

## Meeting Minutes

### 2019 Public Meeting, International Kootenay Lake Board of Control (IKLBC)

Thursday, September 19, 2019

7:00 to 9:00 PM

Visitor Information Centre, Nelson, British Columbia

	United States	Canada
<b>Chair</b>	Colonel Mark Gerald (Absent)	Bruno Tassone (Host)
<b>Members</b>	Kyle Blasch	Ted White
<b>Secretariat</b>	Kevin Shaffer	Martin Suchy
<b>IJC Commissioners</b>	Lance Yohe	
<b>IJC Advisors</b>	Mark Colosimo	Wayne Jenkinson

#### **Welcome, Introductions, Review of the Agenda**

Bruno Tassone, Board Co-Chair, Canadian Section, opened the meeting with welcoming remarks and an introduction of the Board. Ten local attendees were present including residents of Nelson and Balfour, British Columbia, as well as representation from Friends of Kootenay Lake, Kokanee Creek Nature Centre, Regional District of Central Kootenay, and local employees of BC Hydro and Fortis BC. Nineteen total audience members were in attendance, including guests and representation from BC Hydro, Environment and Climate Change Canada, Global Affairs Canada, Fortis BC, International Joint Commission, and United States Department of State.

#### **International Joint Commission and Kootenay Order Context**

Mr. Tassone 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. Mr. Tassone detailed the main provisions of the Orders, including the one-time dredging of Grohman Narrows, the reduction of peak lake levels on Kootenay Lake, and the repayment of additional pumping costs to farmers in Idaho. Mr. Tassone also described the limitations on lake level control due to the outflow constriction at Grohman Narrows.

## **Hydrology and Compliance Summary 2019**

Martin Suchy, Canadian Section Secretary, reviewed the International Joint Commission rule curve and the 2018-2019 hydrology year-in-review. Fortis BC met Order requirements, despite a rule curve exceedance due to high natural runoff in late-April. The Board determined that this was not a violation of the Orders since Corra Linn Dam was in freefall during this time. The Board declared the commencement of spring rise shortly thereafter, on April 24, 2019, ending the rule curve exceedance.

Water year 2019 was a below-average year with an early snowmelt runoff. The basin experienced near-normal snowpack accumulation into February, followed by minimal snowpack accumulation in the late-winter and early-spring. The middling snowpack mitigated flood risk in the Kootenay Lake basin, though the basin was still susceptible to flooding depending on temperature and rainfall patterns. The spring was warm and unseasonably dry, alleviating most flood risk.

Mr. Suchy shared historical annual maximum and minimum lake levels. Mr. Suchy indicated that the peak lake levels continue to be significantly lower than in the past, due to the expansion of Grohman Narrows and, more significantly, due to the construction of the two upstream Columbia River Treaty dams, Duncan and Libby Dams.

Mr. Suchy 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. As is typical, Duncan Reservoir was drafted to near-empty and refilled to near full in the summer. Libby Dam was drafted over the winter to levels determined by the snowpack and forecasted spring/summer runoff.

### **Questions and Comments from Public**

**Comment (Dan Egolf, Fortis BC)** – The repayment of \$30,000 USD to Idaho farmers was a cap cost.

**Comment (Mr. Egolf)** – Just because Kootenay Lake has not exceeded elevation 1,755 feet since the construction of the upstream treaty dams, does not mean that it cannot happen in the future.

**Comment (Ramona Faust, Regional District of Central Kootenay)** – Regional investigations have shown the infrastructure which would be jeopardized if the lake levels exceeded elevation 1,755 feet, and she does not want to see that happen. Additionally, expressed concern about the impacts of climate change on lake levels.

**IKLBC** – A lake level below elevation 1,755 feet cannot be guaranteed in any year. Regarding climate change, the Board does not perform its own climate change studies, but it keeps abreast of the work done by other agencies and organizations.

**Question (from Board)** – How was the lake elevation of 1,755 feet determined as the treaty flood level?

**Ms. Faust** – Houses were built when there were not development regulations. Homes now must have pumps. Expressed concern that the Regional District of Central Kootenay was not directly invited to the public meeting.

**IKLBC** – Asked that Ms. Faust provide her contact information and the Board would ensure future invites.

**Question (Claire Pollock-Hall, Friends of Kootenay Lake)** – Shoal dewatering is a concern for kokanee on the lake, how can she suggest a change in lake operations?

**IKLBC** – The Applicant may operate the lake how they wish within the bounds of the Order, which only specifies the maximum lake level. The appropriate approach would be to speak with BC Hydro and Fortis BC regarding their lake operations.

**Question (Joanne Siderius, Kokanee Creek Nature Centre)** – As a naturalist at Kokanee Creek Provincial Park, concerned about shore-spawning kokanee. Many kokanee spawned near the shore and she found dewatered redds in April. The kokanee are a culturally and historically important fish. Is it possible to raise the lake levels for the first few weeks of March to protect the redds? The fish spawn in the fall at a depth of approximate 0.5 to 1 meters.

**IKLBC** – The Applicant would not have been able to hold the lake much higher in March. Suggestion is to consult with the Columbia Operations Fisheries Advisory Committee (COFAC) and Fortis BC on when they can accommodate higher March lake levels. If the Applicant is unable to do so because of the Order, the Board could evaluate and raise issues to the Commission.

**Question (IKLBC)** – Why was the lake level lower than was required in March?

**Gillian Kong, BC Hydro** – The lake was not held right at the maximum level in March due to forecast uncertainty.

**Comment (Ms. Faust)** – Represents local government and is on the Columbia River Treaty local coordination group. She received a comment that 60 percent of kokanee redds were dewatered, last year.

**Comment (Mr. Egolf)** – In-season operations are challenging, due to hydrologic uncertainty.

**Comment (Gary Munro, Nelson)** – Dewatered kokanee redds were found near Kokanee Creek Provincial Park and Willow Point. He believes the fish spawn in the same locations, no matter if the lake is lowered in the late summer and fall. That operation only reduces the habitat.

**Question (Ms. Pollock-Hall)** – Is it possible to not draft the lake any lower than the International Joint Commission rule curve requires on April 1<sup>st</sup>?

**BC Hydro and Fortis BC** – Requested more details on what lake levels were unacceptable for the shoal spawners.

**Comment (Blair Weston, BC Hydro Community Relations)** – Kootenay Lake is a very complex system. Each year brings a different issue between fish, flooding, and recreation. Recommended that concerned parties work with COFAC, but recall that in 2012 that any additional water stored in the spring would have resulted in worse flooding.

**Comment (Ms. Faust)** – Requested a management plan or a federal Water Use Plan.

**IKLBC** – Water Use Plan is not appropriate, since there is not a single operator involved.

**Question (Dan Gatto, Nelson)** – Is there a thought or direction for the Board with regards to climate change?

**IKLBC** – Yes, it is a priority for the International Joint Commission, in general, and the Kootenay Board participates with appropriate agencies to draw upon their climate change research and work.

**Question (Mr. Gatto)** – Is the concern over climate change shared on both sides of the border?

**IKLBC** – Yes, both countries are concerned and involved.

**Comment (Dave Hutchinson, Environment and Climate Change Canada)** – Climate change may help the kokanee, because spring lake levels could be forced higher due to early snowmelt and spring rains.

**Comment (Wayne Jenkinson, International Joint Commission, Canadian Section)** – The International Joint Commission has directed all boards, including the Kootenay Board, to look at climate change impacts. Additionally, the Kootenay Board is reviewing the Kootenay Order and plans to make a recommendation to the International Joint Commission regarding whether it should be modified. The International Joint Commission can provide funding and facilitate input from local interests on these types of concerns.

### **Adjourn**

Mr. Tassone thanked those in attendance and adjourned the meeting.