAT the Board Accepts the OBWB 2024 Audited Financial Statements Report."***  
***CARRIED***

7. **STAFF REPORTS**

7.1 **Executive Director Report – Melissa Tesche**

Ms. Tesche referenced the final audited financial statements for 2024 and thanked the finance team at the Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO) for making the process smooth and efficient. Ms. Tesche provided Board Directors with an update on the upcoming Board meetings schedule, reminding the Board there will be no July Board Meeting, and the next scheduled meeting will be held August 5, from 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. at the RDNO offices in Coldstream. Directors were asked to give their alternates advance notice to ensure a quorum if needed.

Ms. Tesche reported on the upcoming Budget 2026 Consultation with the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services. The OBWB has been invited to present in person to the Committee on Tuesday, June 10 in Vernon. The Board is permitted to provide up to three recommendations, and will again prioritize advocating for consistent, long-term funding for the prevention of invasive zebra and quagga mussel infestations..

Finally, Ms. Tesche reported on staff attendance at the recent Canadian Water Resources Association (CWRA) National Conference in Penticton from May 25-29, 2025. Ms. Tesche, along with Ms. Schira and Dr. Jatel, attended the conference, where the theme, "Living Between Water: Connecting Water and Resilience." Ms. Schira presented on the Climate Indicator Dashboard, while Mr. Jatel gave two presentations: one on the launch of the new Shiny app for monitoring real-time environmental flows and another on the role of trust in transboundary water governance.

Ms. Tesche noted that the Okanagan and Columbia region has been left off Canada Water Agency's (CWA) list of fresh water bodies of national significance . She explained that this goes beyond regional pride, directly impacting future national funding and excluding the region from the \$650M associated with the program. Ms. Tesche stated that this will be a central federal talking point, along with the need to prevent invasive mussels, and the need for increased infrastructure funding.

Finally, Ms. Tesche noted that she has been invited to provide an OBWB presentation to the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS).

***"THAT the Executive Director Report, dated May 27, 2025, be received."***  
***CARRIED***

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

Dr. Jatel provided an update on the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council (OWSC). He highlighted that the May 6 meeting was a joint session between the OWSC and the OBWB Board of Directors, aimed at strengthening collaboration and communication. The OWSC will finalize its next two-year work plan at its upcoming June meeting.

Dr. Jatel also updated the Board on the current activities of the OWSC committees. The Water Demand and Supply Committee is advancing two key initiatives: support for the Mission Creek Raven Model and an ongoing economic analysis of agricultural water use. The Policy Committee reviewed progress on proposed updates to the Okanagan Lake Regulation System and has begun examining provincial regulations related to septic systems and managed aquifer recharge. The Committee expressed concerns about potential liability risks for local governments under the current septic system framework—particularly the lack of inspection, regulation, and professional oversight beyond the initial design phase, as well as challenges navigating the Professional Governance Act.

***“THAT the Water Stewardship Director Report, dated May 22, 2025, be received.”***  
**CARRIED**

## 7.3 Office and Grants Manager Report – Carolina Restrepo Tamayo

Ms. Tamayo reported to the Board with information on the Water Conservation and Quality Improvement (WCQI) grants. As of April, all 15 grantees from the 2025/2026 grant cycle have signed agreements and have commenced their proposed deliverables, with midterm reports due in October. From last year's cycle, 7 projects have been completed, and the remaining have received extensions. Ms. Tamayo emphasized that flexibility for this program remains an important aspect, allowing organizations to deliver outcomes while continuing to receive funding from the OBWB.

Ms. Tamayo also reported on her attendance at the Environment Funders Canada (EFC) conference in Yukon, noting that the OBWB is a member of the organization. There was an interest from a number of groups in creating a Water Funders' Collaborative within the EFC, with the goal of water funders working together to collectively advocate to the federal government.

***“THAT the Office and Grants Manager Report, dated May 22, 2025, be received.”***  
**CARRIED**

## 7.4 Communications Manager Report – Carmen Weld

Ms. Weld spoke to the Board about ongoing Communications efforts. The Make Water Work (MWW) launch in Armstrong was a success, with FireSmart™ as an active partner and excellent collaboration from the City of Armstrong. The "Mayors' standoff" photo was a media success. Ms. Weld further reported that Osoyoos has received a public challenge from the former mayor of Armstrong.

Billboards are now posted across the Okanagan for the Don't Move a Mussel campaign, along with a responsible recreation checklist, and re-designed sandwich boards have been delivered by the Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society to key locations including Okanagan yacht clubs.

Ms. Weld also informed the Board that OBWB staff will be attending the upcoming District of Peachland Open House on Wednesday, June 11, from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the Peachland Community Centre, located at 4450 6th Street. At this event, OBWB staff will engage with the

public on key OBWB topics of priority. Directors are invited to attend. Media monitoring data for the past month was also presented to the Board.

***“THAT the Communications Manager Report dated May 22, 2025, be received.”***  
***CARRIED.***

#### **7.5 Water Science Specialist Report – Sandra Schira**

Ms. Schira provided the Okanagan weather update to Board Directors. She reported on snowmelt, presenting new graphs, and noting a slight improvement over last year, with levels having dropped but remaining within the normal range. Precipitation in spring is within normal conditions. Temperatures are within normal ranges, consistent week to week, but with recent significant spikes.

At 11:24 a.m. Director Hodge exited the meeting.

Ms. Schira further explained that the Province has presented briefings on their changes to drought communications, trying to make their classifications more consistent with drought monitoring systems in other regions. Directors discussed challenges with drought communications, sharing insights from their communities. While the entire Okanagan Valley will be assigned a regional drought level, reservoir levels and watering restrictions will vary wildly between communities from Armstrong down to Osoyoos.

At 11:28 a.m. Director Hodge returned to the meeting.

***“THAT the Water Science Specialist Report dated May 20, 2025, be received.”***  
***CARRIED.***

#### **8. NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

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

#### **9. CORRESPONDENCE**

**9.1 Letter from the Honourable Randene Neill, Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship, acknowledging the OBWB’s letter and advocacy towards keeping B.C. free of invasive mussels.**

Directors inquired about the meaning of "further analysis and engagement" in the Minister's letter. Mr. Littley explained that the province will be considering different models they could use for the mandatory inspections. The Board discussed B.C.'s actions to prevent the spread of invasive mussels, noting the province seems to be lagging behind Alberta's actions. Mr. Littley will be looking to re-convene the Okanagan Interior Invasive Mussel Working Group. Directors also suggested that Don't Move a Mussel messaging could be placed at boat launch gas stations, and staff were directed to explore this possibility.

***“THAT correspondences to the OBWB, dated May 7, 2025, be received.”***  
***CARRIED.***

#### **10. NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board will be on Tuesday, August 5, 2025 at 10 a.m. at the Regional District of North Okanagan office, 9848 Aberdeen Road, Coldstream, BC V1B 2K9.

**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 June 3, 2025 be adjourned at 11:51 a.m.”*  
*CARRIED*

Certified Correct:		
Chair		Executive Director