



Draft Board Meeting Minutes

Monday, March 31st, 2025 9am-noon

Location: Online via Zoom

Meeting Chair: CoChair Kate Segall; **Participants:** Chief Cindy Daniels, Christopher Alphonse, Calvin Swustus Senior, Alison Nicholson, Shannon Waters, David Slade, David Froese, Tim Kulchyski, Kristine Sandhu, Jenna Sutherst, Michelle Staples. **Advisor:** Oliver Brandes; **Regrets:** Arlette Malcolm; **Staff/Project Leaders:** Danielle Paydli, Heather Pritchard, Tom Rutherford, Jill Thompson; **Guest Speakers:** Oliver Brandes, POLIS Project on Ecological Governance; **Audience members:** Working group members, volunteers, interested public.

1. Welcome

Chair Segall opened the meeting at 9am.

2. Agenda Review / Revisions

Correction: Michelle's name missing from agenda. Agenda adopted with that correction.

3. Review February 24th, 2025 Draft Minutes

Minutes adopted without changes.

4. Announcements, Correspondence and Reporting Out (see details below agenda)

Correspondence received RE request for input on a forestry plan for Community Forest K1K, from Khowutzun Forest Services (KFS)

- staff shared that research from the recent Cowichan River fish kill monitoring has revealed that the proposed logging areas include cold water refugia spaces; propose submitting a letter to inform KFS that the area includes this valuable cold water input stream and provide ideas of how we can protect this type of habitat moving forward.
- **Motion:** that Heather prepare a draft letter for Board input at the next CWB meeting.
 - DFO rep expressed support. DFO has chosen Cowichan river as a site to do work on 3D modelling of cold water refugia (length and depth).
 - Motion passed by consensus.

Debrief of Minister Neill's visit to Cowichan Tribes

- Key Reflections:
 - Unified voice and group professionalism were emphasized; powerful impact noted from a specific presentation.
 - Importance of hearing Cowichan Tribes' perspectives.
 - Expressions of commitment to addressing systemic, Indigenous-specific racism in governance. Reflection on the discomfort of naming racism and the need for truth-telling in public spaces.
 - Gratitude expressed for community contributions, such as Project 84,000.
 - Personal stories shared around environmental change and emotional impacts.
 - Suggestion that appointment of a Senior Executive Advisor to Minister Osborne focusing on Indigenous-specific racism could be considered for Minister Neill, related to WLRS.

- Recognition of strong ministerial engagement as a key factor in creating “winning conditions.”

Walk the Weir, World Water Day Event

- surveys generated by Cowichan Lake and River Stewards (event co-host) indicated 110 took a tour + 40 came to the booths;
- ToLC (Kristine) provided shelter and support for the booths, and took a tour
- Domtar’s Brian Houle opened the weir and provided great tours with Tom
- surveys showed the education was very well received.

March Speakers Night

- Jedson August; Carleen August - beautiful evening of learning about canoe building and life in the Quw’utsun watershed for Indigenous people.

BC Association of First Nations Water Forum

- Shannon, Calvin, Chris, and Danni presented on the history and work of the CWB.

Email RE concerns about the impact of abandoned vessels in Cowichan Bay

- Kate will attend.

Email RE riparian damage at Stanley Creek

- confirmed that this is within the TOLC boundaries and staff are examining the complaint.

5. Hul'q'umi'num' Watershed Lesson

- Councillor Christopher Alphonse led us through a lesson based on map http://hulquminum.bc.ca/pubs/Place_Names_maps_2005.pdf

6. Impact Plan — Final Input and Approval

Danni spoke to the differences made to the Impact Plan since the last meeting based on February Board meeting input. Whole of Watershed strategy will evolve the existing target structure.

Discussion

- weir is more than a project - it's our priority.
- people need to be part of the solutions or the solutions won't work
- we have dropped the ball on Targets, and sharing what we have learned and what's next, so we bring people along.
- need whole of watershed thinking - not just the weir
- fixing the whole watershed is hugely expensive
- need youth at the table
- acknowledgement that the plan is about sustainability, not returning to pristine states.
- **Motion**: to approve the Impact Plan, pending integration of new input.
 - Motion passed by consensus.

7. Vancouver Island Whitewater Paddling Society - Requests for Consideration

The Board was referred to the previously circulated agenda package, which included correspondence from VIWPS and a briefing note from staff on this item.

Discussion

- DFO rep shared that DFO recently reviewed the concept of play wave features in the Cowichan River and concluded the department would not support it. Additional water disturbance and additional ongoing human activity in the river can be an additional stress on fish. Significant efforts and millions of dollars of investments are being made by all levels of Government and stewardship non-profits to protect and restore fish runs in the Quw'utsun Sta'lo'.
- not within our wheelhouse to be directly advocating for any form of recreation on the river; no stance against it and appreciate and recognize the contribution from the paddling community toward our common objectives but this isn't our mandate.
- acknowledge tourism/economic benefit but that's not CWB's flag to carry.
- appreciate the enthusiasm but this request doesn't align with the strategic direction of the CWB; we need to focus on salmon and health.
- expert analysis from Stantec, after reviewing the VIWPS input, suggests a wave feature could pose a risk to fish passage; comments from DFO reinforce that; that's the information we have to rely on.
- can't support a playwave in the weir or elsewhere on the river; prioritizes human needs vs. our other-than-human relatives, at a time when they need our help.
- not enough information right now about how it would benefit the river
 - **Motion:** CoChairs to reply on behalf of the Watershed Board stating that the CWB does not support the proposal for a playwave because: a) it's outside our mandate and b) the best information available to us does not support that there would be no impact to the health of this river, at a time when the river and fish are already under stress.
 - Motion passed by consensus.

8. Whole of Watershed Discussion

Heather introduced the next phase of developing our Targets strategy, following from the presentation and discussion in November, acknowledging this will be a bit chaotic as we try to create something new. Heather added that there are groups in the watershed who are doing similar work (Quw'utsun Cultural Connections, CVRD, XWP). Looking for Board input on:

1. What don't you know today that you'd like to know 'tomorrow' that will help you better understand the watershed?
2. How is knowing this new information going to help the board and community do our work better? What do you want this information to 'do'?
3. What isn't in our targets that should be?

Roundtable Input

- capital costs for the weir and ongoing operational costs - how will we pay for that? How does Domtar fit in?
- that word "evolve" that Chief used reflects a positive change to the attitude in this Board; evolution toward action...don't want to stall out.
- we need action.

- important to have a good diagnostic - different from its baseline to what it looks like 50 years ago and what it looks like today
- perhaps “economic value of a healthy watershed” - could we know that number? if this was included, this may support us politically
 - we can find a value to humans; but we need a larger story captured
 - bringing everyone along with us — can’t assume everyone has the same connection to the watershed that we have. Economic value may bring some of those folks into the conversation. e.g. traditional values of harvesting shellfish
- long term maintenance and operations of the weir, projections by 2050 will have zero snowpack, will the XWP result in meaningful change in how that watershed is managed?
- how much forest do we need to restore to a previous state to protect the hydrological functioning?
- agree on looking at the economic case.
- broader society is getting pushed back towards fossil fuels again. Need to work towards net zero again.
- get the outfalls out of the river, pressure governments to go that way.
- cool water refugia - understanding where they are in the system and recognizing their value in the watershed and protecting them.
- Biodiversity
- 1500 different foods in the estuary - shows the type of information we need to know
- cold water siphon (when extra funding secured) to avoid pumping.; weir is a big piece of the puzzle but only one piece. Ecological function and value (\$12-\$40 million annually for chinook according to Kevin Pellett and Tim - back of envelope calculation)
- discussions here will be shared across the valley - help people not getting misinformation.
- Oliver - a common way to think of these kinds of projects - what we have/what we had and what we want.; community doing some of this visioning (led by CWB) ie. how much cold refugia do we want? how much riparian areas do we want? CWB could be a credible source to put out this information — key vitals (what was, is, we want in the future) — potential framework to consider.

Summaries

Oliver:

- inventory of what on the books and implications
- values - link to economic - but know that first - current value vs what we’re working towards.
- what did we have and how has it changed
- living project - not done quickly. 100 yrs ago, 100 yrs from now
- how to measure impact of tech projects - e.g. what will change with weir, XWP, cold water refugia, restoration, etc.
- what projects would make sense to get to net zero? storing carbon?
- scope is large - which slice do you want to start with.

Heather: there are a lot of different opinions but we can pull out key messages; can sense already that it will be an ongoing discussion, frequent check-ins with the Board. Need to meet the needs of staff, board and the community.

Additional board input - this is less about what we want but what the ecosystem needs to be healthy; keep that in our mind. That is the fundamental thing we've gotten wrong in the past. We can't be so people-centric

Action - Oliver to provide advice and guidance to the Board for next steps.

- Good for watershed planning, which includes some of the key “vitals” is <https://yourcier.org/watershed-planning-guidebooks/> See in particular Volume 3 Knowing Your Watershed - All our relations - pg 26 with good outline of specifics for “State of Watershed reporting”
- Two good resources (analogs):
 - Water Rangers
<https://www.watershedreports.ca/watershed/flowing-west-pacific-ocean/08-pacific/>
 - Sask Water Security Agency
<https://www.wsask.ca/about/publications/state-of-the-watershed-report-2010/#:~:text=Saskatchewan's%20State%20of%20the%20Watershed,to%20Dundestand%20report%20card%20format.&text=For%20further%20information%20about%20Saskatchewan's,at%20comm@wsask.ca>

9. Other Business (none)

10. Adjourned Next CWB meeting - April 28th, 2025 in the CVRD Board Room.

Materials referenced below can be found at: <https://cowichanwatershedboard.ca/meetings/>

Correspondence

- Community Forest K1K, Khowutzun Forest Services - invitation to review Forestry Plan
- Vancouver Island Whitewater Paddling Society - information package RE request for wave feature at the weir.
- Guy Johnston - email RE concerns about the impact of abandoned vessels in Cowichan Bay
- Michele Zaharia - email and photographs RE concern about erosion of Stanley Creek in Lake Cowichan

Announcements/Events

- Speakers Series - Always at VIU-Cowichan Campus, Room 140, 7pm, FREE. Details at <https://cowichanwatershedboard.ca/content/cwb-viu-speakers-series/>
- Mon. April 14th - [Bernard Schroeder, Marbled Murrelet researcher.](#)

Further Reading

- [Samuna Marsh Wildlife Society] Parrot's Feather Control 2024 Report. Prepared By: Gina Hoar R.P. Bio, and Phaedra Douglass. Prepared for Municipality of North Cowichan.

- [Cowichan Valley Citizen] Guest column: Navigating the future: collaborative fixes for Koksilah watershed. Alison Nicholson, Mar 1, 2025.
https://www.cowichanvalleycitizen.com/opinion/guest-column-navigating-the-future-collaborative-fixes-for-koksilah-watershed-7830602?utm_source=Email_Share&utm_medium=Email_Share&utm_campaign=Email_Share
- [British Columbia Magazine] The Future of Water: From floods to heat waves, clear cuts and rising river bottoms, British Columbia's watersheds are in need of some serious attention. [Andrew Findlay](#), January 13, 2025.
<https://www.bcmag.ca/the-future-of-water/>