

SUMMARY

Columbia Basin Regional Advisory Committee Meeting #3 March 12, 2015, Castlegar, BC

INTRODUCTION

The Columbia Basin Regional Advisory Committee (CBRAC) held its third meeting (second time in person) on March 12, 2015 in Castlegar, B.C. Twenty-three 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), BC Hydro (BCH), Fortis BC and the Canadian Federal Government.

The day built on the momentum of CBRAC's successful inaugural meeting in September 2014, and focused on addressing a number of information needs identified by CBRAC members at that first meeting.

Members said they wanted to learn more about the Basin hydroelectric system operations – how the dams and reservoirs are operated individually, and how the system is operated as a whole. They wanted to understand the decision making process that goes into hydro operations planning, and how future energy demands in BC will be met. They expressed interest in discussing how to further engage the public in Columbia River Treaty and hydro operations related topics, and they wanted to be updated on Columbia River Treaty activities.

In response to these requests, BCH delivered two well received presentations on meeting BC's growing energy demand, and Basin hydroelectric operations; MEM provided an update on the Columbia River Treaty; and members gathered in small groups to discuss current community engagement on Basin hydro operations at sub-regional levels, followed by a lively whole-group discussion on potential opportunities. CBRAC also considered and agreed to a Code of Conduct for CBRAC members.

The day ended with the group feeling like they had increased knowledge and perspective in all topic areas, they had a better sense of their role and were eager to continue working together. There continues to be appreciation that citizens of the Basin, and representatives of First Nations, local, provincial, and federal governments, BC Hydro, FortisBC and Columbia Power Corporation 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 spirit of the discussion. Materials and presentations can be found [here](#) or by clicking on each title below:

[Code of Conduct](#)

[Arrow Lake Scenarios](#)

[BC Hydro Integrated Resource Plan](#)

[Hydro Operations Overview](#)

[Community Engagement on Columbia Basin Hydro Operations](#)

SESSIONS

CBRAC Recap

*Deb Kozak Mayor of Nelson, Chair of the Association of Kootenay Boundary Local Governments and the Columbia River Treaty Local Governments' Committee, and
Karen Hamling, Mayor of Naksup, Vice-Chair Columbia River Treaty Local Governments' Committee*

LGC is grateful for everyone coming together and continuing this legacy from the Columbia River Treaty public consultation. This group will set the stage far into the future.

CBRAC Purpose and Member Roles

Brooke McMurchy, Chair, Columbia Basin Regional Advisory Committee Steering Committee

CBRAC serves as a forum for dialogue between members and hydroelectric facility operators with the goals of:

1. Improving understanding of and information sharing with respect to the Columbia Basin hydroelectric operations, with the goal of better informed operations planning, and
2. Continued engagement of First Nations and communities throughout any future Columbia River Treaty negotiation process.

Members are expected to seek input and opinion from their communities and/or interested parties and to report at each meeting on relevant issues. They are also expected to report back to their communities or interested parties on Committee discussions and activities. How the members seek input and report back on committee activities will be left to individual members to undertake as they see fit.

Alternates for citizen members will not be permitted as citizen members were chosen based on their own merits. If a member plans to be absent for an extended period of time, the Steering Committee will assess each situation on a case by case basis. Representatives appointed by First Nations, local, provincial and federal governments, the Columbia Basin Trust and utilities are able to send alternates as they are representing an organization.

Who is getting CBRAC's advice? Who is listening?

- The CBRAC Steering Committee has committed to taking all advice and questions, and to follow up with the appropriate responsible parties and decision-makers. The Steering Committee will respond to each inquiry or recommendation.

The full list of CBRAC Duties and Member Responsibilities are in the Terms of Reference, which can be [accessed here](#).

What CBRAC has done so far

- Initial meeting September 2014
- Increased understanding of CBRAC's purpose
- Identified information needs
 - Impacts/benefits of hydro operations
 - Impacts/benefits of the Treaty
 - Environmental and economic issues
 - Hydro planning and operations
 - How to enable further public engagement
- Hosted a webinar on the [Range of Impacts and Benefits of the Columbia River Treaty on Basin Communities, the Region, and the Province](#), presented by George Penfold

What CBRAC sought to accomplish on March 12, 2015

- Further understand CBRAC's purpose
- Review and potentially approve CBRAC Code of Conduct
- Understand current status of the Columbia River Treaty Review
- Learn more about hydroelectric operations
- Learn about BC Hydro's plans for meeting long term electricity demand
- Discuss engagement practices around hydroelectric operations in the Basin
- Identify opportunities for CBRAC to help improve regional information sharing and understanding of hydro operations
- Identify next steps for CBRAC, the Secretariat, and the Steering Committee

Code of Conduct

Jody Lownds, CBRAC Member

[CBRAC Code of Conduct](#)

The purpose of the CBRAC Code of Conduct is to ensure that members of CBRAC have a clear understanding of proper practices, and appropriate individual and collective behavior for the Committee. It complements the CBRAC Terms of Reference, which sets out the purpose, structure, and expectations of CBRAC.

The CBRAC Code of Conduct was adapted from the Revelstoke 6 Water Use Plan Committee Code of Conduct. CBRAC members were sent a Draft CBRAC Code of Conduct in advance of the meeting, and were asked to share any recommended changes or concerns. Two suggestions were put forward to 1) add a reference to the Terms of Reference and 2) change the wording in the fourth bullet on page 1 to read "Recognition of existing legal and constitutional rights and responsibilities" instead of "Respect for existing...responsibilities". With these changes, the Code of Conduct was approved by all members.

Columbia River Treaty Update

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

Key points:

- The Province of BC, led by the Ministry of Energy and Mines Columbia River Treaty review team, conducted a 2 ½ year public and First Nations consultation process on whether to continue, terminate or make changes to the CRT. These discussions were supported by technical, social, economic and environmental studies.
- In March 2014, the provincial government released its [decision](#) to continue the Treaty and seek improvements within its existing framework. This decision is supported by the majority of public, local governments and First Nations.
- The Province is currently conducting a valuation of US benefits from the Treaty. The first phase of this work will be concluded by the fall of 2015. As it may be used during potential negotiations with the US the full report will not be made public; however, some information from the report will likely be made public at some point.

- As part of potential improvements to the Treaty, MEM's CRT team and BC Hydro have been exploring a more stable mid-elevation Arrow operation. BC Hydro has done some preliminary modeling to understand how it would affect operations upstream at Revelstoke and Mica dams and downstream in the US. This sensitivity analysis is ongoing and still needs to be reviewed internally before seeking comments. At the same time, Mountain Station Consultants have been retained to assess the environmental and social benefits and impacts across the Arrow reservoir from such an operation. Alan Thomson, Bill Green and Greg Utzig are undertaking this work. (See below for further information).
- The CRT team is continuing to engage stakeholders, local governments and First Nations on potential areas of improvement to the treaty. CBRAC is part of this engagement.
- In December 2013 the US Entity tabled their [recommendations](#) to the US State Department after their own CRT review process. Since then the US State Department has been conducting an internal federal interests review with various federal departments. They have given no indication as to when their review will be concluded and a recommendation to the Secretary of State will be made.
- The Canadian Federal Government will support BC's interests in any potential negotiations with the US.

Greg Utzig, Consultant with Mountain Station Consultants

[See presentation](#)

The Province and BC Hydro have been exploring the potential of a constant mid-elevation operations scenario for the Arrow Reservoir. Mountain Station Consultants have been retained to assess the environmental and social benefits and impacts across the Arrow Reservoir from such operations. The consultants' research is expected to be completed by the fall of 2015.

BC Hydro Integrated Resource Plan

Randy Reimann, Director of Resource Planning, BC Hydro

[See presentation](#)

Hydro Operations Overview

Jim Gaspard, Generation, Resource Coordinator, BC Hydro

[See presentation](#)

Community Engagement on Columbia Basin Hydro Operations

[See Working Draft of the Overview Paper](#)

A paper on current practices of community engagement on Columbia Basin hydro operations was distributed to CBRAC members before the meeting. After a brief review of the paper, attendees broke out into discussion groups based on geographic areas of interest. They discussed what engagement practices are working, what could be strengthened, what CBRAC needs to know more about in order to provide advice, how those information needs can be met, and how CBRAC members can link with the public. Each group then reported their responses to the questions. Participants recognized the need for more time for a deeper discussion of these topics, and to identify practical actions to strengthen engagement.

Key points from each discussion topics are listed below.

What engagement practices are working?

- BC Hydro's updates by reservoir
 - Face to face meetings/open house
 - Conference calls
 - Regular emails
 - Conference calls
- Newsletters
- Regular email contact (weekly)
- Water level forecast
- Notification of conference calls
- BC Hydro planning committee (comment is likely referring to the Water Use Planning process)
- Observer status for Rev 6 core committee meetings (helpful to have another person there – note taker/mentor)
- Fantastic facilitators – Lynne Betts and Dan Olsen
- Flood alert system – so valuable (2012)
- Social media group (specific group not clarified during discussion)
- Advertising initiatives
- Schools/library
- Friends of Kootenay Lake
- Columbia River Treaty Community Engagement (2012)
- Bringing people together from throughout the Basin
- Allowing opportunities for discussion on challenges/opportunities that communities face
- Understanding the impacts on the reservoirs and communities associated with them
- CBRAC - great to see Federal, Provincial and Local Governments, First Nations, utilities and residents come together
- CBRAC Secretariat
- CBRAC Face to Face meetings

How could public engagement be strengthened?

- Re-activate CRT e-newsletter – bring up important info that people should be aware of
- Offer presentation(s) to the public
 - Use regularly occurring webinars for sharing background information – one day crash course for people who want to be involved to bring them up to speed – hydro operations 101?
 - Offer the ability to view presentations at own leisure (post video online)
- Create a video on how the hydro system works that can be seen on the web and in schools

- To influence energy conservation, show connection between lights on/off and the change in reservoir levels, and the people and ecosystems around them
- Map each hydro facility
 - List owner, licensee, operator
 - List management objectives over various period during the year
 - What operating agreements are in place
 - Tell people how water levels are being managed for ecosystems
 - How does it affect me as a citizen
- “Follow the money” presentation/graphics
- US CRT Review status updates
- Signage for invasive species, water levels etc
- Add info into CBT’s “Report to Residents” (newsletter)
- Local government better managing floodplain development
- Increase awareness of hydro operations throughout the BC population overall
- Engagement processes scoped too narrowly in the past, but getting better
- Build overall knowledge – canvas high schools or elementary schools
- Realistic, feasible focused suggestions
- Educate citizens about what they can expect with respect to changing water levels
- Rapid water level changes are unpredictable (leads to mistrust)
- More support and more funding
- Erosion “creates lakefront properties”
- Online discussion
- Links to resources

Kootenay system

- Develop a water management process
- There aren’t any engagement processes for Kootenay lake
 - Water management planning process (not WUP)
- Include stakeholders of Kootenay Lake system – no engagement
- Engage schools – (highschool, colleges) in learning about dams
- Engagement re: Grohman Narrows
- Tell people that Kootenay Lake floods naturally
- Connect people around Kootenay Lake – informed plans and planning (Friends of Kootenay Lake)
- Greater support/funding for Friends of Kootenay Lake
- Framework to engage all stakeholders on Kootenay Boundary including Libby, Kootenay Lake
- Maintaining Kootenay Lake as a drinking water source
- International Subgroup – the subgroup that needs to deal with management of the Kootenay system and impacts of Libby Dam - start to interact w/ subgroup on the US side
 - Kootenay system is unique – impacted by US Dam

CBRAC

- Clarify purpose – are we giving advice, recommendations? To whom? (see CBRAC Purpose and Member Roles on page 2.)
- Identify a few specific issues that are common to all, as well as issues that are community-specific, then form working groups to investigate and develop recommendations
- Difference between advice and recommendations – who do they go to?
- Create a place online (discussion forum) to share questions and comments that arise in CBRAC meetings
- Local meetings at a regional level
- Subgroup for region specific issues – bring it back to main body

- Meet more frequently and for longer periods of time (get together over 1.5 – 2 days, as the agenda dictates)
- Share more information about other hydro operators (not just BC Hydro)

What does CBRAC need to know more about in order to provide advice?

- The whole hydro system (power, marketing, operations, planning)
- BC Hydro decision making
- Local issues/impacts
 - meet as subgroups of CBRAC on unique areas
- Archeology, fish and wildlife
 - system impacts on wildlife, invasive species, how/why?
- Power generation management decisions, marketing
 - more hydro ops experts
- Know more about the Canadian system - if they do this 'here' how does it affect 'there'
- Understand the US system
- Share whatever info came out of First Nations Government to Government consultation/relationship building during the CRT Review (2012). Whatever is publically available.
- How we can educate residents better around what BC Hydro is already doing (e.g. fish and wildlife compensation programs) (Suggestion: map each facility as suggested in "what can be strengthened")
- Simple list of issues e.g. Sturgeon – what's being done
 - e.g. "this month's sturgeon is important" - quick and dirty, mid level, all the details (different levels of info available)
- Why were these sites selected? (for dams??)
- Invasive species
- Shortlist of hydro hot topics that BC Hydro can try to address
- Further understand Pend d'Oreille River system (Seven Mile dam)
- Columbia Power Corporation and Waneta dam
- Employment (potential) opportunities of hydro projects
- Environmental impacts of peaking operation of Revelstoke Dam
- Access (or lack of) to the reservoirs by boat
- Hear other perspectives
- What environmental mitigation work and archaeological studies are being done?
- More info about hydro operations from other operators – not just BC Hydro
- Climate Change projections and what that means for Treaty negotiations and hydro operations
- What COULD be done without Treaty obligations?
- Environmental impacts of flooding Kinbasket
- Water Use Plan and Non-Treaty Storage Agreement planning and operation process

How can those information needs be met?

- Identify key pieces of advice/recommendations at the end of each meeting (Secretariat)
- Compile a list of websites/resources
- Continue delivering presentations and webinars to CBRAC

How can CBRAC link with the public?

- Some CBRAC members belong to organizations - they can go back to and report what happens in CBRAC to their membership
- Organize local public meetings lead by CBRAC members, so people in different reservoirs can talk about their concerns and/or local issues with CBRAC (Could help provide a Basin-wide scope)

- Finding a way through existing websites for the public to look at some of the presentations
 - Public currently has access to CBRAC meeting materials – perhaps we can find a way to spread the word that they exist
- Online discussion forum
 - The public can be invited to comment on the CBRAC webpage.
 - Summary of online input compiled for CBRAC or Steering Committee – a summary of what has been posted, synthesized for a focused discussion around focused solutions to issues
 - Keep record of online issues raised – be nice to have a written record of online comments – these were the issues – this was what was said
- Keep things simple – people can get overloaded by email and other communication systems
 - Try not to inundate with info b/c it becomes overwhelming
 - Focus on 2 or 3 things a particular group may be interested in. E.g. if you have a group (Rod and Gun Club, or Friends of Kootenay Lake etc) show up and give them 2 things CBRAC is working on or 2 pieces of info
- Create 1 pager on CBRAC that members/the public can forward to others
- Free workshops/lunches for the public (this happened at Selkirk college and was a success)

Other

- Integrated Resource Plan process is not in the engagement doc
- Heritage sites
 - Increase awareness of sites/impacted heritage sites
 - Recreational use (ATV) on heritage sites
 - Erosion – protect heritage sites
- What are the objectives of engagement?

NEXT STEPS

- Explore potential next presentations for CBRAC:
 - US system operations (Jim Gaspard)
 - More time on each Canadian Basin reservoir
 - International Joint Commission Order
 - Power markets and the pricing of power
- Explore Subgroup for Kootenay Lake/Kootenay Boundary system
- Explore Kootenay Lake water management planning process
- Explore mapping facilities in the Basin
- Make “CRT – A Primer” available to CBRAC
- Distribute Resource list , updated Acronym List and CBRAC Contact List
- Set up online engagement options
 - CBRAC - Sharepoint site
 - General Public - comment function on the CRT website. Develop a process for responding to comments and sharing answers
- Finalize CBRAC Schedule for 2015
- Set next meeting and webinar dates

CLOSING COMMENTS FROM THE ROOM

“Presentations were good – at the right level.” (sentiment voiced by several members)

“Presentations were great – very informative and great value.” (sentiment voiced by several members)

“Greatest value is talking with all of you.” (sentiment voiced by several members)

“Nice chemistry to the group.”

“Really enjoyed the meeting and find it very meaningful. There is always an opportunity to learn more.”

“Meetings keep getting better and better.”

“[Facilitator] Lynne Betts did a great job getting the maximum out of the group.”

“Thrilled that we discussed how to improve public engagement. I am optimistic about getting something out of this process.”

“With information you see over and over – input from all different organizations, you don’t realize how many people have given themselves to managing the system.”

“Presentations were all excellent. We’re just getting started. The small discussion at the end of this meeting was a good start to move forward.”

“Thrilled that there are so many people who are passionate about this and want to become more engaged with public engagement.”

“I look forward to learning what the Americans are going to ask of us (with regards to the Columbia River Treaty.)”

“It is good to be reminded that we are at the beginning of this group. It is huge to get to know these faces - knowing people who live in certain areas makes it real.”

Kathy Eichenberger (MEM): “Thank you for all attending and participating. This is an amazing group of people.”

Heather Matthews (BCH): “Sessions are very interesting. We always hear something we haven’t heard before.”

Jim Gaspard (BCH): “When we’re planning operations we are always looking to balance out the social and environmental impacts. It is good to hear these conversations.”

Deb Kozak (LGC): “Thankful everyone is here together.”

Karen Hamling (LGC): “Thanks to everyone for showing up and putting all the effort in. I’m really happy I belong to this group.”

Ken Warren (Government of Canada): “This is a great opportunity to meet everyone, and hear and listen to what CBRAC has to say. Your messages, your voices will be taken to the Americans.”

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/>
- Reservoir level information
 - BC Hydro Previous Reservoir Elevations - http://www.bchydro.com/energy-in-bc/our_system/transmission_reservoir_data/previous_reservoir_elevations.html
 - Columbia Hydrometeorologic Data - https://www.bchydro.com/energy-in-bc/our_system/transmission_reservoir_data/hydrometric_data/columbia.html

Other

- Columbia River Treaty Local Governments' Committee: <http://akblg.ca/content/columbia-river-treaty>
- Columbia Basin Trust: <http://www.cbt.org>
- BC Hydro Integrated Resource Plan Mailing List: www.bchydro.com/irp (click "Join the IRP mailing list" in bottom right corner)
- List of Acronyms: <http://blog.gov.bc.ca/columbiarivertreaty/files/2014/05/2015-07-21-Columbia-Basin-hydro-operations-acronyms.pdf>