

SUMMARY

Columbia Basin Regional Advisory Committee

Meeting #7

December 4th - 5th, 2017 – Prestige Rocky Mountain Resort, Cranbrook, BC

INTRODUCTION

The Columbia Basin Regional Advisory Committee (CBRAC) held its 7th meeting on December 4th and 5th, 2017 in Cranbrook, BC. 22 members attended, along with the Minister of Children and Family Development by phone, and representatives from the Columbia River Treaty Local Governments' Committee, BC Hydro, Fortis BC, Columbia Basin Trust and Global Affairs Canada.

Meeting presentations, agenda and list of attendees can be found on the [Columbia Basin Regional Advisory Committee website](#).

The meeting opened by acknowledging the traditional territory of the three Indigenous Nations in the Canadian Columbia Basin: the Ktunaxa, Okanagan (Syilx), and Secwepemc Nations. Minister Katrine Conroy provided opening remarks and support for the work at hand. Minister Conroy is Minister of Children and Family Development and responsible for the Columbia River Treaty, Columbia Basin Trust and the Columbia Power Corporation.

Global Affairs Canada and the Province of BC gave an update on Columbia River Treaty negotiations status, sharing that initial conversations between Canada and the US are expected to commence early in 2018, though no date has been set.

CBRAC provided feedback on preliminary goals and objectives meant to guide what an ecosystem-based function of the Treaty could look like. These goals and objectives were developed by a technical committee consisting of BC and federal agencies, Indigenous Nations and technical consultants. CBRAC also provided feedback on a communication/education document meant to summarize impacts to Columbia Basin ecosystems from hydro operations, and initiatives underway to address those impacts.

BC Hydro shared an update on Water Use Plan monitoring and physical works, and recent Columbia Basin hydro operations. These two presentations were highlights of the meeting.

The meeting closed in its traditional fashion with a round of comments from participants. CBRAC members shared that the meeting was successful, they want to raise the profile of this committee in the public eye, and that they see value in the committee with respect to Treaty negotiations.

The following more detailed summary is based on notes taken 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.



DAY ONE - December 4th, 2017

Review of CBRAC Priorities

The table below lists CBRAC's priority topics, as voted on by CBRAC at the October 2016 meeting, and notes how each topic has been addressed to date. CBRAC was asked to think about how else these topics can be addressed within CBRAC, or whether they consider them 'complete'. A survey to capture those thoughts will be sent out in January.

Priority Topic		How it has been addressed through CBRAC as of December 2017
1	Status of Columbia River Treaty	Ongoing updates at each meeting Update conference call in September 2017
2	Indigenous Nations perspectives and approach regarding the Columbia River Treaty	Indigenous Nations panel at the May 2016 meeting in Cranbrook Ongoing participation at CBRAC meetings from Columbia Basin Indigenous Nations CBRAC members
3	Climate Change projections and what this means for the Columbia River Treaty and Columbia Basin hydro operations	Presentation on Climate Change projections at June 2017 meeting in Nelson
4	Water Use Plans	Water Use Plan webinar February 2016 Update on Water Use Plan monitoring and physical works at this meeting – December 2017 in Cranbrook
5	Alternative renewable energy sources	Briefly addressed during presentation by BC Hydro on the Integrated Resource Plan at the March 2015 meeting
6	1-page summary of key information for each Columbia Basin reservoir	Summary documents are in development – first draft presented to CBRAC for feedback in June 2017; second draft planned to be sent to CBRAC before Spring 2018
7	Salmon reintroduction to the Columbia River	Have not directly addressed this at CBRAC
8	Comprehensive list of environmental issues related to management of reservoirs and dams	Preliminary draft document presented to CBRAC at this meeting – December 2017 in Cranbrook

Objectives for this meeting

1. Address and review CBRAC priorities as voted on at the October 2016 meeting
2. Understand the current state of potential Columbia River Treaty negotiations with the US
3. Receive an update from the Local Governments' Committee
4. Receive an update from BC Hydro on Columbia Basin hydro operations
5. Receive an update on Columbia Basin Water Use Plan monitoring and physical work
6. Understand the environmental impacts that result from Columbia River Treaty hydro operations, and what initiatives have been/are being done to address them
7. Provide input on preliminary Ecosystem-based Function goals and objectives

Ecosystem Impacts from Hydro Operations in the Columbia Basin: Backgrounder document

Cindy Pearce, Mountain Labyrinths Inc.

[Presentation available on the CBRAC website](#)

Highlights

Goals of the Ecosystem Management Backgrounder:

- Focus on information needed over next 2-5 years during CRT negotiations
- Scope is meant to encompass the whole Basin hydro system
- Aim to keep it uncomplicated
- Include recent reports and First Nations knowledge
- Bite sized chunks of information/ range of formats:
 - a. Stand-alone summary – intended for the public
 - b. Main document (20 pages, plain language with web links to more info – intended for more interested public)
 - c. Summary of ecosystem activities by geography
 - d. Detailed ecosystem mitigation activities

Discussion Topics

- Timeline for completion of this backgrounder
- Add objectives/what is actually being delivered to the tables in the appendix
- Content versus intent, and use for treaty negotiations needs to be clarified
- Suggestion to create one online platform where all information is easily accessible and easy to share via email and social media.

Breakout Session: Feedback on Ecosystem Impacts Backgrounder document

Summary of Feedback

- The intended audience for this information is partly the general public and partly interested groups including local governments and water/recreation users
- The summary needs to indicate how the Columbia River Treaty impacts the audience
- Language needs to be simple and visuals should be used to engage the audience – keep it simple
- This should have an online presence to reach people effectively (website, social media, app etc)
- Storytelling to make a more personal connection to issues / topics in document will help engage public
- Include more detail on how climate change will impact Columbia Basin ecosystems and how loss of salmon impacts ecosystems

- Add Local government roles, invasive species, Water Sustainability Act and more definitions
- Include Indigenous background (a timeframe that goes beyond the CRT)

Water Use Plan Monitoring and Physical Work

Margo Sadler, BC Hydro

[Presentation available on the CBRAC website](#)

Highlights

Regional Water Use Plan (WUP) overview

1. Followed Water Use Plan Guidelines
2. Three major objectives:
 - a. Culture and heritage
 - b. Aquatic resources
 - c. Wildlife and vegetation
3. A history of Columbia and Duncan WUPs up to now was reviewed in presentation

Selection of physical works and monitoring studies to illustrate scope, issues and learning

- Arrow wildlife physical works
 - Wetland restoration
- Kinbasket revegetation physical works
 - Native planting with very little success
 - Assessment of revegetation projects to discover what has worked best in progress (CLBMON-35)
 - Debris removal and wetland restoration implemented as well
- Lower Columbia River mountain whitefish monitoring studies
 - Approximately 8 fish studies conducted
- Lower Duncan River Kokanee monitoring

Discussion Topics

- Water Use Plans Review – timing and what does it look like?
- How will past results inform future plan?
- How Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program works/ projects align with WUPs
- History of WUP from when they started – https://www.bchydro.com/about/sustainability/conservation/water_use_planning.html
- Can the terms of reference be broadened given the CRT is under review?
- How could we change operations to maximize a particular value?
- What are the critical ecosystem pieces that we need to tackle in the Basin?
- What decision criteria guide operations at Libby Dam and the Kootenay River?

Columbia River Treaty Update

Greg Lemermeyer and Stephen Gluck, Global Affairs Canada

Kathy Eichenberger, BC Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources

- Canada now has a mandate to negotiate the Columbia River Treaty (CRT). This information has been shared with the Government of BC, Columbia Basin Indigenous Nations and the US Department of State.
- Global Affairs Canada is the federal agency responsible for international negotiations, including the CRT
- Canada's lead negotiator for the CRT is Sylvain Fabi, Executive Director of the U.S. Transboundary Affairs Division at Global Affairs Canada
- The US lead negotiator is Jill Smail with the U.S. Department of State
- Though no dates have been set, it is expected that there will be meetings early in the New Year to discuss protocols and processes
- Global Affairs Canada continues to engage with the Province of BC and Columbia Basin Indigenous Nations, and is committed to ensuring the interests of Canada, British Columbia and Indigenous Nations are addressed during negotiations. This includes the interests of the Canadian Columbia Basin communities affected by CRT hydroelectric operations.
- BC Premier John Horgan has been briefed on the Treaty, along with Ministers Katrine Conroy (Minister of Children and Family Development, the CRT, Columbia Basin Trust and Columbia Power Corporation) and Michelle Mungall (Minister of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources). They all support the BC Decision.
- Premier Horgan has a particular interest in the Treaty. Both Ministers are from the Columbia Basin.
- Ministry Katrine Conroy knows the Treaty well, and was the opposition critic during the previous government.

Columbia River Local Governments' Committee Update

Deb Kozak, Chair, Local Governments' Committee

- The committee has been together since around 2011. This committee is made up of appointees from regional districts. They consult with residents about Basin concerns and take them forward to higher level government.
- For the first few years they collected data to bring to the province about recommendations on the CRT. They continue to meet annually to review their purpose and to meet with federal Ministers, cross-border stakeholders, Basin residents and others.
- In early Sept 2017 they met with Global Affairs Canada to discuss the long-term impacts of the CRT.
- Draft ecosystem based goals have been reviewed.
- Three major ecosystem issues included in the LGC recommendations are:
 1. Include refinement and operations with a broad range of interest in US and Canada in the Basin.
 2. A water management process is needed for the Kootenay River system.
 3. Full implementation of the Columbia and Duncan water use plans.
- Met with Minister Conroy this year and she is a very willing participant in the work the LGC is doing.
- Met with the new BC Water Comptroller. He was presented with the LGC recommendations as well, stressing a need for a water use plan for Kootenay River system and full implementation of the Columbia and Duncan water use plans.
- Tim Link with the University of Idaho and his students met with Deb Kozak in Nelson at a trans-boundary meeting with young people to talk about their hopes and dreams for the future. There was good interest in this.
- This Spring the committee will be meeting again to look at priorities.

BC Hydro Operations Update

Jeremy Benson, Manager, Planning and Licensing, Generation Resource Management at BC Hydro
[Presentation available on the CBRAC website](#)

Highlights

- The biggest driver of operations is water.
- The CRT year starts in August. Historical data is used to help make predictions.
- In 2017 record-setting precipitation, and then lack of precipitation happened.
- In the Kootenay, there were multiple months that broke precipitation or lack of precipitation records.
- Forest fires in 2017 season caused issues for many BC Hydro operations.
- To stay informed on BC Hydro operations, call the toll-free Reservoir Information Line – 1 877 924 2444 or email Dayle Hopp to be added to operations update conference calls – dayle.hopp@bchydro.com

Discussion Topics

- Are the record setting changes in precipitation in 2017 comparable to historical data?
- Storage in US reservoirs compared to Canadian Basin reservoirs
- US refills are done very differently. Libby Dam plans are discussed with Canada and there is an opportunity for feedback, but operations are not jointly coordinated like they are for the three BC Treaty dams.

Ecosystem-Based Function Goals and Objectives

Cindy Pearce, Mountain Labyrinths Consultants
[Presentation available on the CBRAC website](#)

Highlights

1. Ecosystem based function and the CRT
 - a. Ecosystem values were raised as a priority in BC CRT review.
 - b. CRT Local Governments' Committee also flagged this as a priority
 - c. [US Regional Recommendations](#) also flagged ecosystem values
2. 2012-2013: CRT Review process
3. 2015: CRT technical workshop on ecosystem based functions (EbF)
4. 2017: Federal and provincial government agencies, First Nations, BC Hydro and the Columbia Basin Ecosystem Collaborative all took part in workshops on ecosystem function's importance.

Discussion Topics

- Clarifying goals and objectives vs. performance measures
- The focus in on ecosystem values only; how will other values be considered e.g. social and cultural values?

Breakout Session: Feedback on Ecosystem-Based Function Goals and Objectives

Summary of Feedback

- Overall goals are good
- Interests that were identified as missing include: invasive species, habitat corridors/connectivity, salmon restoration, impacts of restoring salmon on other environmental interests, cumulative effects on ecosystems, grassland/rangeland impacts including ungulate winter range, assess/stabilize spawning channels in alluvial fans in drawdown zones, and fish passage.
- Support for preparing objectives for each reservoir.
- Explore the possibility of decommissioning older dams/reservoirs and removing dykes/re-establishing original

channels.

- Increase knowledge about the reservoirs and hydro system by:
 - hosting dinners/gatherings for CBRAC focused on each reservoir
 - transboundary tours/talks,
 - books about the Basin being more readily available and
 - sharing Kootenay Lake Partnership foreshore mapping resource

Additional Items Raised

- It would be helpful to create a visual model to better understand how CBRAC fits into the larger picture of CRT Negotiations
- Can CBRAC receive more in-depth information on the entire operation of the Columbia River below the US border?
- BC Hydro addresses many WUP studies in terms of \$ spent. Need to add the area compensated (ex. How much habitat created)
- Would be good to include a presentation about the Creston Floodplain Management Plan at a subsequent meeting
- What is next with the [Mid-Arrow study](#)?
- Can we hear more from the BC Water Comptroller?
- Concerns about the extended timeframe for WUP reviews – reminder that WUPs were initiated to address concerns being raised through legal processes about the environmental impacts of hydro operations.

Next Steps

1. Explore the possibility of a CRT Update conference call for CBRAC before the next face to face meeting
2. Set Spring face to face CBRAC meeting (strong support to hold it in the Duncan Dam region)
3. Incorporate CBRAC feedback in to Ecosystem Backgrounder – determine what form the document/information will take
4. Share CBRAC feedback on the Ecosystem-based Function goals and objectives with the technical committee for further development of this work
5. Continue working on the Reservoir Summary document/information from June's meeting – share next draft with CBRAC before next meeting
6. Explore promoting CBRAC to the Basin more – raise the committee's profile

Closing Comments

- There is a lot of value in learning and action items that come out of these meetings
- Valuable to learn more about what CBRAC is doing and what its interests are – guest speaker comment
- Wants to know if level of information was enough in presentations, was it technical enough / too much – BC Hydro
- Cindy presentation helped show the ground the group is making – she has done a lot of useful and informative work
- Great to have young people in the room
- BC Hydro presentation was great – new format was really helpful – good to enhance BC Hydro operation understanding
- Discussion groups were very productive
- Learn something new at each meeting
- The CBRAC group has a broad perspective of knowledge and it should remain this way – great learning and networking opportunity – the broad geographical diversity is important as well
- Would be good to see prospective dates for the ongoing priorities – what is the timeline for them all?
- What we are doing here is a monumental opportunity to accomplish something we did not when the Treaty was first implemented!

- Suggest reading “Continental Water Boy” and “Land Grab”, both books by Donald Waterfield written in mid 60’s – a better understanding of what really happened in the Basin
- More dam tours in the future
- We are all experts in our local areas but we have so much to learn about all the different areas in the Basin – which is why it is great to have the meetings spread out
- Would be great to have a presentation on the Kootenay Lake Partnership at the next meeting
- It would be nice to meet in smaller communities to get the local residents excited and to connect more with them
- We should communicate to the community that these meetings are happening