

MEETING MINUTES

2023 Annual Public Meeting International Kootenay Lake Board of Control

Tuesday, September 19, 2023
6:30 – 8:00 PM (PDT)

Nelson & District Chamber of Commerce
Visitor Information Center
Upstairs Meeting Room
91 Baker Street
Nelson, BC

BOARD MEMBERS

Evan Friesenhan (host)	Co-Chair, Canadian Section
Col. Kathryn P. Sanborn	Co-Chair, U.S. Section (nominee)
Ted White	Board Member, Canadian Section
Roy Bartholomay	Board Member, U.S. Section

BOARD STAFF and ASSISTANTS

Sonja Michelsen	Secretary, U.S. Section
Martin Suchy	Secretary, Canadian Section
Kate Alexander (virtual)	Assistant to Martin Suchy

IJC REPRESENTATIVES

Robert Sisson	Commissioner, U.S. Section
Adam Greely (virtual)	Science Advisor, U.S. Section
Rob Caldwell (virtual)	Engineering Advisor, Canadian Section
Paul Allen	Communications Manager, Canada Section
Jeff Kart (virtual)	Communications Advisor, U.S. Section
Geneviève Asselin (virtual)	Communications Advisor, Canada Section

GUESTS

Felicia Minotti	GAC
Connie Chapman	BCMF
Shannon Price	FBC
Gillian Kong (virtual)	BCH
Shawn Young	KTOI - observer
Chelsea Colwyn (virtual)	CSKT – observer
Lyndsey Gaudioso (virtual)	CSKT - observer

ACRONYMS

BCH	BC Hydro
BCMF	BC Ministry of Forest
CCVA	Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment
CSKT	Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes
ECCC	Environment and Climate Change Canada
FBC	Fortis BC
GAC	Global Affairs Canada
IJC	International Joint Commission
IKLBC	International Kootenay Lake Board of Control
IWB	International Watershed Initiative
KTOI	Kootenai Tribe of Idaho

1. Welcome, Introductions & Agenda

Evan Friesenhan (Canadian Co-Chair) opened the meeting at 6:30pm with a land acknowledgement. Thanking the Syilx Okanagan, the Ktunaxa and the Secwepemc people for allowing the Board to live, work and play on their territories and ancestral lands. A member of the public indicated it's also part of the Sinixt traditional territory. Mr. Friesenhan went on to provide a description of the in-person and virtual meeting spaces. He went over the meeting protocol and explained how and when virtual attendees could ask questions. The meeting was recorded and was made available on the Board website. Before going over the agenda, all Board members and secretaries introduced themselves.

2. IJC and the Kootenay Order

Co-Chair Friesenhan gave an overview of the IJC's structure, responsibilities, and purpose. He named the Commissioners, and explained that all three Canadian Commissioners are up for replacement. The new US Chair commissioner, Gerald Acker was appointed to the commission on July 28, 2023. Mr. Friesenhan gave context on how the Boundary Water's Treaty, IJC, Corra Linn Dam and the IKLBC all work together. He went over the roles of IJC Boards of Control and other types of Watershed Boards. Descriptions were given on how water flows through the Kootenay Basin and how FortisBC, as the Applicant (the operator of Corra Linn Dam), impacts the water levels by controlling Kootenay Lake outflow. Mr. Friesenhan went on to outline the three main provisions of the Order and further explain the IKLBC roles and responsibilities.

3. Kootenay Lake Levels & Order Compliance

Martin Suchy, Canadian Section Secretary, gave an update on the 2022-2023 hydrological conditions. Early in the season the snow pillows were close to normal, however as the season progressed snowpacks in the Basin dropped to below normal levels. This was the result of persistently dry periods and a rapid depletion of the snowpack in early May. The low snowpack resulted in lower flows into Kootenay Lake. As of the meeting date, drought conditions are continuing in the Kootenay Basin and throughout BC.

Mr. Suchy explained the rule curve and how it applies to the Applicant's responsibilities. It was reported that there was one exceedance in early April. At the time of exceedance, the applicant remained in

compliance as Grohman Narrows was in control of the lake outflow and the gates of Corra Linn Dam were fully open. The minimum lake level was recorded at 1739.06 ft (530.07 m) on April 25-26 and spring rise was declared on April 30. The freshet peak was 1748.52 ft (532.95 m) and occurred on May 23. Kootenay Lake neared historical minimums from mid-June to September. Lake levels have since returned to normal levels. A graph showing the max and min historical Lake levels was shown to illustrate the reduction of maximum levels since the construction of Libby Dam.

Sonja Michelsen (US Section Secretary) presented the Libby Dam operations update. Outflows in October 2022 were low. Outflow increased a little until February. The outflows at that point returned to low flows. There has been involuntary drafting as the elevation targets were hit before conditions got drier. There was not enough runoff to require a sturgeon pulse. The increase in outflow corresponded with the increase due to freshet. Peak inflows were recorded on May 18 at 51.06kcfs (1445.9cms). The maximum reservoir elevation was observed on July 17 at 2452.35 ft (747.48 m).

Ms. Michelsen went on to outline the operations at Duncan Dam. The minimum reservoir elevation was hit on April 30, and the maximum on August 11. Duncan Dam drafted the reservoir down all winter until freshet began in the spring. During this period outflows were kept steady. Once freshet began the outflows were reduced, and the reservoir began to refill.

4. Board Projects and Initiatives

Mr. Friesenhan presented an update on the Board's projects and current initiatives. To begin he explained that the IJC has conditionally approved a review of the 1938 Order, contingent on two criteria being met first. The criteria being an expansion of the Board and a Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment (CCVA).

As a part of the Board expansion the IJC has suggested looking to indigenous representation. In February of 2023 initial engagement letters were sent out to indigenous groups on both sides of the border. The Board has received some responses. There were observers from the Kootenai Tribes of Idaho (KTOI) and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) participating in the 2023 annual meetings.

Secretary Michelsen went over the steps of the CCVA in a high-level overview. Phase 1 of the assessment includes data collection and model identification. Phase 2 contains more model development and analysis components. The timeline for the CCVA is approximately 16 months. There will be a better estimate provided once work on Phase 1 commences.

Secretary Suchy explained what the visualization tool shows and how it can help people understand the lake levels and how they are controlled. He used the Board website to demonstrate the tool. While on the board website, Mr. Suchy indicated where people can go to sign up for push notifications that are sent out to emails every time a news release is published.

5. Questions and Comments from the Public

Comment (In person): Suggestion to expand the visualization tool to include the impacts of Libby and Duncan Dams, the rapids that occur when Grohman Narrows is in control, the diversion into the Columbia and how the construction of Corra Linn has impacted the elevation of Kootenay Lake.

IKLBC: The IKLBC designed the tool to represent the scope of the mandate.

Question 1 - Andy Davidoff (Online): How severely could a significant atmospheric river event behind Libby Dam at peak high-water impact downstream?

IKLBC: Libby is not at full pool levels at the time there are atmospheric rivers. There is typically space in Lake Kootenay to store the influx of water in the autumn. Flooding in this basin is driven by cumulative volume. The possibility of flooding because of an atmospheric river is not zero, but it is also unlikely.

Follow-up comment from a public participant: Atmospheric River “narrow bands of moisture laden air” flows come of the Pacific Ocean. However, we have seen a storm that came across from Calgary the east and caused flooding in the Kootenay Basin. So, the question is still important as extreme events are still possible.

Comment 2 – Issac Dekker (In-Person): The Yaqan Nukiy have serious concerns about the Kokanee shore-spawners in the west arm of Kootenay Lake.

Question 2 - Issac Dekker (In-Person): In the future climate modeling will there be analysis of forestry operations on the impacted flows?

IKLBC: Still scoping the assessment, the Board will take suggestions as that process progresses.

Question 3 (In-Person): How do we get someone to drain / dredge Grohman Narrows to reduce the amount of deposition that has accumulated since the original dredging?

Public Participant: A study done by BC Hydro that showed that dredging the Grohman Narrows again would only reduce the flooding in Kootenay lake by 6 inches and wasn't cost effective. At the time there was public distrust in BC Hydro, so they dropped the project. Potential impacts to local aquatic life also had an influence on this decision.

IKLBC: Thanked the participant for the answer.

Question 4 - Swami Sukhananda (Online): Will there be an opportunity for the public to be involved in the scoping of the climate change assessment?

IKLBC: The public will not be involved in the scoping of the climate change assessment. When it's time to go public we will have opportunities for public commentary.

Question 5 (In-Person): What progress has been made on the Board expansion and have other groups, besides the local indigenous groups been contacted?

IKLBC: The Board is Currently curating a list of potential NGOs and people that may show interest in joining the Board.

Question 6 - Ramona Faust (online): We talk about snow pillows as if they are weather dependent. Are you graphing the snow pillows with a climate change lens and additionally, are you monitoring watershed changes that will affect snow retention which are key to Lake levels?

IKLBC: No, the Board does not graph the snow pillows and instead conveys the information being collected from provincial snow pillow stations. The Board uses that data to visualize and understand the conditions of the Kootenay Basin. No operational decisions are being made from the snow pillow graphs. Members of the public are encouraged to reach out via the IJC website

if they have suggestions on important factors that they believe should be monitored in the Basin.

Question 7 (In-Person): How fast will the board expansion happen? And what would it look like?

IKLBC: The Board began to look at the possibility of expansion last year. In November 2022 the IJC approved the expansion. The Board has since contacted local Indigenous groups and made a list of other organizations. Moving forward, we are letting the indigenous observers dictate the level of commitment before contacting other groups. The timeline on this process shouldn't be too long, but they are not going to rush decisions.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:52pm