

Meeting Minutes

Similkameen Watershed Technical Advisory Committee Meeting

DATE: June 4, 2012

LOCATION: RDOS Office, 101 Martin St. Penticton, BC

IN ATTENDANCE:

Tracey Lawlor, Denise Neilsen, Conrad Pryce, Kevin Huey, Stephen Juch, Liisa Bloomfield, Lee McFadyen, Michelle Desjardins, Ryan Benson, Tara White, Judi Ekkert, Robert Birtles, Doug French

Facilitator Janice Johnson

Recorder Angela Hook

Meeting was called to order at 10:15 am.

Review of background to the project

- Purpose (see 'welcome' sheet)
- Background to the Project (binder – second page)

DISCUSSION:

1. **Conrad** – felt paragraph in “Background” not clear on whether it IS or IS NOT a “**Part 4 Water Management Plan**” – for that to happen, the Minister would have to ask for it/order it.
2. **Doug** – “No, it is not”
3. **Lee** – confused with Conrad’s comment...in “Background” it is stated it is not an “Order” and that the Plan is a guidance document. Is this voluntary?
4. **Janice** – There is no Order requested under Part 4, the SVPS is pursuing a NON-regulatory document - a guidance document. RDOS and SVPS leading the process.
5. **Michelle** – Maybe that is a future plan? For example, Langley approached the Minister for support after the fact
6. **Conrad** – **VERY IMPORTANT POINT** – ensure that you do not have false expectations that this *will* become a Water Management Plan, supported by the Minister. Kettle River, called theirs a Watershed Management Plan, as it is a guidance document
7. **Lee** – Suggests the name for the plan be Similkameen Watershed, rather than Similkameen River
8. **Conrad** – Good idea.

INTRODUCTIONS:

Liisa – RDOS engineer, Project Manager of this initiative

Denise – Pacific Agri-Food Research, Agriculture Water Demand model, working with Environment Canada

Robert – Interior Health, Source Protection Plan, Drinking Water Protection Act

Judi – Water Quality Specialist, Interior Health, shadowing Robert

Tara – Senior Fisheries Biologist, Ministry of FLNRO, Fisheries Act

Kevin – Keremeos Irrigation District

Doug – Manager of Public Works, RDOS

Ryan – Fisheries Biologist, Okanagan Nation Alliance

Conrad – Section Head, Water Allocation (signs water licenses) Ministry of FLNRO, involved in various planning processes... excited to help

Tracey – Lower Similkameen Indian Band

Michelle – Environmental Supervisor, Copper Mountain Mine - environment, reclamation and permitting – lots of monitoring... can provide data to this committee

Lee – SAC member, lives beside river, has observed change over the years, farmer

OBJECTIVES: DETERMINE INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS and DATA GAPS

A) Identify other parties to be involved in Technical process? Contacted Ted White (waiting to hear back), also Michael Crowe and Dean Watts (Fisheries) cannot attend. Upper Similkameen Band representative cannot attend today. Ted van der Gulik, cannot attend today, but is giving a presentation at the Stakeholder Advisory meeting on June 14th.

9. **Denise** – notes a lack of hydrologist?

10. **Conrad** – has it covered (2 on team and maybe others... Neil Goeller – regional hydrologist and Skye Thomas regional hydrologist – copy minutes to them)

11. **Conrad** will be consulting with other FLNRO staff and relaying back.

12. **Kevin** – please note change of email

B) The Summit Report identified the following Technical Studies:

- a. Determine Actual Water Use in the Watershed. (Summit 6.3.3)
- b. Assess Groundwater-Surface Water Interaction. (Summit 6.3.4)
- c. Assess Groundwater Quality. (Summit 6.3.5)
- d. Assess Minimum In-Stream Flow Needs for Fish Populations. (Summit 6.3.6)
- e. Assess Optimal/Desired In-Stream Flow Needs for Fish Populations. (Summit 6.3.6)
- f. Conduct an Overview-level Storage Assessment. (Summit 6.3.7)

Provide input as to whether the above studies should be completed.

Prioritize the list.

DISCUSSION:

7. **Conrad** – Summit Report, we need at least 30 days to review and provide a detailed report. Asks for consideration for he and his team to review the report over 30 days and submit report to RDOS.

8. **Doug** – “yes”

9. **Janice** Summit report was previously emailed – but will resend copy of the Summit report and the link for the SVPS Report

Data Gaps as identified per Summit Report - need to determine actual water use – (See 6.3.3)

10. **Conrad** – Okanagan Basin Water Board – similar studies – doesn't see his hydrologists doing the actual modeling.
11. **Janice** – not the objective of the TAC, TAC to provide input, not do the studies.
12. **Doug** – Dr. Adam Wei from Okanagan University College, assigning a PhD student to do some modeling (maybe a quarter of it) with regards to hydrology in catchment area. Determine supply, etc.
13. **Conrad** – Will there be a consultant involved?
14. **Doug** – “Yes, after we establish a terms of reference”
15. **Denise** – There are a mixture of roles in the technical committee... some components are already done. 'Hydrology' component and 'water balance model' are huge efforts...this will be a big part. PKIK, Univ. of Washington have previously done models for Similkameen. Keep it in mind, these [hydrology and water balance model] are the most important things.
16. **Conrad** – For the Okanagan – cost was \$5.2M... their situation was more urgent, running out of water.
17. **Conrad** – People on this tech committee are not the people who would do anything about the bullet points/studies
18. **Conrad** – Summit has been the prime consultant for OBWB, Kettle River... they've done a great job. If process goes to tender,... concerned that it is appropriate, if we go down those roads
19. **Denise** – agrees Similkameen is not as complicated as OK Water Basin.
20. **Tara** – be cautious of process... need to determine how much info we have, how much cost and time, THEN do the water planning process... CAUTION that it sounds like it's at the beginning, when it should be at the end.
21. **Tara** – You have to model supply, because there's always usage. So, hydrology is key. Also need to work through other processes first. Right now other projects are monitoring fish, levels, etc... suggest needing 3 years to do the study. Nothing has been done in the Similkameen... if funding is available, will need 3 years.
22. **Conrad** – Similkameen 'blessed with a fair abundance of water'... not as complicated as others. Summit is saying 3-5 studies... I see it as one study, for economy of scale. Or maybe integrate a couple of studies?
23. **Denise** – one problem, there are only 4 weather stations in the whole Similkameen Valley
24. **Doug** – to clarify: SVPS garnered funds for the Summit report, RDOS was not involved.
25. Intent is that it all be worked together (professor Wei will be supplying demand info budget – approx. \$100k, if Board approved)
26. **Liisa** – Yes, Summit's recommended budget is to do the whole thing within \$500,000.
27. **Conrad** – concern about open tender... were there any other consultants to bid on it? Ministry may not attend if it is not clear. Need to understand how it is being paid for?
28. **Doug** – Going to RDOS board for approval ...
29. **Lee** – Initially, SVPS asked RDOS to come up with some funding for this. SVPS has taken responsibility to guide this process, as they wanted to find out the state of water within the watershed. The Minister is not part of it, it is not an Order, as discussed.
30. **Conrad** – speaking from 5 years of experience... If this process rolls out over many years, an integrated, coordinated effort (including the PhD student) should be okay
31. **Liisa** - Summit recommended a 2 year schedule (estimate). RDOS thinks 5 yrs would be better, not going to rush
32. **Michelle** – would be interesting to see the schedules... how far will the \$500,000 go? Maybe

we need to determine which things we need the most (prioritize studies) A. Hydrology (supply/usage) B. What you're trying to achieve... fish, water treaty, whatever it might be. (note: ground water studies are extremely expensive...)

33. Denise – PKIK deal with hydrology? Have we talked with them? No. Denise has offered to talk to them. 3 elements that need to use the same drivers as we are using
34. Conrad – talked to Skye Thomson about groundwater... unbelievable... may not be able to quantify interactions between groundwater/surface water... maybe identify where they are, etc., on the committee writing groundwater legislation, groundwater protection zones... possibility of regulating, being aware of shortages/groundwater issues
35. Kevin – Summit Report cost \$15k. Our concern... we end up with something water purveyors can actually use. Groundwater consumption is the biggest issue, and it's totally unregulated (we've got 13 high volume wells). When spending this money, use the KISS principle... this is the first step. Something we can look at to determine system requirements, future efficiencies, etc.

Data gap: most of our output is unmetered in our system.

Need to know in the end:

- a. how much water (supply)
- b. groundwater relation and net surface water

36. Conrad – problem is shoulder seasons... down to base flow (supported by groundwater). Determine the minimal flows needed by fish. What do we need to protect fish? Sustainable water use - objective. May require studies and regulation.
37. Tara – climate change is making the highs higher, lows lower... 100 year drought (ie: 2009). How low can agriculture users go? How low can the fish go? Average years are okay, but what about drought years, etc.
38. Conrad – need to know who looks after what data in the region. Roles and responsibilities of multiple agencies. Is this a role of the study? Ie: Doug Edwards – Environment Canada... important role. Ask everyone to suggest if they know who is doing what, who does what in the area. [Janice to send out an email to TAC members asking for any possible connections.]
39. Tara – can help coordinate timelines. Maybe apply for other funding in the fall for next fiscal year to help (once Kettle River is done)? Yes, USA have done some studies.
40. Janice – Could we access their [USA] data? (ie: regarding fish flow)
41. Tara – as an example, with the Kettle River... we got our stuff done first, then coordinated cross-border exchange of info.
42. Conrad – example: Shankers Bend - public utility, had done some studies...
43. Michelle – Copper Mtn has data from 5yrs of study... health of fish and their habitat
44. Kevin – look at creating a complete plan down the road. Look at all possible sources once we determine what it is we want.
45. Lee – like the idea of getting all of our data together before going across the line
46. Wonder about funding from HCTF (Habitat Conservation Trust Fund)?
47. Tara – yes, they would support it. There are 3 projects they're working on right now. Application period will be in the fall. (resources are slim this year) allocate fisheries requirements, monitoring... looking at \$40-50K/yr over 3 years. Dependent upon how many proposals come in, etc.
48. Michelle – maybe Copper Mtn studies can help? So not duplicating efforts.
49. Tara – Yes, combining efforts would definitely support funding application as in-kind

50. **Conrad** – short staffed, “I will be here”, will use his team/resources as required.
51. **Ryan** – Many of these studies would be helpful.
52. **Robert**– most discussion has been about quantity. We do have some chemical data on groundwater. Some info on pathological, etc. (example: Apex – surface water supply)
53. Interior Health can provide a lot of info when we get to that.
54. **Lee** – Any wells drilled as a result of subdivision application will have been tested as an requirement of Interior Health... is there a database of all this info?
55. **Robert** – No, 2 years out... data is not easily accessible at this point.
56. What about Victoria? Mike Wei – head of Groundwater Section... observe levels of groundwater, and test suitability... also will show chemical characteristics – may be a good resource to supplement Interior Health?
57. Ministry of FLNRO looks after observation wells
58. **Robert** – Don’t have an inventory of GUDI wells, no rate data of water pumped... info gaps that Interior Health could not address.
59. **Lee** – stated that owners of the wells observe their wells quite closely...non-scientific data from long periods cannot be dismissed. Worthwhile info. Real.
60. **Janice** – Ted Van der Gulik for Agriculture Model - did you collect info on wells?
61. No, we already knew... for the Similkameen – we mostly know who is using.
62. A summer student went out and surveyed “if ground truth data, is it sourced by groundwater?”
63. **Lee** – Maybe the occasional person who draws from the river, or gravity, etc... most people have moved to wells (most did use the river back in the 60s) Knowing all the wells does not give an accurate picture... RED FLAG: most will keep license, for security, even if they don’t use it.
64. **Lee** – If groundwater is licensed, what can they say south of the border? Opens a can of worms.
65. **Conrad** – Good point. If everything’s licensed, might need proportional reductions... circle of demand. Complicated formulas (like in Australia, where they’re running out of water)
66. **Lee** – Some think we’ve got lots of water. Concern is that it is planned for properly to preserve for future.
67. **Janice** – achieve understanding through education
68. **Kevin** – Similkameen Improvement District has a dam on Nickel Plate - has to release water every September to make up for water that has been taken out.
69. **Conrad** – SID is the only one on a mainstream river who can hold a storage license. Purpose - to hold water storage license
70. **Kevin** – aquifer protection studies found several abandoned wells... almost need property by property study. Abandoned wells could be detrimental to quality of water in aquifer. Over 300 wells - annual water analysis, water quality data could be used for reference.
71. **Kevin** – 3 test wells in the Keremeos area – for water analysis
72. **Kevin** – Aquifer protection: GUDI well levels go up with the river...
73. **Kevin** – Licensing: we hold 8 licenses, although every drop of water we pump comes out of the ground. We don’t want to give them up. (maybe they could be transferred if groundwater licensing comes into play?)
74. **Janice** – We have not prioritized the list, will send an email to ask TAC to prioritize. The other Summit recommendation is to compile current studies, reports in an information database, what do you think of that... an example of a data base is OBWB’s.
75. **Robert** – EcoCat (www.env.gov.bc.ca/ecocat) is a great reference
76. **Conrad** – The consultants’ task is to compile what is known, what we can do with \$500k, how we are going to do it?

77. **Conrad** – caution that each item needs to be scoped down a bit... need to prioritize. Great job of existing baseline. Everyone on committee should have one month to review the Summit report.
78. Summit's budget seems very optimistic. Need to get input from this committee regarding priorities, based on available funding.
79. **Lee** – Document in the end, to be used for future planning for developments – water is the defining resource for future development. Fortis application to store water.
80. **Conrad** – Documenting pending applications (for example: Fortis). There is a benefit to listing them in the water use report... Letting people know.
81. **Lee** - Aside from power, what is the appetite for storage?
82. May affect riparian areas, and ground water replenishing.
83. More water for fish, more water flowing down.
84. More control of flow through the year.
85. Is there more support for the Fortis dam proposal now?
86. **Lee** - Not necessarily more support, maybe more open minded. More prepared to look at it this time.
87. **Conrad** – agriculture: Need to identify ag land base. Look at value of land, crop, climate change, etc. What are the best lands to irrigate? ALR? Currently irrigated? How that relates to whether the water was stored or not?
88. **Lee** – Need water to produce food. Agricultural land is disappearing. We have one of the most important banks in the world. Class 1, 2, 3 - depends on what it is used for. Information is already there...
89. **Denise** – Crop suitability work: Land Suitability Rating System for Canada... perennial crops are most high value. Pilot has been done in the Okanagan, and will be extended to BC. Takes into account climate, topography, soil type, water supply, etc.
90. **Kevin** – Question about grant application: based on the Summit Report, is there something specific we need to address?
91. ??????? Missed reply to question in #90.
92. **Janice** - Email will be sent out to all TAC

Next meeting: To be determined

