

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE OKANAGAN BASIN WATER BOARD
HELD AUGUST 5, 2025, at the Regional District of North Okanagan offices
at 9848 Aberdeen Road, Coldstream, B.C.**

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
Alternate Director Adrienne Fedrigo	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Director Subrina Monteith	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen
Director Sheena Spencer	Okanagan Water Stewardship Council (OWSC)
Director Bob Hrasko	Water Supply Association of B.C.

REGRETS

Director Tim Lezard	Okanagan Nation Alliance
Director Sue McKortoff	Regional District Okanagan-Similkameen

STAFF

Melissa Tesche	Executive Director
James Littley	Chief Operating Officer
Nelson Jatel	Water Stewardship Director
Carolina Restrepo-Tamayo	Office and Grants Manager
Christina White	Water Quality Project Manager
Sandra Schira	Water Science Specialist
Amanda Burnett	Communications Coordinator

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair Ireland called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

He respectfully acknowledged that we work on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded tm̓x̌wúlaʔx̌w (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

In-Camera Session, item 10.1.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

“ THAT the agenda of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of August 5, 2025 be approved.”

CARRIED

4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

- 4.1 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.

“THAT the minutes of the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board on June 3, 2025, held at the Regional District of the South Okanagan, 101 Martin St. Penticton B.C., be approved.”

CARRIED

5. DELEGATION

Sandra Shira, OBWB Water Science Specialist, presented “A Look Back at the 1974 Okanagan Basin Study.”

51 years later, the foundation laid by the 1974 Okanagan Basin Study continues to guide the work of the Okanagan Basin Water Board. The study looked at the relationship of water resource management in comprehensive planning. Throughout 20 chapters, the study addressed water quality, water quantity, environmental quality, social betterment, quality of life, public education, water management, and focused in large part on economic growth.

Ms. Schira presented highlights from the study, noting that economic projections went up to 2020, examining different growth scenarios. The Okanagan ultimately reached the high end of population growth projections over the last 50 years.

The Comprehensive Framework Plan was one of the most important outcomes of the 1974 Okanagan Basin Study, which ultimately led to the formation of the Okanagan Basin Water Board.

“Only through careful planning and integrated management of the basin’s water, land, and human resources can the present ecological and environmental harmony continue,” states the study.

Following the presentation, Executive Director Melissa Tesche provided follow-up commentary, drawing comparisons between the thought process that guided the study and the thought process that will guide OBWB’s upcoming strategic planning process. In preparation for the process this fall, Ms. Tesche invited the Directors to consider both the similarities and the changes for water management in the Okanagan Basin between 1974 and 2025.

Director Cummings, who was involved in the original Basin Study, provided historical context for the time when the study was being conducted and discussed the important work being done at the time by Dr. Glenn Sinclair.

Directors discussed the immensity of some of the current and future water issues and opportunities facing the Okanagan, including discussion of the significantly higher costs for water infrastructure, increasing population growth, the growth of UBCO, and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.

10:31 a.m. Director Monteith joined the meeting.

6. BOARD CHAIR REMARKS

- 6.1 There were no Board Chair remarks at this meeting.

7. STAFF REPORTS

- 7.1 Executive Director Report – Melissa Tesche

Ms. Tesche shared an update on Mr. James Littley's continued work advocating for Invasive Mussel Defence Funding at the Jun 10, 2025 Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services for Budget 2026. The OBWB is awaiting the committee's conclusions.

Ms. Tesche noted that her presentation to the Pacific Caucus, July 14-15, 2025, was well received and focused on three main points; Increasing water infrastructure costs, the threat of invasive mussels, and the need for equity in federal funding. Since the July presentation, Kelowna MP Stephen Fuhr's office has already followed up, requesting more information, and the OBWB provided his office with the Preparing for Invasive Mussels: Vulnerability Assessment Guide for Raw Water Infrastructure, among other resources.

Ms. Tesche presented the Strategic Plan Engagement Timeline, with the formal process to begin in October and the final draft of the plan scheduled for delivery to the Board at the March 2026 Board meeting.

The Board was informed that OBWB Water Science Specialist Sandra Schira is set to start her PhD at UBCO this fall where she will be joining Dr. Mathieu Bournonnais' lab working on wildfire risk mapping.

"THAT the Executive Director's Report, dated July 27, 2025, be received."
CARRIED

7.2 Chief Operating Officer Report – James Littley

Mr. Littley updated the Board on the operations of the Invasive Milfoil Removal Program. An early milfoil bloom led to harvesting starting two weeks ahead of schedule in Osoyoos Lake. Harvesting is also taking place in Wood Lake and is set to begin in Vaseux and Okanagan Lakes by early August.

Mr. Littley shared that legislation for mandatory watercraft inspections has received Royal Assent, however further progress has been stalled. He is planning to engage with Okanagan partners to continue to pressure the province to implement mandatory inspections. A "Menu of Options" report was prepared to help inform the province's implementation, but it is currently unclear if the regulations will be ready for the 2026 boating season.

The OBWB is developing the first Regional Invasive Mussel Response Plan in B.C., which will act as a toolkit for a rapid, day-one response by compiling pre-detection information for major waterbodies.

Directors discussed the creation of a comprehensive inspection plan to be presented to the province. Mr. Littley expressed his intention to collaborate with the Okanagan Nation Alliance and the BC Wildlife Federation on this initiative.

Director Hodge exited the meeting at 11:01 a.m.

The Board discussed the potential for collaboration between mussel free provinces and asked about the delineation of responsibility between provincial and federal governments.

Director Hodge returned to the meeting at 11:12 a.m.

Mr. Littley concluded his report by noting that a second version of the Invasive Mussel Guide for Raw Water Infrastructure is in progress to account for the newly discovered invasive Golden Mussel.

"THAT the Chief Operating Officer Report, dated July 28, 2025, be received."
CARRIED

7.3 Water Stewardship Director Report – Dr. Nelson Jatel

Dr. Jatel provided the Board with updates regarding professional regulatory reform that came out of the June 12 Okanagan Water Stewardship Council (OWSC) Meeting. Directors discussed the issues of improperly conducted hurdles that small, rural communities face with small-water infrastructure systems, like septic systems, and the prohibitive costs associated for municipal governments with sewer expansions.

Dr. Sheena Spencer, Okanagan Water Stewardship Council (OWSC) Chair, provided Board Directors with a high-level overview of the work being planned and conducted by the OWSC.

Dr. Jatel reviewed the updates on ongoing water management projects and then provided a summary of the meeting between OBWB and the Canada Water Agency. The Board discussed possible next steps for advocacy on the issue of the Okanagan's exclusion from funding under the current funding model.

“THAT the Water Stewardship Director's Report, dated July 27, 2025, be received.”
CARRIED

7.4 Communications Manager Report – Carmen Weld

On behalf of Communications Manager Carmen Weld, Amanda Burnett, Communications Coordinator, presented the Communications Manager Report and updated to the Board about progress on the Make Water Work and Don't Move a Mussel summer public outreach campaigns. Ms. Burnett highlighted this year's increased public participation in the annual Take the Pledge contest.

“THAT the Communications Manager's Report, dated July 30, 2025, be received.”
CARRIED

7.5 Water Science Specialist Report – Sandra Schira

Ms. Schira provided the Board with a detailed weather and hydrology update for the Okanagan Basin as of late July 2025, noting that the key takeaway is that despite some recent rainfall, the valley remains in a drought due to low snowpack, an early melt, and residual dryness from previous years.

“THAT the Water Science Specialist Report, dated July 28, 2025, be received.”
CARRIED.

8. NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

8.1 Memo from Melissa Tesche, Executive Director, Re: Bank of Montreal Authorizing Resolution.

“THAT the OBWB Board of Directors enter into a credit card agreement with the Bank of Montreal and hereby pass the required Authorizing Resolution naming the OBWB Executive Director as the authorized signing authority for this agreement and any future modifications to this agreement, as outlined in Schedule A.”
CARRIED

9. CORRESPONDENCE

9.1 Letter from Lori Halls, Deputy Minister of Ministry of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship regarding our letter to them asking for urgency in bringing the Wildlife Acts into force to prevent invasive mussels.

- 9.2 Letter to Honourable Stephen Fuhr, Member of Parliament for Kelowna informing him that the OBWB submitted two project proposals to the Canada Water Agency's EcoAction Stream 2 program, designed to enhance freshwater sustainability and innovation across Canada.

"THAT correspondences to and from the OBWB, dated June 5 and July 7, 2025, be received."

CARRIED.

10. **IN CAMERA**

The Board entered an in-camera session (under sec. 90(1)(a) and 90(2)(b) of the Community Charter) at 12:54 p.m.

"THAT the Okanagan Basin Water Board enter into an in-camera session."

CARRIED.

The board exited the in-camera session at 1:19p.m.

11. **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board will be held following our Annual Meeting on Friday, September 5, 2025, at 12 p.m. at the Mary Irwin Theatre, Rotary Centre for the Arts, 421 Cawston Ave, Kelowna, B.C.

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 for further details.

12. **ADJOURNMENT**

"THAT there being no further business, the regular meeting of the Okanagan Basin Water Board of August 5, 2025 be adjourned at 1:20 p.m."

CARRIED

Certified Correct:		
Chair		Executive Director