

INTERNATIONAL OSOYOOS LAKE BOARD OF CONTROL
Quarterly Conference Call
Thursday March 9, 2023 at 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM PST
MS Teams

ACRONYMS

IJC	International Joint Commission
IKLBC	International Kootenay Lake Board of Control
IOLBC	International Osoyoos Lake Board of Control
IWI	International Watershed Initiative
IWB	International Watershed Board
OBWB	Okanagan Basin Water Board
USGS	U.S. Geological Survey

BOARD MEMBERS

Dave Hutchinson (first half)	Chair, Canadian Section
Cindi Barton	Chair, U.S. Section
Ted White (first 30 mins)	Board Member, Canadian Section
Sue McKortoff (absent)	Board Member, Canadian Section
Brian Symonds	Board Member, Canadian Section
Anna Warwick Sears (absent)	Board Member, Canadian Section
John Arterburn	Board Member, U.S. Section
Col. Xander Bullock (absent)	Board Member, U.S. Section
Kris Kauffman	Board Member, U.S. Section
Arnie Marchand	Board Member, U.S. Section

BOARD STAFF and BOARD MEMBER ASSISTANTS

Andy Gendaszek	Secretary, U.S. Section (outgoing)
Cameron Marshall	Secretary, U.S. Section (incoming)
Martin Suchy (first 1.5 hrs)	Secretary, Canadian Section
Sonja Michelsen	Technical Assistant to Colonel Xander Bullock
Cameron Wyndham	Assistant to Martin Suchy

IJC REPRESENTATIVES

Merrell-Ann Phare	Commissioner, Canadian Section
Adam Greely	Senior Advisor, U.S. Section
Jeff Kart (absent)	Communications Officer, U.S. Section
Catherine Lee-Johnston	Environmental Officer, IWI Staff, Canadian Section
Rob Caldwell (absent)	Engineering Advisor, Canadian Section

1. Introductions and Approval of the Agenda

The meeting was led by U.S. Co-Chair Cindi Barton who reviewed the agenda. The International Watershed Board (IWB) discussion was moved to item 2 and the Annual Board and Public Meetings and IJC Spring Semi-Annual Meeting Preparation were moved to items 7 and 8, respectively. The Board

approved these changes. Ted White explained that he has taken a temporary assignment as Executive Director of Compliance, Enforcement and Archeology Branches within the BC Provincial Government. He confirmed he would stay on as a member of the IOLBC and IKLBC throughout the summer.

2. Pilot International Watershed Board Discussion

Commissioner Merrell-Ann Phare began the discussion by describing the purpose of the International Watershed Initiative (IWI), International Watershed Boards (IWBs) and outlining the process that will be undertaken by the IJC to review if the Osoyoos Lake Board is a suitable candidate for a pilot. The first step will involve IJC IWI staff reaching out to IOLBC Members for recommendations on important stakeholders and decision-makers in the basin that should be consulted over the coming months. It is the IJC's hope that communications will have started prior to the IJC Spring Semi-Annual Appearance and that attendees from the IOLBC will be ready to discuss and ask questions. Commissioner Phare pointed to the International St. Croix River Watershed Board, International Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed Board, International Red River Watershed Board, and International Souris River Pilot Watershed Board as evidence for the success of this initiative. She also noted that this undertaking in the Osoyoos Lake watershed is part of a larger IJC effort to look at all transboundary watersheds and develop an understanding of where an ecosystem-based approach can help prevent and resolve disputes and ensure resiliency in relationships and management in the face of a changing world and climate.

Commissioner Phare, Adam Greely, and Catherine Lee-Johnston then responded to comments and questions from the IOLBC Members in attendance. A summary of their responses are as follows:

- The knowledge-gathering phase is not meant to create more work for Board Members. However, their cooperation is expected in this endeavour. IOLBC Members are encouraged to attend future meetings with the identified stakeholders and decision-makers to the extent that is possible.
- A more holistic approach should lead to better management of the watershed for local communities and interests. Commissioner Phare brought up the example of the Rainy River and Lake of the Woods Board where IWI-funded studies on sturgeon and wild rice led to changes in management that improved outcomes for these two species, all while being approved by all parties involved.
- The IOLBC's mandate may change if it were to become a Pilot Watershed Board. All the current Watershed Boards already had a water quality or ecosystem component in addition to their control component. In their cases, the mandates were combined into one. A benefit of a broader mandate is that it would open the Board to additional IWI funding for a greater variety of projects.
- The transition from an engineering board to a watershed board is a process and will be different for each watershed. The purpose of becoming a Pilot Board is to refine the process during the transition and allow for evolution towards a full Watershed Board.
- The IWI is guided by key principles and how these are implemented will depend on the watershed. Watershed Boards share common characteristics, but each will be different.
- The Province of BC and State of Washington should be consulted moving forward. There has been hesitation from the State in the past due to the possibility of increased expectations by local groups and the possibility of increased Federal authority. Watershed Boards are to

consider broader perspectives; they are not meant to take control from other agencies but, rather, work synergistically with them. An idea for managing the expectations of State and other stakeholders was brought up and will be considered moving forward.

John Arterburn noted that the IOLBC has already been able to manage the system in a way that considers the broader ecosystem, even within its narrow mandate. He brought up his concern that taking on too much may prevent the Board from being able to manage the system effectively. Brian Symonds also noted that the previous board expansion and order review has already incorporated some of these newly proposed considerations, and that transitioning to a Watershed Board may not cause the watershed to gain much.

3. Items for Board Review (Minutes and Annual Report)

Andy Gendaszek described how the review of Board documents will be performed using the IOLBC SharePoint site. Once a Board Member has reviewed a document, they are to place their initials at the end to signify their approval. Martin Suchy also reminded the Board that the IJC Annual Report is normally due before the Spring Semi-Annual Appearance. It has been started and will be uploaded to the SharePoint in the next few weeks for Board review, along with minutes from the 2022 Annual Board and Public Meetings, and the September and December quarterly conference calls. Documents will continue to be attached in emails for those that are unable to access the SharePoint.

4. Phase 2 Hydrologic Model Integration

The latest Statement of Work has been distributed and submitted to the IJC for approval. Notable differences include an increase in cost and the use of CMIP6 climate scenarios. Work is planned to begin in April with an expected completion in May 2024. In total, there will be 1,500 years of simulations for the Okanagan and Similkameen river basins (5 climate models with two emission pathways over 150 years). There will be a need for Board meetings and decisions throughout the process, the first of which will be in the summer. A second discussion will occur at the Fall Annual Board Meeting where the contractor, Northwest Hydraulic Consultants, will present on progress.

Anna Warwick Sears has set up a side contract with the IJC involving an in-kind project through the OBWB to provide additional recommendations and considerations on incorporating different downscaled climate data, evaluate the bias compared to historical data, and to ensure that the model has appropriate stewardship after the project's conclusion. There is a need for the modernization of the Okanagan Lake Regulation System, and a combined Okanagan and Similkameen model can help with this beyond the IJC's use.

5. Ice Jam Project

Cameron Marshall and Andy Gendaszek updated the Board on the Ice Jam Project, the purpose of which is to investigate the cause, effect, and frequency of ice jams in Osoyoos Lake. A contractor was initially proposed to complete the work, however, the USGS is now being considered. This change would not require the work to be re-scoped but would increase the project's overall cost. The length of the project would remain at 10 months, but the timeline would involve a later start with an expected completion in February 2024. Cameron would lead the project with guidance from Andy and help from other USGS staff. The budget has not been approved by the IWI as they are waiting for the new Statement of Work.

Cameron noted that the final product needs to be decided, as the time and effort for the USGS to review it will depend on its format. A scientific investigation report (SIR) is the most rigorous review, but would take the most time and money to produce. Other options include an open file report, a published presentation, or a fact sheet. Regardless of what option is chosen, the project will involve the same analysis and detail, and the final product will have been peer-reviewed according to USGS procedures and will be fully citable.

6. Hydrologic Conditions

Martin Suchy provided an overview of the spring hydrologic and climatic conditions for the Okanagan and Similkameen Basins. Precipitation in the Okanagan Valley during December was above normal historical conditions but was near normal for January and February. Temperatures at Osoyoos and Kelowna were mostly below normal in December but were above normal for the majority of the next two months. ENSO conditions have shifted from La Nina to neutral, though cooler and wetter conditions may linger with continued snowpack growth throughout the end of winter and early spring. Snow-water equivalence (SWE) reported by snow pillow stations were below average for Blackwall Peak in the Similkameen basin and above average for Salmon Meadows. John Arterburn pointed out that the conditions at Salmon Meadows are not representative of the broader Similkameen basin at this time. In the Okanagan basin, the Mission Creek station is back online and reporting above average SWE. SWE at Silver Star Mountain is also above average while that at Brenda Mine is near average. BC snow basin indices are 124% and 84% of normal SWE for the Okanagan and Similkameen basins, respectively, while the Washington SNOTEL Upper Columbia basin is showing 104% of normal SWE. The three-month US probabilistic forecast for April to June precipitation is below average, while the US forecast for temperature and the Canadian forecasts for precipitation and temperature are showing near normal conditions.

The Condition 8a Drought Criterion is forecasted to be met with the April to July cumulative flow volume for the Similkameen River at Nighthawk estimated to be 879,000 acre-feet, below the 1 million acre-feet threshold. The Condition 8bi and 8bii Drought Criteria are not forecasted to be met. Both BC River Forecast Center models are predicting the net inflow to Okanagan Lake for April to July to be greater than 195,000 acre-feet, with the old model estimating a net inflow of 358,700 acre-feet and the new principal components model estimating a net inflow of 292,200 acre-feet. The Okanagan Lake Regulation System target for Okanagan Lake elevation in June or July is currently 1,123.00 feet, above the threshold of 1,122.6 feet.

Osoyoos Lake elevation is currently 909.76 feet and Okanagan Lake elevation is currently 1,120.40 feet. Similkameen River discharge is currently 343 cubic feet per second. Increased discharge through the Okanagan River at Penticton and the Okanogan River at Oroville was noted. Discharge at these locations will likely be decreased as inflow forecasts are updated in the coming months.

7. 2023 Annual Board and Public Meetings

Martin Suchy noted that the Annual Board and Public Meetings will be scheduled separately from those of the Kootenay Board and should be held in either early September or early October to avoid conflicting events. This year's meeting will be held in Canada and will include presentations and a field

trip. Brian Symonds suggested that the field trip could involve seeing the returning sockeye salmon run, depending on the timing of the meeting.

8. IJC Spring Semi-Annual Meeting Preparation

Anna Warwick Sears, Martin Suchy, Sonja Michelsen, Col. Xander Bullock, Cameron Marshall, Cindi Barton and Andy Gendaszek are planning to attend the meetings in Washington, D.C. in-person. Additional Board Members should inform the secretaries if they are also planning on attending. The IOLBC's appearance is scheduled for Monday April 24, where Cindi Barton will present on the Board's activities, concerns, and feedback with a focus on communications and public engagement. There will be a communications workshop on April 25, a reception in the evening of April 26, and an IWI workshop on April 27. The communications workshop will be solely in-person, whereas the IWI workshop will also have limited virtual attendance. The IJC would like the Board's Annual Report by April 12 to allow time to review.

9. Round table

To end, Cindi Barton opened the meeting up for a round table discussion. Kris Kauffman advised that meeting with local State and Provincial representatives regarding the Watershed Board topic would be prudent. John Arterburn reaffirmed his concern for transitioning to a Watershed Board but noted that if the Board were to just continue considering broader perspectives, then he would be agreeable.