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| <b>DRAFT Minutes<br/>Cowichan<br/>Watershed Board<br/>Meeting</b> | <b>Monday October 28, 2019<br/>9:30-11:45am<br/>CVRD Boardroom</b> | <br>Cowichan<br>Watershed Board |
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**Co-Chair:** Ian Morrison. **Participants:** Chief William Seymour (co-chair), Tim Kulchyski (left at 9:50am), David Anderson, David Slade, Lori Iannidinaro, Tom Rutherford, Kristine Sandhu, David Froese (arrived at 9:51 am).

**Regrets:** Darin George, Debra Toporowski, Alison Nicholson, Laura Brown, Shannon Waters.

**Guests:** TAC and Working Group members, Members of the public, MP MacGregor

**Minutes:** Heather Pritchard.

Meeting materials are available on our website. <https://cowichanwatershedboard.ca/document/cwb-board-oct-2019/>

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| 1 | Welcome                                      | <p>Ian Morrison called the meeting to order and made opening remarks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With respect to the federal election, Ian acknowledged and thanked all candidates and their teams, and congratulated MP Alistair MacGregor, who was in attendance, on his win.</li> <li>• Provincial MLA Sonia Furstenau was acknowledged for working tirelessly on the weir and many other local projects, as well as helping to secure funding for these projects.</li> <li>• Both co-chairs are up for re-election. Cowichan Tribes Chief and Council elections are on Dec. 6<sup>th</sup>. CVRD's annual election of the co-chair is on Nov. 13<sup>th</sup>.</li> </ul> |                 |
| 2 | Approve Agenda                               | Motion to approve agenda by Kristine; seconded by Lori. No changes.   | Approved        |
| 3 | Review and approve Minutes of Sept. 30, 2019 | Motion to approve agenda by David A.; seconded by David F. No changes.  | Approved        |
| 4 | Correspondence and Announcements             | <p>Tom reviewed announcements in agenda package:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speaker Series has started up again. On Nov. 28, Joy Wade will be presenting on Cowichan Lamprey</li> <li>• The CWB has received an invitation to become a member of the BC chapter of the Canadian Fresh Water Alliance. This will be an agenda item for the Nov. CWB meeting</li> <li>• Chief Seymour has been invited to join a group presenting to the NDP caucus at the BC Legislature on a proposed Watershed Security Fund to support sustainable provincial financing of local and indigenous watershed co-governance. (See Agenda Item 8.)</li> </ul>                                    | For information |

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| 5  | Opportunity for public comment | MP Alistair MacGregor offered his thanks for the acknowledgement by Ian and said that his office is always open to CWB input to ensure he is always representing the board's interests.  | For information |
| 6a | Updates                        | <p>a) Tom gave a presentation on Cowichan weir progress and in-season decision making framework (see <a href="#">presentation link</a>).</p> <p>Highlights include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Due to a cold, wet September Cowichan Lake level is above full storage and flows are at 50 cms (i.e., normal). Pumping ceased and the weir is off control.</li> <li>• The decision-making process associated with weir operation is being reconsidered. Instead of making urgent decisions each spring based on current conditions, consideration is being given to developing a decision-making framework using current data (e.g., snow depth, lake and river level, forecasted weather conditions). Brian Houle is organizing a group with representatives from Cowichan Tribes, DFO, CWB, FLNRORD, and Catalyst with meetings starting next month (Nov.).</li> <li>• With respect to the BC Salmon Restoration and Innovation Fund, progress has been made in 4 areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) a governance agreement between the four project partners;</li> <li>ii) a project manager (a candidate is being interviewed this week);</li> <li>iii) an engineering feasibility and design study (the RFP will be posted soon); and</li> <li>iv) LIDAR mapping for natural boundary (which has just been flown).</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• David A. asked what forecast data could be used in the weir decision-making process – existing data or is new data required? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A: Tom replied that existing Environment Canada data would be used as it is generally the most accurate and only general forecast data is required.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• David F. asked what provincial government feedback and input would be involved and can we pre-plan this framework? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A: Tom replied that FLNRORD will be at the table (Water Authorizations branch; decision maker RE the licence),</li> </ul> </li> <li>• David S. asked if the province is likely to be willing to move the control date more? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A: Tom replied that this could be scoped into the</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | For information |

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|    |  | <p>discussions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ken Traynor (TAC member) raised the point that impacts of flow levels and control extend beyond fish and that assessing ecological impacts on the lake and measuring people’s opinions on changing water levels would be beneficial. It’s possible this could be done with existing data held by Catalyst. Ken also pointed out that it is important to communicate these deliberations to the public in the future.</li> <li>• Chris Steeger (public) asked if an assessment under the <i>Environmental Assessment Act</i> will be required for the weir and include impacts to the lake environment? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A: Tom replied that he is unsure but that all proper protocols will need to be followed and all required permitting obtained.</li> <li>○ NOTE: Identification of necessary permits is being scoped into the RFP for engineering feasibility and design work.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   |                 |
| 6b |  | <p>b) Salmon returns so far; coho-chinook hybrid</p> <p>Tim provided information on Cowichan River salmon returns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chinook - It has been another good year with nearly 12,000 adults counted at DFO fence by Oct. 17<sup>th</sup>. Plans are to look at male: female ratios. There were few jacks (males that return early) counted during this window and impacts of this are unknown.</li> <li>• Chum returns were very poor for the Cowichan, similar to results along the rest of the South Coast. Chum fishery is usually significant (value around \$2M) though this year the US fishery has shut down.</li> <li>• Coho returns are unknown as it is early in the season. A pit tag program has started which will help with estimates.</li> </ul> <p>Coho-Chinook hybrid: More than 60 samples have been collected in the Salish Sea. Successive generations have been caught indicating viability. As part of the acoustic tagging program in Cowichan Bay, a 2 year old hybrid fish was caught. Visual indicators are subtle therefore the incidence of hybrids is likely not new, but people are aware now.</p> <p>Tom presented additional information (<a href="#">link</a>) :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The increased flows to 12 cms a month ago along with the rain helped Chinook. While hatchery stock was used to rebuild populations, returns are now 90% wild run. Habitat and water improvements have likely helped re-establish the population.</li> </ul> | For information |

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|    |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chum are an important ecological driver in the watershed and low populations mean a significant nutrient source is lost from the system. Chum are less dependent on late spring and early summer and fall flows than Chinook.</li> <li>• Recent Chinook counts suggest that the 2016 marine environment was good. Although drought years have meant that only about 15% of the fry survived, their return in 2018 and 2019 suggest marine survival was significantly higher than average.</li> <li>• Data from recent years also shows jacks migration timing is later than adults.</li> <li>• Recent observation of Coho-Chinook hybrid demonstrates the value of citizen science as it was public stewards collecting tissue samples from fish for DNA testing that determined hybrids exist. It is possible that the drying of small streams typically used by Coho during spawning may be forcing more Coho spawners into faster water used by Chinook spawners.</li> </ul> |                 |
| 6c |  | <p>c) Drinking Water and Watershed Protection – process update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tom indicated that the CVRD has struck a Community and Technical Advisory Group of ~20 individuals (Cowichan Tribes, local governments, industry, NGOs, etc.) to work on identifying vision, goals and objectives. There are concerns about ambitious timelines but it’s a great approach to identify what this initiative should look like and what it should do.</li> </ul>  | For information |
| 6d |  | <p>d) Koksilah – scoping Water Sustainability Plan – FLNRO/Cowichan Tribes meeting</p> <p>Tom provided an update (<a href="#">link</a>):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Koksilah summer flows go as low as ~2% of the mean annual discharge while 10% is the target. Cowichan River summer flows below the intake are approximately 5%, which is also low, however this can be addressed via a new weir. Because there is no sizable lake storing water in Koksilah, the only way we can increase summer flows is by adjusting how water and land are managed.</li> <li>• To address low flows the Water Sustainability Plan approach is being considered, which is an enforceable plan. FLNRORD has been working on identifying a preliminary process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. discussions are occurring on formulating a letter of agreement between Cowichan Tribes and FLNRORD on scoping and for resources for Cowichan Tribes; and</li> </ul> </li> </ul>                          | For information |

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|   |   | <p>ii. develop a “state of the watershed” report describing current condition.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CWB is emphasizing that a broadly scoped, “whole of watershed” approach is required to accurately link land use to watershed health.</li> <li>• A WSP would be a first in BC and a chance to improve the situation in Koksilah watershed.</li> </ul>   |                 |
| 7 | Report from delegation to Nicola Watershed co-Leadership Workshop.    | <p>Chief Seymour provided a summary of the workshop:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chief Seymour, Debra, Tim, and Tom met with the Nicola watershed board to exchange ideas and have a tour of the watershed. Five local First Nations were present and are part of the Nicola board.</li> <li>• Chief Harvey Macleod took Chief Seymour for a tour of the Upper Nicola where they saw extensive dry creek beds, sediment issues, flooding, and declining fish stocks.</li> <li>• There are 6 months left for Nicola pilot. More work is needed to continue work on restoring the watershed.</li> <li>• There were questions about what roles the First Nations could take on with respect to the <i>Water Sustainability Act</i> (e.g. approval of new wells).</li> </ul> <p>Tom added his perspective that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are similarities in the challenges faced in the Nicola and Cowichan watersheds. Coldwater Creek has similar low flow issues as the Koksilah. When it comes to salmon, the Nicola is much worse off.</li> <li>• Attendance at the workshop included FLNRORD staff that will be involved in Koksilah WSP efforts.</li> </ul> <p>Ian offered his thanks to Chief Seymour and those who went. It is great to learn from the Nicola Valley experience and it is important to support them in continuing their work.</p> | For information |
| 8 | Provincial Watershed Security Fund initiative – overview and CWB role | <p>Tom provided an update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Last spring the Co-Chairs presented to the Standing Committee on Budget 2020 (i.e., a group of MLAs who provide advice to caucus on the budget).</li> <li>• Our message to the province included that a provincial trust fund is needed so that communities and indigenous governments could be supported to do work with respect to resolving water issues. This recommendation went to cabinet.</li> <li>• A small delegation, including Chief Seymour, is invited to speak to caucus on Oct. 30<sup>th</sup>.</li> </ul>  | For information |

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|    |                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The financial ask for this work will be significant. This initiative could represent a major environmental and reconciliation commitment by this Government prior to the next election.</li> </ul> <p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>David A. asked how much money is involved here? Doesn't this alter the role of the civil service in managing water in the province? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A: Tom replied that there could be millions of dollars available provincially on an annual basis if the Government invested in a large trust that generated significant interest. This trust could allow for development of water governance models by communities and FN. It's uncertain how this may affect government staff and what exactly the role of communities could be.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Ian commented that the cost of, for example, weirs should not be on the tax payer and that maybe this fund could help. Local groups have been offering first class work on shoestring budgets. This funding could be recognition that this work is important and should be continued.</li> </ul> |                 |
| 9  | Presentation:<br>Ugandan water story | <p>Tom gave a presentation on some of his impressions on water while traveling in Uganda. Tom's family has been supporting a school in Uganda for 12 years. They traveled there last fall; it was a life changing experience. Here are some of their experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The water resources are very poor. Drinking water for this one community comes from a small muddy pond. There has been no water for 2 growing seasons so crops have failed as irrigation was not an option with such limited water. Children would spend many hours a day walking to this pond and collecting water for the family.</li> <li>Tom and his wife also visited a high elevation ridge top community living in a steep, arid environment. Every day children would walk down 2000 ft in elevation to collect water and then carry it back to the community. There were no schools and no medical services.</li> <li>The take home message is that we have a lot... We have forests, water, salmon – to name a few. It would be irresponsible of us not to care for what we have. The work conducted by the CWB and community is very important.</li> </ul>    | For information |
| 10 | Other                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ian provided closing comments that the work conducted in this community by the Roundtable, CLRSS and so many others is so</li> </ul>   | For information |

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|    |         | important. Ian remarked that it has been an honour for him to serve over the last year and thanked Chief Seymour for all the help and support. |                         |
| 11 | Adjourn | Next meeting – Mon. November 25 <sup>th</sup> , 9:30am   | Adjourned<br>(11:25 am) |

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