

Meeting Minutes

2018 Public Meeting, International Kootenay Lake Board of Control (IKLBC)

Thursday, September 20, 2018
Public Meeting: 7:00 to 9:00 PM

Kootenai River Inn & Casino (Ktunaxa Room), Bonners Ferry, Idaho

	United States	Canada
Chair	Colonel Mark Geraldi (Host)	Bruno Tassone
Members	Kyle Blasch	Ted White
Secretariat	Kevin Shaffer	Gwyn Graham
IJC Commissioners	Richard Moy	Gordon Walker
IJC Advisors	Mark Colosimo	Wayne Jenkinson, Paul Allen
Guests	Martin Suchy (ECCC), Gillian Kong (BC Hydro), Dale Ernst (Fortis BC)	

Welcome, Introductions, Review of the Agenda

Colonel Mark Geraldi, U.S. Section Chair, opened the meeting at 7:09 PM with welcoming remarks, an introduction of the Board, and a roundtable introduction of audience members. Four local attendees were present: Dan Dinning (County Commissioner, District 3, Boundary County, Idaho), Ed Atkins (Elk Mountain Farms), Robert Olson (Kootenai Valley Reclamation Association), and Erik Olson (Kootenai Valley Reclamation Association). Fourteen total audience members were in attendance, including guests and representatives of the International Joint Commission.

International Joint Commission and Kootenay Order Context

Colonel Geraldi described the International Joint Commission framework, responsibilities, and composition. He outlined the history of the Kootenay Lake Orders of Approval, referenced the geographic area of the Kootenay Basin, and described the duties of the Kootenay Board. Colonel Geraldi detailed the main provisions of the Orders, including the dredging of Grohman Narrows, the reduction of peak lake levels on Kootenay Lake, and the repayment of additional pumping costs to farmers in Idaho. Colonel Geraldi also described the limitations on lake level control due to the outflow constriction at Grohman Narrows.

Hydrology and Compliance Summary 2018

Kevin Shaffer, U.S. Section Secretary, provided an overview of the International Joint Commission seasonal rule curve on Kootenay Lake and compliance with Order in 2018, to-date. Mr. Shaffer noted that inflow was high in March due to releases from upstream reservoirs, causing Corra Linn Dam to go on freefall operations on 01 March 2018. The level of Kootenay Lake exceeded the IJC rule curve on 17 March 2018. However, Mr. Shaffer indicated that the Board determined this was not a violation of the Orders because the Applicant took all appropriate actions to maximize the outflow from Kootenay Lake and minimize the lake-level exceedance.

Mr. Shaffer reviewed the weather and hydrology from for water year 2018, to date. The water year (beginning in fall 2017) was marked by a very wet fall, a wet and cold early-2018 which resulted in a significant basin snowpack, and then very dry and warm weather beginning in May and continuing through the spring and summer. The large snowpack and abrupt melting in May resulted in some basin flooding concerns and significant peak river and lake levels, but the dry spring and summer staved off the possibility of historic flooding.

Mr. Shaffer reviewed historical peak and minimum lake levels for Kootenay Lake, indicating the significant reduction in peak lake levels which occurred beginning with the dredging of Grohman Narrows, followed by the drastic reduction in peak lake levels with the construction of Libby Dam. Mr. Shaffer also presented information on the sources of inflows to Kootenay Lake, with the vast majority of inflow during the freshet coming from portions of the basin unregulated by dams and reservoirs.

Mr. Shaffer reviewed the operations of Duncan Reservoir (Duncan Dam), Koocanusa Reservoir (Libby Dam), and Kootenay Lake (Corra Linn Dam and the Kootenay Canal) for the water year, to date. Mr. Shaffer indicated that Kootenay Lake experienced the third-highest peak level since Libby Dam became fully operational in the mid-1970's, exceeded only in 1997 and 2012. Inflow to Kootenay Lake peaked at 119,000 cfs on 17 May 2018, the fourth-highest one-day inflow into the lake since the construction of Libby Dam, exceeded only in 1997, 2006, and 2012. The Kootenai River at Porthill, Idaho, peaked at elevation 1,756.1 feet on 26 May 2018, the fifth-highest river elevation since the construction of Libby Dam, exceeded only in 1996, 1997, 2006, and 2012. The river at Porthill, Idaho, was above elevation 1,750 feet (the elevation at which farmers in the Kootenai Valley have indicated causes crop damages) between 06 May and 15 June 2018.

Questions and Comments from Public

Question – Libby Dam had previously exceeded full pool elevation. How did this come about and could it happen again?

IKLBC – The normal full pool elevation of 2,459 feet was exceeded in 2012, in coordination with Canada through the Columbia River Treaty framework and with approval from dam safety experts at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. In the future, if the reservoir approaches full then

there would again be coordination between Canada and the United States regarding any desire to store water above the normal full level. In all cases, the outflow from the dam would be held as low as possible without causing the dam to overtop.

Question – What would have happened this past year if it had rained in the late spring?

IKLBC – Kootenay Lake would have peaked higher and probably for a longer period. Operators at Libby Dam would have reduced or cancelled sturgeon pulse flows if there had been higher flood risk, in an attempt to keep the river below flood stage. Despite the large snowpack and flooding concerns, in the end Lake Kooconusa did not refill all the way this year due to the dry summer.

Question (Erik Olson) – What are the considerations for future dredging of Grohman Narrows?

IKLBC – The Board's understanding from BC Hydro is that further dredging of Grohman Narrows is not currently under consideration, due to a lack of public support. Additional dredging had been considered in the recent past.

Question (from Board) – Given that in 2018 Kootenay Lake reached its fourth-highest level since the construction of Libby Dam, it is interesting that fields were not impacted more severely.

Answer (from farmer) – Having the lake reach the low elevation in April and having lower sturgeon flows helped (required pumping in fields was primarily during the sturgeon pulse operation). Conditions have not been as bad since 2012. Libby Dam operations have improved since 2012, which was the worst year in living memory.

Answer (from farmer) – A hog farmer located near the international border could not use gravity drains this year and did not have pumps to assist with drainage.

Adjourn

Colonel Geraldini thanked those in attendance and adjourned meeting at 7:45 PM.