

Columbia Basin Regional Advisory Committee

Summary of the Inaugural Meeting

September 11, 2014, Nelson, BC

INTRODUCTION

The Columbia Basin Regional Advisory Committee (CBRAC) held its inaugural meeting on September 11, 2014 in Nelson, B.C. Twenty-two of the thirty-six [members attended](#), along with representatives from the B.C. Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM), the Columbia River Treaty Local Governments' Committee (LGC) and BC Hydro (BCH).

The inaugural meeting was designed to share information that would bring everyone to a general understanding of hydroelectric operations in B.C., the status of the Columbia River Treaty Review and the purpose of CBRAC. BCH and MEM delivered presentations on the first two topics, acknowledging benefits and impacts that exist in the Basin and providing open, honest answers to any questions asked. The LGC provided a presentation reviewing their activities to date and their recommendations to the provincial and federal governments, including supporting the creation of CBRAC. The group discussed CBRAC, where it came from, what its purpose is, and where it will go. There were many good discussions, and a number of information needs were identified. The day finished with the agreement that another face to face meeting is necessary 'soon' to further explore how CBRAC will operate and what it will focus on, and webinars or other approaches were encouraged to support CBRAC members to learn more about Basin hydroelectric operations and the CRT.

There is a great deal of knowledge, expertise, well founded perspectives and passion in this group. The general feeling at the end of the day was that of positive anticipation for working together, and appreciation that citizens of the Basin, and representatives of First Nations, local government, provincial government and BC Hydro have come together to be part of the discussion.

This summary is based on notes taken by MEM during the meeting as well as written comments from participants. Though not everything was captured verbatim, these notes are meant to reflect the intended spirit of the discussion. The presentations can be found [here](#) or by clicking on each presentation title below:

[CBRAC Form and Function: Perspectives on CBRAC – MEM](#)

[CBRAC Form and Function: Perspectives on CBRAC – LGC](#)

[Hydro Operations in the Columbia Basin](#)

[Columbia River Treaty Review: Update and Next Steps](#)

PRESENTATIONS

CBRAC Form and Function: What is it? What isn't it?

Perspectives on CBRAC: *Province of B.C.*

Kathy Eichenberger, Executive Director CRT Review Team, Ministry of Energy and Mines

[See presentation](#) and [CBRAC Terms of Reference](#). Key points are summarized here:

The Ministry's Role

The Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM) conducted the Columbia River Treaty (CRT) Review on behalf of the Province, and will engage in CRT negotiations between Canada and the US once the US State Department has made its decision on whether or not to continue the Treaty and what if any changes may be contemplated. As part of the CRT Review, MEM conducted extensive public engagement with residents in the Basin regarding CRT issues, and will continue to do so in part through CBRAC. MEM will provide the Secretariat for CBRAC for the next 3 years, along with staff expertise and active participation in CBRAC meetings. Consultation with First Nations was conducted separately on a government-to-government basis during the Review and will continue.

What is CBRAC?

A forum for dialogue and mutual learning that provides insight, advice and input on current and future hydroelectric operating issues and plans. It explores positive solutions to regional issues, and provides input and advice on potential future changes and improvements to the Columbia River Treaty. It complements other BC Hydro and Ministry engagement – this is not “instead of”, it is “in addition to.”

What is CBRAC *not*?

It is not aboriginal consultation. It is not a decision-making body. It will not re-open results of previous broader consultative and regulatory initiatives (e.g. water use plans, the Water Sustainability Act).

Why was CBRAC Formed?

CBRAC was formed in response to feedback received from Basin residents and First Nations during the Province's two-year engagement for the Columbia River Treaty Review. Engagement participants said they want more information in a timely manner with regards to hydroelectric operations in the Basin, and ongoing opportunities to provide input on operations and regional issues. They also want the ability to remain engaged in the Columbia River Treaty process. The goal of CBRAC is to serve both of those needs. It is expected that CBRAC will evolve as members learn and adapt.

How was CBRAC created?

CBRAC was created through a partnership between the Ministry of Energy and Mines, the Columbia River Treaty Local Governments' Committee and BC Hydro. Representatives of each of these groups form an informal Steering Committee for CBRAC, the purpose of which is to look after administration and maintain CBRAC's momentum. All decisions within the Steering Committee are made by consensus.

How were members selected?

MEM invited expressions of interest from Basin residents. Selection of Basin citizen members was made by consensus within the CBRAC Steering Committee. Members were selected based on geographic and sectoral representation from key areas in the Basin. Members were also selected to ensure diversity of age and gender. It was preferred that members would be able to contribute in a collaborative manner. Regional Districts, First Nations, the Columbia Basin Trust, FortisBC, and BC Hydro were invited to designate representatives to be part of CBRAC.

Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference were developed in collaboration between the Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM), Local Governments' Committee (LGC) and BC Hydro (BCH). Here are some additional thoughts behind them that were expressed at the meeting:

- MEM, LGC, and BCH want CBRAC's advice, which will be taken into consideration
- The CBRAC Steering Committee recognizes CBRAC members are volunteering their time and want to be reasonable and realistic in its expectations of what members can contribute
- All members need to be flexible and adapt as we go
- The Steering Committee set the agenda for the inaugural meeting, but future agendas will be sent out in advance for the Committee's input
- Comments during meetings will not be attributable
- All members agree to respect confidentiality if and when requested
- MEM will make sure other ministries and federal government agencies are aware of pertinent information we hear from CBRAC, and will bring them in where possible and appropriate.

Perspectives on CBRAC: *Columbia River Treaty Local Governments' Committee*

Deb Kozak, Chair and Karen Hamling, Vice-Chair, Columbia River Treaty Local Governments' Committee

[See presentation.](#) Key points are summarized here:

The Local Governments' Committee (LGC) ensures Basin residents and local elected officials have opportunities to increase their knowledge of the Columbia River Treaty (CRT) and have opportunities to be actively engaged on CRT related issues. They also advocate on specific regional interests, and work collaboratively with local MLAs and MPs. They foresee the LGC continuing to address CRT related issues that require attention at the political level. As part of their recommendations to the Province following extensive engagement on the CRT, the LGC encouraged the Province, BC Hydro, the Columbia Basin Trust and others to work together with the LGC to provide meaningful ongoing engagement of Basin Residents in hydro operation decisions. CBRAC is a direct result of that recommendation.

Perspectives on CBRAC: *BC Hydro*

Renata Kurschner, Director, Generation Resource Management, BC Hydro

There was no PowerPoint presentation for this session. Key points are summarized here:

BC Hydro representatives on CBRAC understand the heritage of loss, and how it is challenging to move forward when something as consequential as loss of land and displacement of residents happens. BC Hydro's role is to reconcile managing BC's hydroelectric system for the benefit of society, while trying to understand and mitigate individual, local and regional impacts. As part of CBRAC, BC Hydro commits to sharing as much information about hydroelectric operations as possible, and as there is interest for. BC Hydro will listen to and consider what CBRAC members are saying, and what they can do about issues that are raised. There is also an expectation that CBRAC members commit to mutual learning, and understand that BC Hydro is responsible to its ratepayers and shareholder (the Province).

Hydro Operations in the Columbia Basin

Renata Kurschner, Director, Generation Resource Management, BC Hydro

Darren Sherbot, Manager, System Optimization, BC Hydro

[See presentation.](#)

BC Hydro Engagement

Lawrence Pillion, Sr. Manager Community Relations, BC Hydro

There was no PowerPoint presentation for this session. Key points are summarized here:

BC Hydro is dedicated to engaging with the public on a wide range of issues related to hydroelectric operations in the Columbia Basin. Community Relations staff is located in Castlegar, Cranbrook, Revelstoke, and Vernon, and engages with local government officials, media and other community leaders on a wide range of issues, as well as responds to a significant number of individual information requests about BC Hydro operations and activities. Community Relations staff perform outreach activities that include regular information sharing and engagement about capital projects spanning all aspects of the generation and transmission/distribution components of BC Hydro's business. Outreach also includes supporting various initiatives that are important to local communities, including Re-greening and Beautification programs, donations/sponsorships and the Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program. In addition to these outreach activities, Community Relations staff also provide communications support during storm seasons, another critical aspect of the community relations function as power outages can occur during forest fires, floods and winter conditions.

For more information about community relations, visit:

http://www.bchydro.com/community/in_your_region.html

Columbia River Treaty (CRT) Review – Update and Next Steps

Kathy Eichenberger, Executive Director CRT Review Team, Ministry of Energy and Mines

Heather Matthews, Project Manager, CRT Review Team, BC Hydro

[See presentation.](#)

CBRAC Form and Function: Next Steps

Time was short at this point in the day, so the group brainstormed what members felt they needed in order to move forward via a combination of ideas written on post-it notes and small breakout groups. Below is our best record of the ideas that came forward.

Operational Wish List

- Constant lake levels near capacity during summer months
- Stabilize Arrow levels between 1415' and 1424' with no spike above 1424'
- Want lesser draw down of reservoir
- Improve fisheries in reservoirs
- Enforce the recommendations in the Water Use Plan (WUP). If the "spirit" of the WUP is not followed then BC Hydro should not get water license

Information Needs (What CBRAC wants to know more about and what issues it wants to address.)

Alternative Energy

- Ability to model energy alternatives in the region
- Is BC looking into other big energy sources that are less socially and environmentally destructive (e.g. geothermal)?
- Create a vision for diversified energy sources (incl. geothermal)

Background

- George Penfold report on impacts and benefits of the Columbia River Treaty. ([Click here](#) to read the report.)
- Who is the steward of the Columbia River (BC Hydro, Provincial Government? Federal Government?)

Columbia Basin Trust (CBT)

- Total dollars generated by CBT per year/CBT sources of revenue
- History on CBT - how it was created and why, relationship to CRT, etc.
- History of Columbia Basin Trust and CRT transferred to younger generations

Columbia River Treaty (CRT)

- Status of the Columbia River Treaty. Where is it going? U.S. perspective?
- Keep knowledge about the CRT current
- Dispute resolution mechanisms under Columbia River Treaty

Duplication

- What are other groups doing on watershed governance?
- Ensure CBRAC doesn't duplicate other initiatives

Economic Impacts and Benefits

- Discuss economic development impacts and opportunities related to hydro operations
- What is the economic loss per reservoir area? (i.e. Lost economic opportunities)
- Address the loss of forests and logging access due to the Mica dam

Public Engagement

- Improve resident engagement (many residents are not interested)
- More engagement of younger generations

Environment/Ecosystems

- What is impact on species at risk by reservoir due to hydro operations?
- Environmental background knowledge and willingness to modify or change. e.g. fish decline
- Comprehensive list of environmental issues related to management of reservoirs/dams
- What are the cost benefits and trade-offs associated with changes in hydro operations that would benefit wildlife habitat and the environment?
- Make improvements to ecosystem function enforceable – no more soft constraints
- Address water level fluctuations and erosion concerns
- Invasive species
- Bringing salmon back to the Columbia River

Hydro Operations

- Water licenses and flood control
- Water licenses – limits, WUP? Obstacles to WUP?
- What % of power made in Columbia Basin is exported?
- Let BC know we were impacted
- Electricity as we have it is a privilege
- More on overall hydro operations
- Model energy alternatives
- Past/future energy demands in BC, the Basin and specifically from the Mica Dam
- Past demand/load growth
- How the hydroelectric system currently works
- Revenue rates
- Hydro's focus on "balancing" interests – improving one usually impacts another
- Mitigation measures for losses
- Importance of IPPs (independent power producers) in the Province/pragmatics of operations
- How to increase sense of ownership in hydro operations

- How to improve relationship with BC Hydro Incremental concerns vs overall system concerns - often BC Hydro processes only address a single project or process (e.g. Mica 5-6) and there is no opportunity to talk about larger system concerns or impacts or mitigation
- Relationship of government in recognizing impacts/limitations to change
- Breakdown by reservoir (for each reservoir, describe how it works, how it is managed, impacts, benefits, and revenue from each).
- What kind of revenue does BCH get from Mica Dam?
- Total dollars made by power generation in Columbia per year

Hydro Planning

- What are the processes BC Hydro uses to make decisions?
- BC Hydro/Fortis/Nelson Hydro planning
- What are we doing to manage load growth? Should we be doing more?
- Cost of electricity if reservoirs are managed poorly
- How else could daily peak demand needs be met (i.e. does it always have to be Revelstoke?)

Recreation

- Establishing a port of call for trans-boundary boat travel capability
- Enhance recreation on Kinbasket – access to the lake, development, forest service sites provincial sites
- Address damage to crown land from recreation users around Koochanusa

Ways to Engage the Public

- “Follow the money” presentation/graphics
- Add info into CBT’s “Report to Residents” (post-mail newsletter)
- Signage for invasive species, water levels etc.
- Online discussion
- Links to resources

CBRAC Structure (Thoughts on how to ensure CBRAC functions effectively)

- Meet on reservoir basis to talk
- Have a contact person in each reservoir area
- Teleconferences/webinars are good
- Email works
- Online discussion forum
- Increase frequency of Face to Face meetings
- More than 2 face to face meetings/year if required
- Prefer meetings be hosted by a Facilitator instead of a Chair
- Keep the structure easy / streamlined and keep everyone equal
- Would like to provide input on the CBRAC Terms of Reference to better define what CBRAC is and who are we advising
- More time for meetings
- Info by email from MEM in advance of meetings
- Meet again ASAP (by Christmas?)
- Need hard copy of materials (some people prefer this over email)
- Hard copies of presentations with notes space would be appreciated for some

CLOSING COMMENTS FROM THE ROOM

“Excited to see midlevel pool studies being done for Arrow Lake. I had a good feeling about this meeting.”

“Hopeful that this group will be able to find some unified solutions to what we are seeking, and be able to make those known so they can be acted by on by government officials.”

“Feeling grateful for MEM, BCH and LGC for bringing us together.”

“Wonderful idea that the Water Use Plan is enforced and no longer soft constraints. Would like to know much more about Mica.”

“Recognize the leadership of MEM and BCH. We are presented with an interesting opportunity. Not clear what the benefits could be, but look forward to exploring them. Having us together can make government a better place; this takes great leadership.”

“BC Hydro’s presentation was foundational.”

“Has complete confidence in BCH and their goal to serve the needs of BC.”

“Thanks to MEM, BCH and LGC for moving this process forward, otherwise it would’ve been a big void from where we were last.”

“Thank you for a genuine and sympathetic ear.”

Kathy Eichenberger (MEM): “Would like to congratulate ourselves (MEM, BCH, and LGC) for selecting such a great group.”

Renata Kurschner (BCH): “I have listened to everything we want to talk about, and hope there are wins and accomplishments. Hope there is not a disappointment; let’s give it a try.”

Karen Hamling (LGC): “Only successful because we’ve had BCH and MEM , and everyone volunteering your time. This all means a lot.”

ACTION ITEMS

- Share presentations and notes from September 11 meeting on Columbia River Treaty website
- Invite FortisBC and the Columbia Power Corporation to join CBRAC (UPDATE: FortisBC has been invited and Blair Weston will be their representative; CPC has been invited and Audrey Repin will be their representative.)
- Look into a web format where members can communicate and/or information can be shared. (SharePoint or something similar)
- Look into organizing webinars or in person presentations that go through the operations, benefits, and impacts of each individual dam/reservoir.
- Create opportunities for CBRAC to learn about US interests
- Sort through Topics of Interest identified by CBRAC to determine when and how they can be addressed
- Explore potential dates for the next CBRAC meeting.
- Start drafting CBRAC Code of Conduct (UPDATE: the first draft, created by Jody Lownds, has been sent to MEM. The CBRAC Steering Committee will review then circulate to CBRAC for comment.)
- Start posting a list of resources on the Columbia River Treaty site

RESOURCES

Columbia River Treaty

- BC Columbia River Treaty website: <http://blog.gov.bc.ca/columbiarivertreaty>
- Columbia River Treaty page on the Columbia Basin Trust's website: <http://www.cbt.org/crt/>
- Paper: *A Review of the Range of Impacts and Benefits of the Columbia River Treaty on Basin Communities, the Region and the Province*, by George Penfold. <http://blog.gov.bc.ca/columbiarivertreaty/files/2012/07/A-Review-of-the-Range-of-Impacts-and-Benefits-of-the-Columbia-River-Treaty6.pdf>
- US Columbia River Treaty website: <http://www.crt2014-2024review.gov/>
- Further Resources: <http://blog.gov.bc.ca/columbiarivertreaty/further-resources/>

Hydroelectric Operations

- About BC Hydro's Generation System as a whole: https://www.bchydro.com/energy-in-bc/our_system/generation.html
- Videos about Columbia River Treaty and Hydro Operations in the Columbia Basin: <http://www.cbt.org/crt/resources.html> - click on "Multimedia" to see the videos
- Water and Power in the Columbia Basin: <http://www.cbt.org/powerandwater/>

Other

- Columbia Basin Trust: <http://www.cbt.org>