

2020 Public Meeting Minutes

International Kootenay Lake Board of Control (IKLBC)

Tuesday, October 6, 2020

6:00 to 8:00 PM

Virtual GoToWebinar Platform

Attendance

	United States	Canada
Chair	Colonel Alexander Bullock (Host)	David Hutchinson
Members	Kyle Blasch	Ted White
Secretariat	Kevin Shaffer	Martin Suchy
IJC Commissioners	Jane Corwin	
IJC Advisors	Mark Colosimo Adam Greeley	Wayne Jenkinson
Representatives	Anna Sharkova (Global Affairs Canada) Dan Egolf (FortisBC) James Baxter (FortisBC) Gillian Kong (BC Hydro)	

1. Welcome, Introductions, Review of the Agenda

Colonel Alexander Bullock, U.S. Section Chair, opened the meeting at 6:01 pm and U.S. IJC Commissioner Jane Corwin provided some welcoming remarks. Colonel Bullock then reviewed the meeting agenda, there were no changes. Nineteen local attendees were present for the virtual meeting, in addition to eight guests and representatives from the Applicant (Fortis BC), International Joint Commission, BC Hydro, and Global Affairs Canada.

2. International Joint Commission and Kootenay Order Context

Colonel Bullock provided an overview of the International Joint Commission framework, responsibilities, and composition. He described the duties of the Kootenay Board, outlined the history of the Kootenay Lake Order of Approval, and referenced the geographic area of the Kootenay Basin. Colonel Bullock detailed the main provisions of the Orders, including the historical dredging of Grohman Narrows, and explained the significance of Grohman Narrows control on Kootenay Lake levels vs. Corra Linn Dam control, which reduced peak lake levels on Kootenay Lake. Colonel Bullock also described the repayment of additional pumping costs to farmers in Idaho.

Colonel Bullock then described how at the request of the IJC, the Kootenay Board has undertaken an information review of the existing Kootenay Order of Approval, to provide a recommendation to the IJC regarding an Order review. The information paper is a literature and documentation review to determine the current and future water management issues in the basin and to determine if additional studies are necessary to close any information gaps.

3. Hydrology and Compliance Summary 2019

Kevin Shaffer, U.S. Section Secretary, provided a review of the 2019-2020 hydrology year-in-review. The Applicant (Fortis BC) was in compliance of the IJC Order Rule Curve for the entire water year. Minimum lake level was reached on March 28, 2020 (1,738.78 feet), Corra Linn Dam was in freefall during this time, while the Board declared the commencement of spring rise on April 25, 2020.

A relatively wet December 2019 and January 2020 built up the snowpack in the Kootenay Basin, then it stayed cool through the spring with normal to below-normal precipitation. Snow Water Equivalent (SWE) in the Kootenay Basin was about 110-120% of average in Canada and 100-110% in U.S. A snowpack of 100-120% of normal is typically enough to present a flood threat, but not enough to guarantee a flood. In a year like this, floods happen with sudden, intense heatwaves, and/or rain on snowmelt events, However, this year the basin was largely spared any flooding, with moderate May and June temperatures and some wet weather in May (that mainly increased the snowpack at high elevations) and normal precipitation in June. Low elevation snow melted off in May, followed by metered melt of higher elevation snow in June

Mr. Shaffer shared historical annual maximum and minimum lake levels. Mr. Shaffer indicated that the peak lake level continues 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 (1967) and Libby Dams (1972). The addition of flood risk reduction storage at these dams has, on average, reduced the annual peak Kootenay Lake stage by about 6 feet.

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. As is typical, Duncan Reservoir was drafted to near-empty by April 23rd and refilled to near full in the summer (August 3rd). Almost all inflow was stored in late-May through mid-July (7-21 kcfs). Libby Dam was not drafted deeply over the winter due to middling water supply forecasts. Koocanusa Reservoir stored 10-55 kcfs from mid-May through early-July, then released approximately 1 million acre-feet for sturgeon augmentation, and then made higher releases after the flood threat passed in early June through July to accommodate summer transformer maintenance.

4. Questions and Comments from Public

Question 1 (Jacqueline Stoeckler): As Kootenay Lake and its environs are experiencing industrial scale logging in our watersheds (Liard Creek and Redfish Creek), does the work of the Commission focus on the totality of its hydrology inclusive of maintaining water on the landscape through forest retention?

IKLBC: Short answer is the Commission is very much interested in what is occurring in the entire watershed, but the mandate is very limited.

Question 2 (Jacqueline Stoeckler): Why so optimistic on the water volumes? Believe you leave no room for climate change.

IKLBC: The IJC takes climate change very seriously; however, older Orders of Approval like the Kootenay Lake Order were purely engineering orders and did not consider climate change.

Question 3 (Jacqueline Stoeckler): Does not more flooding occur when clear cut forestry is practiced in steep zones?

IKLBC: Clear cutting in steeper terrain does change the hydrologic signature of a basin due to changes in soil moisture retention, destabilization of slopes, as does revegetation.

Question 4 (Cindi Pearce): Will there be a public process as part of the Order review?

IKLBC: The Board seeks input from the public through meetings like tonight, and can also be contacted and given feedback through the website. However, there may be other avenues for input as the process evolves.

Question 5 (Marc-Andre Beaucher): How will (or could) the renegotiation of the Columbia River Treaty affect the Kootenay Lake Order?

IKLBC: The current CRT very much impacts the hydrology of Kootenay Lake simply with the additions of Duncan and Libby Dams; however, the Kootenay Lake Order has not to date changed as a result. It is not known how a modified CRT would impact the Kootenay Lake Order.

Question 6 (Ramona Faust): Is there any discussion about a lake management plan for Kootenay Lake? We have accretions based on 50% natural inflows shore spawners wetland loss etc. that are on people's mind.

IKLBC (Ted White): A lake management plan is not within the Kootenay Boards mandate, however, it would be within Provincial governments area of responsibility. Speaking as the British Columbia Director and Comptroller of Water Rights, there is currently no water management plan for Kootenay Lake.

Question 7 (Daniel Gatto): Has there been an identified change or shift in the overall trend for precipitation (rain/snow) over the last few years? What if any are the anticipated studies being undertaken by the Board? For example the volume of rainfall on the west arm of Kootenay Lake feel to be more intense than normal?

IKLBC: Climate Change is definitely on the minds of the IJC and the Board. The Board anticipates that numerous studies, such as the partitioning of rain and snow, the raising of temperatures, and the frequency of rain on snow events, would need to be conducted as part of any climate change investigations.

Question 8 (Martin Carver): Kootenay Lake hosts kokanee. Some of these spawn along the shore of Kootenay Lake, in your Order review, would you consider including considerations of the needs of this subpopulation?

IKLBC: Shore spawning Kokanee, like all ecosystem needs would definitely be considered should a formal Order review be initiated.

Question 9 (Ramona Faust): Is the Board observing Fraser Narrows to monitor deposits by creek fans on both sides of the West Arm? The infill at Liar Creek seems to be narrowing the channel.

IKLBC: The Board is not actively observing Fraser Narrows; however, it has an interest in staying current with events and natural changes within the basin.

Question 10 (Dean Watts): Currently, minimum flow requirements for fish are often not met in addition to exceedance of ramp rates on the lower Kootenay River below Brilliant Dam. Will or can the Kootenay Order Review consider these issues??

IKLBC: Minimum flow requirements and ramp rates are ecological needs that most likely would be considered as part of an Order Review.

Comment (Kyle Blasch, USGS Idaho Water Science Center) – The Board encourages members of the public to reach out to regional scientists from federal, state, and provincial agencies along with academics to help with local scientific issues.

5. Adjourn

Colonel Bullock thanked those in attendance and adjourned the meeting.

6. List of Public Attendees

- Steve Hope
- Blair Weston
- Garry Jackman
- Jesse Scharf
- Marc-Andre Beaucher
- Cindy Pearce

- Serina Swanson
- Tara Soriat
- Greg Hoffman
- Danneil Gatto
- Ed Atkins
- Ramona Faust
- Martin Carver
- Will Langshorne
- Aaron Lawrence
- Shannon Ehlers
- Dean Watt
- Jacquenine Stoeckler
- Janett Jonker