

MEETING SUMMARY

Columbia Basin Regional Advisory Committee Meeting

Dec. 14, 2020, 12pm – 1:30pm Pacific Time via Zoom

The Columbia Basin Regional Advisory Committee met on Dec. 14, 2020 by webinar to receive updates and ask questions about Canada-U.S. Treaty negotiations, Columbia River Treaty Local Governments Committee activities and BC Hydro operations. Members also shared their reflections on the past year's virtual meetings, commenting on what worked and what could be improved.

Welcome/CBRAC member updates

Brooke McMurchy, B.C. Columbia River Treaty Team

- The webinar began with an acknowledgement of the traditional Indigenous territories that all participants, spread throughout the Canadian Columbia Basin and Victoria, were joining the webinar from.
- Brooke introduced new members Caitlin Hinton (Revelstoke) and Joseph Hughes (Regional District of Central Kootenay.)
- Caitlin spoke about growing up in Golden, B.C., and moving to Revelstoke, as well as her work at the Columbia Basin Trust, including her role organizing the 2019 Columbia Basin Transboundary Conference. She is looking forward to learning more about the Treaty and building relationships as part of CBRAC.
- Joseph mentioned he is on his third term on the Village of Nakusp council and his first on the Regional District of Central Kootenay. He is passionate about the Columbia River and is looking forward to his CBRAC role.
- Brooke next shared the news that, after six years, one of CBRAC's original members, Pam Turyk, will be stepping down. Brooke acknowledged Pam's contributions and noted that the Province will be seeking a new CBRAC member for the Jaffray/Baynes Lake area in the new year.
- Pam expressed her thanks to CBRAC members for their work and is looking forward to attending community engagement sessions in future.
- Stan Doehle, Vice Chair for the Columbia River Treaty Local Governments Committee and Area B Director with the Regional District of East Kootenay, thanked Pam for her years of service, and her work related to Koocanusa Reservoir and other issues.

Columbia River Treaty Update

Sylvain Fabi, Canada's Chief Negotiator for the Columbia River Treaty, Global Affairs Canada

Kathy Eichenberger, Executive Director, B.C. Columbia River Treaty Team

- Sylvain wished everyone the best for the holiday season and announced his new role as Consul General of Canada in Denver. He confirmed that he will remain Canada's Chief Negotiator for the Treaty.
- Regarding the recent U.S. election, Sylvain said it is too soon to know whether the change in administration will affect the U.S.'s approach to Treaty negotiations.
- The Canadian negotiating team is awaiting word from their American counterparts regarding when the next round of negotiations will take place, as well as a response to the proposal Canada tabled at the 10th round of negotiations in June 2020.
- The Canadian proposal, developed collaboratively by Canada, B.C. and Columbia Basin Indigenous Nations, outlined a framework for a modernized Treaty, and covered the range of issues discussed since negotiations began, such as flood-risk management, power generation, ecosystem function, Libby dam coordination and increased flexibility for Canadian operations.
- Given the change in U.S. administration and other U.S. priorities such as COVID-19 response, the delayed response is not unexpected; however, Canadian negotiators are hopeful that the talks will resume soon.
- Sylvain addressed the resolution recently tabled by three members of Congress in the U.S. House of Representatives, calling for termination of the Treaty, and confirmed that no termination notice has been issued to date.
- Sylvain expressed that much work needs to be done to bring both sides of the negotiating table together and that it is normal for the two countries to be far apart at this point in negotiations. While Canada wants a Treaty that addresses Canada's priorities and values, it will also have to address U.S. concerns.
- The Canadian negotiating team is ready for the next round of negotiations whenever the U.S. is ready.

- Kathy spoke next about work underway to strengthen Canadian negotiating positions and make improvements in the Basin:
- **Exploring Treaty Governance Options**
 - The Negotiation Advisory Team, which includes representatives from Canada, B.C. and the Ktunaxa, Secwepemc and *Syilx* Okanagan Nations and provides advice and information to Canada's negotiating team, has directed that a consultant be hired to look at potential Canadian domestic Treaty governance

models. The process is expected to start in January 2021 and will take time. More information will be provided as this process develops.

- **Modelling Columbia River Management Scenarios**
 - Basin Indigenous Nations continue to lead the ecosystem function work presented at the [September 2020 CBRAC meeting](#). They are developing and refining performance measures for ecosystems and for Indigenous cultural values. These performance measures will be used to model potential Treaty operation scenarios to see how river management could meet ecosystem and other objectives.
 - Performance measures for social and economic objectives will also be included in the modelling work. The Local Governments Committee will be leading this process.
- Kathy also spoke about the Province's efforts to address Treaty-related community interests in the Basin, highlighting some of the projects underway:
 - **Enhancing support for Basin agriculture** – The B.C. Treaty Team is researching programs and initiatives currently available to support Basin agriculture and will seek feedback on where there are gaps in addressing agricultural interests and concerns.
 - **Columbia River Treaty Heritage project** – Work continues on this proposed touring route that aims to acknowledge what was lost as a result of the Treaty dams.
 - **Broadband/Connectivity** – Bringing high-speed internet to as many communities as possible is a BC Government priority. The B.C. Treaty Team is researching how it can support these efforts in the Columbia Basin.
 - **Creston Valley Dyke Management** – The B.C. Treaty Team is working with diking authorities in Creston Valley to address dike maintenance and construction challenges.
 - **Kinbasket Recreational Opportunities** – The B.C. Treaty Team is in contact with the Golden Community Coop to explore opportunities for enhancing recreation on Kinbasket Reservoir.
 - **Nakusp breakwater repair project** – Through funding and coordination efforts, The B.C. Treaty Team supported Phase 1 of the Village of Nakusp's project to repair their marina and breakwater.
 - **Aerial reservoir mapping** – The B.C. Treaty Team is working with B.C. Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation and BC Hydro to develop geospatial mapping products of Kinbasket and Arrow Lakes Reservoir, which will support the Indigenous Nations-led efforts to enhance Columbia Basin ecosystems.

Columbia River Treaty Local Governments Committee Update

Linda Worley, Chair, Local Governments Committee, and Cindy Pearce, Executive Director

- Linda said she was very encouraged that the Honourable Katrine Conroy has returned to her role as B.C. Minister Responsible for the Columbia River Treaty, and that Sylvain Fabi remains Chief Negotiator for the Treaty.
- In January 2021, the Local Governments Committee (LGC) will send its updated recommendations for a modernized Treaty to the five governments on the Canadian negotiating team: Canada, B.C. and the and the Ktunaxa, Secwepemc and *Syilx* Okanagan Nations. These recommendations will also be published on the [LGC website](#).
- The LGC looks forward to participating in discussions about potential governance options for a modernized Treaty as well as leading the integration of socioeconomic objectives into the river management modelling, which is informing Canadian Treaty negotiating discussions. She thanked the Province for this opportunity.
- Other priorities include: continuing to support Basin communities as they work with the B.C. CRT Team and others to address impacts and issues related to the Treaty; and, providing background information to the Province to support updating the 2012 George Penfold report - [A Review of the Range of Impacts and Benefits of the Columbia River Treaty on Basin Communities, the Region and the Province](#).

- Cindy Pearce further explained the LGC's role in the river management modelling efforts. The LGC will lead development of performance measures to evaluate how well alternative dam operating scenarios meet Basin socioeconomic interests.
- Examples of potential socio-economic interests include: ideal reservoir levels for safe boating access, transporting log booms and ferry access, as well as minimizing flooding, health impacts from dust storms and erosion of infrastructure and private property.
- The LGC wants to work with CBRAC to develop these performance measures. The process is in its early stages and more information will be shared in the new year.
- She encouraged CBRAC members to email her if they have any questions.

BC Hydro Operations Update

Darren Sherbot, Manager, System Optimization, BC Hydro

[View presentation](#)

- Darren shared a summary of BC Hydro Columbia Basin operations from summer to December 2020 and forecasts through to September 2021.
- There were average inflows in 2020 due to above average snow pack and precipitation.

- COVID-19 impacted energy demand throughout the year. There was an increase in residential use and a reduction in commercial and industrial energy use.
- BC Hydro released spills at Revelstoke, Williston and Mica dams.
- Spills are the result of inflows being greater than reservoir storage, load (energy demand) and export capability.
- There was a consistent spill at Revelstoke dam across July and August.
- Kinbasket Reservoir was surcharged in August; a small spill was released that same month.
- Generally, snow pack and inflows to date are slightly above average for this time of year, though it is still early in the season and things could change.
- See the presentation for more detail.

2020 Reflections

Brooke McMurchy, B.C. Columbia River Treaty Team

- Brooke invited feedback from CBRAC on the past year's virtual meetings – what worked and what could be done differently.
- She mentioned the B.C. Treaty Team's goals have been to:
 - keep CBRAC connected throughout the pandemic;
 - ensure the committee stays updated on Treaty negotiations, efforts supporting the Treaty modernization process, and Columbia hydro operations; and,
 - provide space for CBRAC to ask questions and share input.
- Several attendees said they liked the Zoom format and the ability to meet virtually.
- Brooke encouraged meeting attendees to share their thoughts via the online survey that was circulated.
- Brooke closed by thanking everyone for their comments and for their patience and dedication throughout such a challenging year.