

# INTERNATIONAL OSOYOOS LAKE BOARD OF CONTROL

## SEPTEMBER QUARTERLY CALL MINUTES

Wednesday, September 4, 2024  
10:00-12:00 AM (PDT)

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### BOARD MEMBERS

Dave Hutchinson	Chair, Canadian Section
Scott VanderKooi (Chair)	Chair, U.S. Section
Connie Chapman	Board Member, Canadian Section
Sue McKortoff	Board Member, Canadian Section
Brian Symonds	Board Member, Canadian Section
Anna Warwick Sears	Board Member, Canadian Section
John Arterburn	Board Member, U.S. Section
Col. Kathryn Sanborn (absent)	Board Member, U.S. Section
Kris Kauffman	Board Member, U.S. Section
Arnie Marchand	Board Member, U.S. Section

### BOARD STAFF and ASSISTANTS

Martin Suchy	Secretary, Canadian Section
Sarah Dunn	Secretary, U.S. Section
Sonja Michelsen	Technical Advisor to Colonel Kathryn Sanborn
Katie Slimmon	Canadian Section Assistant
Jamie Kolodinsky	Canadian Section Assistant

### IJC REPRESENTATIVES

Rob Caldwell	Engineering Advisor, Canadian Section
John Allis	Engineering Advisor, U.S. Section
Adam Greely (absent)	Senior Science Advisor, U.S. Section
Jeff Kart	IJC Communications, U.S.
Christina Chiasson	IJC Communications, Canada
David Hermann	Senior Policy Advisor, U.S. Section

### GUESTS

Samantha Long	Washington State Department of Ecology
Craig Jordan	Washington State Department of Ecology

### **Welcome, Introductions & Approve Meeting Agenda**

Mr. Scott VanderKooi (Chair, U.S. Section) opened the meeting at 10am PDT and reviewed the agenda before a round of introductions was completed. It was noted that Ms. Kate Alexander and Ms. Katie Slimmon will be transitioning out of their support roles. Ms. Jamie Kolodinsky was welcomed as she will be stepping into the support role on the Canadian side. Mr. Martin Suchy (Secretary, Canadian Section) was welcomed back.

### **Approval of June, July & August Meeting Minutes**

A motion was made by Dr. Anna Warwick Sears (Board Member, Canadian Section) to adopt all three sets of minutes for June, July, and August considering some minor changes. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kris Kauffman (Board Member, U.S. Section) and all minutes were approved with the understanding that the below updates would be made: 1) June minutes – Consistency in spelling of last names. 2) July minutes – Consistent use of last names and honorifics rather than first. Capitalization of “Commission.” 3) August minutes – Table that was created in support of this meeting to be added to the minutes.

### **Hydrologic Conditions and Drought Declaration**

Hydrologic conditions and drought declaration in the basin were reviewed by Ms. Sarah Dunn (Secretary, U.S. Section). Ms. Dunn addressed the history of the drought criteria and fluctuation of values throughout the summer. In terms of drought criteria, condition 8 (a) was met, and conditions 8 (b i) and (b ii) were ultimately not. Ms. Dunn reviewed the Board’s drought decision making timeline. Throughout much of the summer, conditions hovered around the threshold values. In August, when the data was available, the Board decided to submit a request to the IJC to continue operations under condition 8. A letter was sent out, and the Board awaits a decision from the IJC regarding this request.

Flow and level conditions were presented for the current time and reviewed from the summer months. Okanagan Lake levels were held high during much of the early season, allowing the lake level to surpass the threshold in early June. Lake levels are now hovering around the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile. The Similkameen had a lower-than-normal freshet in May, and flows have remained lower than average over the summer months. They are expected to remain low into the fall. Osoyoos Lake levels have remained within condition 8 limit throughout the season; in mid-July they came down within condition 7 limits and continue to hover around the mean value. Peaks levels were reached on May 22<sup>nd</sup> and June 23<sup>rd</sup>. Due to the current fish flows, flows out of Okanagan Lake were increased and we have seen Osoyoos Lake levels increase over the past week.

Ms. Dunn reviewed the seasonal forecasts, highlighting that temperatures are projected to be above normal for September, October and November (based on ECCC's forecast). The NOAA forecast was more restrained and suggested less of a chance of temperatures being above normal for the basin as a whole.

Precipitation forecasts were reviewed. ECCC shows equal probability of above, near, and below normal precipitation. NOAA indicated that precipitation is leaning towards above normal for the fall season. A La Niña watch is also issued for the coming months, with a 66% chance of these conditions developing from September to November, and a higher chance into January. This would mean colder temperatures, greater snowpack, and more precipitation in the basin.

Questions and Comments:

Mr. Suchy pointed out that for Condition 8 b. i. (net inflow), we look at the number at the end of the period to July 31<sup>st</sup>. In contrast to 8 b. ii, we look for the value to surpass the threshold at any point rather than just looking at the number on July 31<sup>st</sup>. Ms. Michelsen commented on the table showing condition 8 b. i. predictions over the season. She noted that it is unclear the time period considered for the volumes and whether they are only observed values or include projections.

#### **IWI Proposal Osoyoos Lake Operations Model**

Ms. Sonja Michelsen (Technical Advisor to Colonel Kathryn Sanborn) shared a proposal for an operation model she has put together. The proposal outlined a simplified tool that would allow for future Osoyoos Lake levels to be estimated and to improve communication with the applicant. There was a model built in 2018 by the USACE that will be updated as a part of this project including adding LiDAR data, and historical inflow numbers. It would produce a simplified estimated outflow from Zosel Dam. We wouldn't be able to set gate settings, or other complex information with this model. To address this, Ms. Michelsen proposed a separate tool that includes some of the more complex features to produce a snapshot for a moment in time, rather than being accurate over a long period. Ms. Michelsen has set aside some time to coordinate with the Department of Ecology. Limitations of the tool also include limitations for forecasted inflows into Osoyoos Lake, requiring us to make assumptions.

The estimated cost of the project is US \$35,000.

Questions and Comments:

Ms. Warwick Sears noted that there is a lot of work that has been done on modelling regarding inflow into the lake that could be used in this model in terms of upper and lower limits based on climate projections. She noted there is an NHC group currently working on this.

Ms. Slimmon asked for clarification on what happened to the 2018 tool and why it was not completed. Ms. Michelsen explained that time and money were limiting factors.

Mr. Kauffman asked about backwater being considered in the model, to which Ms. Michelsen replied this was something that warrants some more thought. She noted that the outflows from Zosel Dam would be input into the tool.

Mr. Hutchinson showed his support for the tool and asked if things such as projected rate of rise of Osoyoos Lake could be incorporated. Ms. Michelsen responded that if there is not significant backwater, more can be done to calculate this. Otherwise, assumptions would have to be made about the amount of water going through the dam. Mr. Hutchinson also inquired about how the Zosel Dam upgrade project might play into this. Mr. Craig Jordan (Washington State Department of Ecology) noted the project was over-budget and being able to read gate levels remotely will likely not go forward in this project.

Mr. Brian Symonds (Board Member, Canadian Section) asked if there is room to incorporate projected operations of Okanagan Lake. Ms. Michelsen noted that this could be set up using estimates and predicted outflows to make the results more granular.

Mr. Jordan supported that this tool would be useful, and that anticipated flows coming down into Osoyoos Lake would be very helpful as well.

Ms. Michelsen asked the Board if this is something to pursue, and what the next steps might look like. Mr. Hutchinson replied that this should be a phased approach, starting with a simple calculator and moving towards a forecasting tool with the ultimate goal of improving the whole system and management of the dam.

Ms. Warwick Sears noted that from the point of view of the Okanagan Basin Water Board, the regulation system needs to be updated, and the Board wishes to improve the Okanagan Lake Dam management to reduce the risks of floods and droughts. She noted that these goals align with those of the Osoyoos Lake management and that more modelling would be very beneficial to understand these needs.

Mr. Suchy asked if there are any other technologies that can be deployed by the USGS to get a better understanding of the backwater effect or flow through the dam. Mr. Jordan said he will get thoughts on this from the modelling team. Ms. Dunn stated that she will look more into this as well. Mr. Arnie Marchand (Board Member, U.S. Section) noted the backwater situation could be resolved if the manmade cross-channel between the Okanogan and Similkameen Rivers (upstream of the confluence) would be removed. Mr. Symonds mentioned that it would be worth looking at the information on the backwater that was collected when the orders were renewed. He suggested also looking at the Fish/Water Management Tool as the season goes along. Ms. Michelsen asked for the link to the tool, and Mr. Suchy offered to forward it. The Board agreed to take the stepwise approach proposed by Mr. Hutchinson.

### **IWB Feasibility Study Update**

Mr. David Hermann (Senior Policy Advisor, U.S. Section) gave an update on the IWB Feasibility Study, noting that most members have seen the plan already and some had provided feedback. The study refers to the feasibility of an international watershed board being stood up in the greater Osoyoos basin. Mr. Hermann pointed out that Commissioners mentioned at the executive meeting in July that expanding watershed boards across the boundary is included in their current priorities. Mr. Hermann went on to say that progress is being made to stand up the feasibility study team, and terms of reference for the study team are being put together to define the work for the team. Budget planning is also in progress. A more detailed update will be available following the in-person October meetings, including the public meeting.

Mr. Hutchinson followed up on a question from Mr. John Arterburn asking about funding for travel for board members, as this is a barrier to engagement. Mr. Hermann responded that if a member works for an agency that pays for travel expenses, the agency can pay for this. For the public, the IJC can reimburse them if they are taking a trip on our behalf. At this point, folks cannot be compensated for their time, but it is not ruled out entirely. Ms. Warwick Sears noted that the IJC needs to work on this, specifically in Canada as it is very difficult to get indigenous participation unless compensation is provided. She suggested that we would benefit from a new process being developed regarding this issue. Mr. Kauffman asked a question relating to documentation outlining the benefits and disbenefits to parties involved with and without an IWB. Ms. Warwick Sears responded to note that it would be put in place to resolve potential conflicts and that the benefits are difficult to quantify when you are preparing for so many unknowns.

Ms. Michelsen asked who is currently on the feasibility study team; Ms. Warwick Sears, Mr. VanderKooi, and Ms. Slimmon have volunteered so far. Mr. Hermann said the list is being finalized and that he was open to suggestions for additions, hoping to include both indigenous and public members on the team. Mr. Jordan asked if Ecology should be involved in the team, to which Board members were supportive of.

### **Zosel Dam Gate Replacement Project Update**

Ms. Samantha Long (Washington State Department of Ecology) and Mr. Jordan provided a project update on the Zosel Dam gate replacement project. The project came out at \$2 million over budget with the lifting mechanism. This put a stop to current plans. Discussions have been had with contractors since bids were received. A few places have been identified where funds can be saved. The project will go back to bid in October. Where it stands now, the SCADA and cameras will be likely be cut from the project, with hopes to complete them in the future. The additional gate heater will likely be cut as well, but the setup for them to put in place will go ahead. The generator and all-season access road will continue regardless of the future bid outcome. Mr. Jordan explained that work is being done to look at replacing the gates after Spring freshet of 2025 and to obtain permits for the road. The plans will be sent to the Board in October following the in-person meetings.

Ms. Long clarified that the project will be broken into sections starting with the mechanical portions of the replacement, and then doing the actual replacement in the future. More money will be requested to make up the difference. She said they won't know if the budget is approved until April 2025, and that more money wouldn't be available until July 2025. Details will follow once bid numbers are received.

Questions and comments:

Mr. VanderKooi asked if the generator and road access will be going out for bid. Mr. Craig responded that this is a separate contract, and it is moving ahead.

Ms. Michelsen noted that information on shifting schedules and operations at Zosel should be provided to the Board. She inquired if there is potential for the IJC to provide funding for work related to gate settings. Mr. Rob Caldwell (Senior Engineering Advisor, Canadian Section) replied that this might be something that can be funded with IWI funding and that it may be considered in the near future. He suggested a secondary proposal be submitted for the camera project.

When inquiring who to contact for this proposal, Ms. Long was informed that she can speak with Mr. Suchy and Ms. Dunn since the Board must approve it first. Mr. John Allis (Engineering Advisor, US Section) agreed to confirm the scope of what can be funded by the IJC.

Mr. Kauffman stated that the original project was jointly funded by the U.S. and Canada and asked if there is interest in cost-sharing on either side.

Mr. Hutchinson suggested that cameras seem like a good option for the Board/IJC to take on in terms of support. He noted we would have to look at the agreement when the dam was built in the late 70s, but involving the Canadian government in cost-sharing discussions would likely increase the complexity and timeline of the project.

### **Prepare for the October Board and Public Meeting**

Mr. Suchy will be reaching out to the curling club to set a time for the Board's social event, and Ms. Sue McKortoff (Board Member, Canadian Section) agreed to reach out to Nancy and Diane at the curling club for additional details. She suggested the activity will likely take around 2 hours.

Mr. VanderKooi shared the agenda for the meetings coming up in Osoyoos and Oroville, which are available to the Board on the SharePoint. Ms. Warwick Sears noted that she will be sending her deputy, James Littlely, to Osoyoos as she will not be able to attend.

Mr. Suchy reminded the Board that there will be a boat tour planned for the Friday in Osoyoos. This will go ahead assuming conditions allow. The alternative plan will be a driving tour to some of the same sites.

### **Prepare for IJC Fall Appearances**

Mr. Hutchinson informed the Board that the full agenda for the IJC Fall Appearances has not been sent out yet but that they are scheduled for the week of October 21-25. Two aspects of the meeting will include a gala on the Wednesday evening and an IWI workshop on Climate Change (Ms. Dunn and Mr. Suchy will be presenting). Mr. Suchy noted that a slide deck will be prepared and circulated to the Board for review. He mentioned that the IJC will be sending a guide outlining what they would like to hear, and they will want a presentation around 20 minutes in length. Mr. Suchy continued to say that the IJC will be asking for the presentation ahead of time, but that the Board will wait to hear what updates they would like the focus on when the secretaries of the Commission send the request out.

### **Round Table**

Mr. Kauffman noted as a correction that the original cost of Zosel was \$3 million. Mr. Arterburn thanked those who were involved in the fish water releases making sure the sockeye got past the facility. The event was a great success and 300,000 sockeye are now spread throughout the entire system.

Mr. Hutchinson asked how the buoy failure in Canada impacted the environmental side of fisheries management. Mr. Arterburn noted that usually the fish can find a place to survive in regard to the temperature-oxygen squeeze but that it would be very nice to have a buoy in the southern basin.

Mr. Craig shared that Osoyoos Lake levels will be dropped soon, starting tomorrow. Outflows will be increased to keep irrigation flows in the Okanagan River.

### **Action Items:**

1. Secretaries will finalize the June, July, and August meeting minutes.

2. Mr. Suchy will share the Fish/Water Management tool with Ms. Michelsen.
3. Ms. Michelsen will update the Zosel Dm operations tool proposal with feedback from the Board and circulate it for review.
4. The IJC advisors will confirm the scope of projects that may be funded by the IWI. Secretaries will work with Ecology staff to develop an IWI proposal and circulate it for Board review, if such work may be funded.
5. Secretaries will share slide decks for Board review prior to the IJC Fall Appearances.