

EXCERPT FROM

SUMMARY REPORT: COLUMBIA RIVER TREATY REVIEW

NOVEMBER 2012 COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS

JAFFRAY FEEDBACK

Introduction

The information contained in this excerpt¹ is the direct feedback received by the Columbia River Treaty Review Team from attendees at the November 2012 Columbia River Treaty Review community consultation sessions.

Background

The Columbia River Treaty Review provided an opportunity to increase the Province's understanding of Basin residents' interests and values. The Province wants to ensure the implications of Treaty options on those interests are communicated to, and well understood by, Basin residents, and that those residents have full opportunity to provide input to help inform Provincial recommendations on the Treaty.

Jaffray Community Session

The session in the Jaffray was attended by 24 people. There were two key themes that emerged from discussions during the main presentations: the lack of a Water Use Plan for the Koochanusa Reservoir; and a perceived lack of compensation for impacts in the local area compared to other reservoirs in the Columbia Basin. Attendees noted that with no Water Use Plan, Koochanusa Reservoir communities on the Canadian side of the border have little ability to plan

¹ The full Summary Report for the November 2012 Community Consultation can be found at <http://engage.gov.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/6/2012/07/Treaty-Review-November-2012-Public-Consultation-Summary-Report1.pdf>

and prioritise development, recreational opportunities, or environmental restoration activities. In future Treaty decisions it was recommended that parameters be put in place to develop a Water Use Plan.

Residents in Jaffray noted that although the impacts of Libby Dam extend into British Columbia, there is not the same level of compensation of impacts as compared with other dams and reservoirs in the Canadian portion of the Columbia Basin. For example, the Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program funds relatively few restoration projects near Koochanusa Reservoir because its mandate is connected with the impacts arising from the construction of BC Hydro dams.

Although the *Review of the Range of Impacts and Benefits* report was useful, some stated that quoting the number of people displaced, or hectares of farmland flooded, did not reflect the personal hardship that has been felt by many in this valley, nor has there been adequate compensation for the impacts that families experienced. Loss of livelihoods, separations, suicide, and alcoholism were some of the hardships voiced by some attendees.

Residents noted that while there are some social and economic development funds available to compensate for impacts, they are typically invested elsewhere in the Columbia Basin rather than in the Koochanusa Reservoir area where actual Treaty-related impacts occurred. One suggested that compensation as a result of the Columbia River Treaty has been a “goldmine” for some communities outside the immediately impacted areas (e.g. one of the Columbia Basin Trust’s initiatives directs more funding towards Cranbrook because its formula is based on population.)

Residents recommended that those people who were directly impacted by the creation of the reservoir should be appropriately compensated.

There were two break-out sessions after the presentations, where participants provided the following feedback:

- Optimal water levels for recreation are reservoir elevations between 2,445 ft. and 2,455 ft (4-14 ft below full pool), although this is less important now since the construction of the new boat ramp that allows access to 2,407 ft. Easy access to the Koochanusa Reservoir from the river was also noted.

- Agricultural productivity, in particular cattle grazing, would be helped if the water level was at 2,449 ft by May 1.
- Low water levels encourage ATV use and create noise and dust problems, and negatively impact aesthetics. When water levels are drawdown to 2,410 ft, there can be hundreds of ATVs on the flats.
- Need to have a designated motorized use area, better education, and better enforcement, although the latter has improved in recent years.
- Need to maximize vegetative landscape and avoid non-productive or bare land. When water levels are in the “sweet spot” there is vegetation for grazing, wildlife forage and nesting habitat. Nesting birds are adversely affected by early increases in water levels.
- The priorities for water levels should be flood control for downstream communities; ecosystem health (relatively stable levels for vegetation that are consistent over time); recreation; and agriculture.

In summary, the priorities for area residents at the session were:

- Stable water levels that will improve agriculture and fish and wildlife habitat.
- Better compensation for local impacted residents.
- More equitable ongoing funding overall compared to other reservoirs to enhance fish and wildlife values, and economic development.
- Water Use Plan for Koochanusa Reservoir.
- Improved economic development opportunities requiring involvement from local government.
- Greater compensation and support to sustain the agricultural sector; if a similar level of support went to agriculture, as has gone to fish and wildlife, then the local agricultural sector would be far more robust.