


<p>DRAFT BOARD MEETING MINUTES</p>	<p>Mon. Sept 25 2023 9:30am Meeting was held online.</p>	
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Meeting Chair: CVRD Chair Aaron Stone **Participants:** Chief Lydia Hwitsum, Alison Nicholson, David Slade, Tim Kulchyski, Michelle Staples, David Froese, Shannon Waters, and Oliver Brandes (Advisor). **Regrets:** Linda Higgins, Kristine Sandhu, Stuart Pagaduan, David Anderson, Darin George. **Staff/Project Leaders:** Danielle Paydli, Heather Pritchard, Tom Rutherford, Jill Thompson. **Guest Speakers:** Kevin Pellett, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Southcoast stock assessment biologist **Audience members:** Working group members, volunteers, interested public.

1	Welcome	Co-Chair Stone called the meeting to order at 9:41am after a delay to secure quorum.
2	Agenda Review / Revisions	<p>Co-Chair Chief Hwitsum asked that a new item (UBCM update) be added to the agenda.</p> <p>Chair Stone moved that we accept the agenda with that adjustment / Chief Hwitsum seconded / Motion carried by consensus.</p>
3	Review July 2023 Minutes	<p>Chair Stone moved to accept the minutes / David Froese seconded / Motion carried by consensus.</p>
4	New item: Union of BC Municipalities meeting update from the Co-Chairs	<p>Chief Hwitsum: shared that the CoChairs met with Premier Eby and discussed the wellness of the river and the fish die-off. The First Nations Fisheries Council also hosted a reception where Chief Hwitsum had a conversation with the Premier’s staff to reiterate the attention needed for the watershed.</p> <p>Chair Stone: Also felt it was a valuable meeting and during lunch. Requested a follow up meeting with the Premier RE the need to move quickly on the weir. Additional meetings of note over the past month: Private Managed Forest Lands met with the Minister of Forests to discuss operations and how they impact watersheds, specifically regarding the Chemainus river. Also attended meetings with Cllr. Alison Nicholson re: PMFL issues; and the Premier Re: Cowichan River. Suggested that CoChairs co-write a letter to the Premier.</p> <p>Oliver Brandes: met individually with the Premier following the larger watershed group meeting. Emphasized how the CWB and the weir is an example of what’s needed and a way forward as a provincial model.</p> <p>Tim Kulchyski: Attended a Provincial drought meeting where the Province</p>

		<p>handed out a booklet that essentially indicated that the drought plan was to come up with a plan. Disappointed and shocked to see from what happened in this drought, that we do not have solutions yet. We were not ready to deal with the crisis. We need a taskforce that is ready to jump into action. We can do better. There was a prominent fish kill on a major river, so we are doing great things but there is a problem. We need to gather people and resources. We need to meaningfully collect data. This is a real issue.</p>
5	Announcements & Correspondence	<p>Jill Thompson: asked Board members to refer to the list at the bottom of their agenda and the online Board Package, flagging the following:</p> <p>Roger Wiles correspondence RE dumping in the estuary. Jill asked for help from anyone who can support this. Emphasized the need to make sure that we have capacity to support Public Input and this one fell through the cracks over the summer.</p> <p>Chief Hwitsum: responded that she spoke with the Governance and Land Manager, Larry George. Cowichan Tribes Governance Dept went through a permitting process for moving that gravel. The proper process is being followed on the side of Cowichan Tribes.</p> <p>Chair Stone asked for clarity regarding where this is located (ie. on whose land?). Answer: It's within reserve land.</p> <p>Chair Stone: suggested follow up after this meeting to find out more about the concerns.</p> <p>Jill: raised hands to Co-Chairs and Tom for responding to the many media requests over the past month.</p>
6	Public Input	None.
7	Language lesson	<p>Tim Kulchyski: provided a language lesson from the estuary, with the landmarks visible. Words shared:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● kwatlakwa (saltwater); ● Pi'paam (Mt. Tzouhalem); ● Swuq'us (Mt. Prevost) <p>Given our limited time on the agenda, Tim offered to share an origin story about this area another time.</p>
8	Estuary Restoration Project	<p>Tim Kulchyski: oriented the group as to where the Dinsdale farm is located and provided background on this project, and his involvement in it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cowichan Tribes is working with Nature Trust (NT) on the estuary project. NT holds title to the Dinsdale property. We've been partnering on sampling and looking at what estuary survival will look like in the

next 25-30yrs.

- With sea level rise, are the estuaries going to survive in a meaningful, intact way? Many species utilize the estuary, it's an excellent source of carbon sequestration - all of these things mean the estuary is one of the most vital spaces we have.
- Future doesn't look good for the estuary. Sea level rise will inundate a large part of the estuary.
- There is a farmer that has farmed that property on a lease for many years. It is a large, dyked property. The farmer has known for a number of years that the ability to farm that property in the future is in question. It would take ~\$12million to bring the current Dinsdale farm dyke up to grade - not even taking into account salinity issues, etc.
- This work was widely supported but the timeline was very short between when NT applied for received funds and began work. The public wasn't brought along as well as they may have been with a longer process.
- **Hopes we can all support this project.**

Tim invited Tom Reid, Nature Trust, to join the conversation from the gallery:

- Tom provided links
 - Project website: <https://www.estuaryresilience.ca/cowichan-estuary-restoration-project/>
 - ArcGIS storymap that provides an in depth overview as well: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/3fe2a2c09cd84baeb9c60cb6cd9fdee8>
- Tom Reid shared that this work will create more channels for juvenile salmonids; working with contractors for removing the berms.
- Still going through the design work for the dyke on the farm; removal of dyke is scheduled for next summer.
- There will be a community engagement session in the next few weeks to provide the science that went into how we got to this point and what next steps are.

Discussion:

- Chair Stone: wondering how this will affect adjacent properties? Acknowledged fear in the community. Flagged that there should be more information provided to the community on that piece.
 - Tom: under the Dyke Maintenance Act we have had to work diligently; had to demonstrate that we aren't exacerbating flooding or transferring risk
- Tim: lots of side channels and low-lying flood areas that were filled in, illegally by prior generations of farming; this increased floods on Cowichan Tribe's land. Trying to recreate the braided connectivity that

		<p>the river used to have, which has now been channelized.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Hwitsum: flagged that the new organization “LandKeepers” formed in July. Chief Hwitsum spoke with representatives at the fair, noted that she didn’t see acknowledgement of Cowichan Tribes in their materials, and said it was important to work together.
9	Fish kill report	<p>Kevin Pellett: Southcoast stock assessment biologist with DFO since 2017.</p> <p>Kevin gave a presentation “Cowichan Juvenile Mortality Update” including a timeline of events and map.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Around the Trestle – noted that algae growth did not look normal, much more than previously seen. - Rainbow and Brown trout found. - Moving down river, at Vimy it starts to look like cleaner, more typical conditions including live fish. - DFO surveyed from Vimy to Stolz Pool (4 sites in total); cleaner substrates and moderate to abundant fish - more normal in this stretch but started to see increased algae by Stoltz. - Upper river seeing matted algae condition, not what we normally see (mid-section of upper river) - Flow Summary – On July 1st, flows were reduced to 4.5cms. First sign of dead fish was July 10. <p>Next steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Download and remove continuous loggers once flow increases - Review electrofishing results to put mortality in perspective - Follow up meeting to review Water Quality and fish results with multi-agencies and Cowichan Tribes - Determine course of action for next year and additional monitoring <p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tim: asked about underwater imagery. He would like to talk to Clay and his team to find out what the differences have been re: algae growth in lower end of the river; Clay was adding alum in years past. • Tim: Do you see value in collecting identical data in lower end? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Kevin: definitely, we’ve been through a few droughts now, so he would like to understand why this year was different? We’ve been at 4.5cms before, so we need follow up fish health discussion. ○ Found new bacteria present in some of the fish - they would need to be under stress conditions for that to cause mortality. ○ Wants to see what those loggers show us to help figure this out. He thinks it will point to more rigorous data collection, especially at low flows. • Tim: requested that Kevin include Kristine Millar and the work she was doing (background impacts and general health that could lead to these

situations).

- Kevin: yes, we need to engage more experts on fish health; have done some of it but he can't speak to what they found but they could possibly come to one of our meetings.
- Tom Rutherford: Pointed out to the Board Members that this assessment report should provide a good idea of the effects (re: electrofishing and downstream effects); another learning we should take advantage of.
- Chief Hwitsum: asked how DFO will aggregate the data collection from all the Ministries, Catalyst, etc. Indigenous People are greatly affected as they rely on the natural world. Has MoE or Ministry of Health seen any health issues that Cowichan Tribes should be aware of? CWB is formed to look at the full health of the river.
 - Kevin: to his knowledge, there were no human health concerns.
 - Kevin apologized for not involving Cowichan Tribes earlier; with investigations it is difficult to go external.
- Shannon: recommended that the new Healthy Environments Team (toxicologist) **come to the CWB** to introduce themselves. They could be a resource for being part of work like this.
- Paul Gowland (via chat): asked if any nutrient measurements are being done in the river.
 - Kevin: Yes, the Province took some nutrient samples and have some results. They will come within that report/data summary.
- Dave F: noted that it is important to spend our resources on WHY the fish died. Can't just wait on the report. If there is an issue with algae, then let's get an expert to find out what's happening. Didymo algae has been on the river for years. There are lots of unanswered questions so we don't want to wait until next year to figure this out; Cowichan River deserves better. He believes we should be as active on this front as we can. Not feeling reassured. Sad event. Frustrating.
 - Tom Rutherford: Acknowledged Dave's comment and agreed, but feels the best course of action is to see what the DFO report will offer as it is the best information we have. BUT let's not let it sit. We have the winter to figure out how to pick up our game and follow up on this.
 - Chair Stone: we need to make sure we don't just do more monitoring - more **action is needed**.

Alison Nicholson: Chief Hwitsum is right, this is about cumulative effects. Anything not good for the fish, we should start addressing. **What will we be doing to mitigate at this point?**

Chair Stone: yes, this should continue to be our conversation as we move into the winter/spring. He would like to follow up after the meeting with staff and Chief about what we need to do.

		<p>Michelle Staples: frustrated regarding dumping effluent into river systems, water misuse/overuse - with everything we've learned we need to make sure these conversations continue to move forward.</p> <p>Tim: one thing we can do now is to use the JUB formula in Lake Cowichan to improve water quality.</p> <p>Dave F: Commented that Coho couldn't be sheltered. There are no refuge areas.</p>
10	<p>Project Updates</p> <p>a) Targets Working Groups Terms of Reference (TOR)</p> <p>Water Quality (WQ) sampling results and the target.</p>	<p>Heather began by recognizing Elodie Roger's presentation last month. Today we hope to connect those findings to our WQ Target. We may also consider how the fish kill may affect how we sample in 2024 (i.e. are new metrics needed?)</p> <p>Heather summarized key takeaways in a WQ & Estuarine Health Report Card format. See Presentation: https://cowichanwatershedboard.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Presentation_WQ-Results-and-our-Target_25Sept2023_H.Pritchard.pdf</p> <p>Discussion:</p> <p>Chair Stone: Noted that the target looks out of date from Board discussions.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Heather: Agreed that a process is underway to update the Target using Cowichan Tribes' teaching "when the tide goes out, the table is set"</p> <p>[11:27am - Chair Stone departed; thanked Chief and everyone else for their work; passed Chair to CVRD Vice-Chair Alison Nicholson.]</p> <p>David Slade: Asked whether the plan is still to move the Joint Utilities Board (JUB) out to satellite channel?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Chief Hwitsum: replied that when she came on as Chief, the recommended solution was "to pump it out further." Cowichan Tribes is trying to do better than this.</p> <p>Alison Nicholson: Noted that we need to understand algae better and how it plays into it, and suggested this would be a good topic for a Speakers Series session.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Jill: asked whether a Board member would be interested in working with her to host a Speaker Night on algae, and/or potentially the JUB project?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Chief Hwitsum: clarified that the JUB is an older governance model and Cowichan Tribes' voice is not at that table.</p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;">Checked whether Heather has what she needed for the Working Group.</p>

		<p>Heather: clarified that her takeaway is that we need to see Fish, WQ and Estuarine health together to discuss (even internally we are working in silos)</p> <p>David F: noted that a weird thing about this fish kill was that it was not a huge phosphorus load. This was in the mid-section of the water.</p> <p>Heather: Asked the Board to consider the Draft Terms of Reference circulated earlier, and requested a motion to adopt so it can be distributed to the Working Groups.</p> <p>The purpose of the Working Groups is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaborate - Share knowledge - Make recommendations and - Provide technical advice <p>With this goal, Working Group meetings provide a forum for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information exchange of projects underway or completed; - Developing workplans for shared priorities that address watershed issues, contribute to the local knowledge base, and provide stewardship tools; and - Tracking and reporting out to the CWB on progress being made toward achieving the target and indicators <p>David Froese moved to approve the WG ToR / Seconded by Michelle Staples / Motion carried by consensus.</p>
<p>b) 2023 River Flows and rebuilding the Weir; Koksilah Watershed Planning</p>		<p>Tom Rutherford: Provided an update on 3 things:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Overview of Cowichan River Flows <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Flows reduced to 4.5cms; this was a risk. b. Sept 13th pumps were turned on; by that time the flow dropped to 4cms; lowest it's been in Tom's lifetime. c. 17 pumps operating d. Expecting rain but likely not enough to stop pumps; unprecedented e. Pumping is a lose-lose situation 2. Cowichan Weir Project <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Meeting with WLRS Exec. Dir. tomorrow b. Tom giving presentation to Town of Lake Cowichan 3. Xwulqw'selu-Koksilah WSP Project <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Planning team met all summer; prepared for the G2G (decision-makers) meeting that happened last Friday: Workplans, budgets, membership for the Community Collaborative Advisory Table (CCAT).

		<p>Tom asked if there were any objections from the Board re: Tom presenting to the Lake Cowichan Town Hall meeting/ Town of Lake Cowichan Council? No concerns.</p>
	<p>c) Watershed Information Knowledge and Data (WIKD) update and invitation to workshop</p>	<p>Danielle Paydli: provided an update on behalf of Lisa Fox, Project Lead</p> <p>Lisa and Cheri Ayers are leading this and did an excellent presentation to the Project Leaders team regarding what they had accomplished so far. Their slideshow presentation is available in the Board materials for your review.</p> <p>The following steps have been taken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop a local advisory group to guide the project ● Conduct a survey of local organizations/entities ● Conduct a series of scoping interviews ● Conduct desktop review of existing tools/resources; <p>AND NOW: Host a workshop to explore recommended path(s) forward. This is happening on October 19t. All members of the Board are welcome to attend. Afterwards - we will present workshop outcomes and possible recommendations.</p> <p>Danni clarified that while discussions are ongoing that the CWB could be a logical organization to serve a long-term collaborative data-sharing hub “role” no commitment as to the CWB's future role in data sharing has been made. It’s an exciting possible opportunity but also a lot of things to consider. We will look to the October meeting to provide more information, context, and connections and conversations with partners.</p>
<p>11</p>	<p>Operational Updates</p> <p>a) Provincial seat(s) on the Board - what outcomes would Province contribute to?</p> <p>b) Leadership Team and</p>	<p>a) Jill outlined the background RE the Provincial seat(s) for our Board. WLRS representative has asked us to define the purpose, intent; & what outcomes the Province would contribute to.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Alison Nicholson: should note that people on the Board should be out there helping, not just coming to the meetings ● Michelle Staples: on the Board of the Climate Caucus - ADMs for the Ministry sit on that; could we make connections? ● Oliver Brandes: It's a net benefit but how would the person be involved in the community and how would they connect and bring this to their Executive team? Happy to work with staff to make expectations clear. ● Chief Hwitsum and Chair Stone can meet to discuss this. ● Please email Danni with further input.

	<p>Society Discussion Items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2024 funding and staffing transition. • Updated CWB Governance Manual. • Comms - Approving Key CWB Messages on Priority Projects. Correspondence protocol. 	<p>b) Jill and Danni provided quick insights into items that (due to time constraints) will be discussed with the Leadership Team before coming back to the full Board for decision/discussion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CVRD staff will recommend an increase in the CWB Core Funding to the CVRD Board. • Jill Thompson sought support in principle for the Watershed Society to initiate a process to consider transitioning to Danni Paydli as the Interim Director, and developing a process to confirm the E.D. position. Alison moved that the Board support the Society to develop a transition plan for the Executive Director / seconded by Michelle Staples/motion carried by consensus. • BC Watershed Collaborative is holding annual gathering in Nov.; great opportunity for Danni to showcase how we work and potentially greater funding. Danni will follow up with Chief Hwitsum to attend. Michelle Staples and Shannon Waters are interested in attending. • Governance Manual has been further updated by Danni has updated; will be reviewed by Leadership Team. • Communications: Jill thanked Tom and the co-Chairs again for fielding media; recommend we try to develop pre-approved messages that staff could provide to media in the case we can't find one of the spokespeople for media in future. Also recommend developing a protocol for correspondence to get it out the door more efficiently. Staff will try to work on this.
12	Other	
13	Adjourn.	<p>Adjourned at 12:15pm Next CWB meeting - Oct. 30 in the CVRD Boardroom</p>