



**Kettle River Watershed Advisory Council
Meeting Minutes**

**February 25, 2025
9:30 am to 12:00 pm**

**Midway Social Centre
(and via Teams)**

Quorum was maintained throughout the meeting

KRWAC Voting Members Present:

Barb Stewart	Boundary Habitat Stewards (Chair)
Bill Sperling	BC Timber Sales
Ciel Sander	Trails to the Boundary Society (Vice Chair)
Cody Zorn	Grand Forks ATV Club (online)
Frank Van Oyen	Kettle River Stockman's Association
Gord Rowland	Operations Manager, Big White Utilities and Ski resort (online)
LeeAnne Wolf	Christina Lake Stewardship (online)
Linda Caron	Mining representative
Owen Broad	Agriculture representative
Peter Flett	Nk'Mip/Osoyoos Indian Band & West Boundary Community Forest (online)
Ray Hanson	Boundary Forest Watershed Stewardship Society (online)
Taylor Frehr-Smith	Interfor (online)
Vicki Gee	Boundary Community Ventures Association (online)

KRWAC Non-Voting Members, RDKB Staff and Guests Present:

Amanda Turner	Ministry of Water, Lands, Resource Stewardship (WLRS), Fisheries (online)
Debbie Bhattacharya	BC Timber Sales
Dylan Kelly	Okanagan Kootenay Well Drilling
Gerry Shaw	Greenwood Director
Grace McGregor	Area C, Christina Lake Director (online)
Julia Podealuk	Ministry of Forests (MOF) (Online)
Kristina Anderson	RDKB, Watershed Planner
Linda Kay Wiese	Area D, Rural Grand Forks Director (online)
Lindsay Hainstock	Ministry of Agric. & Food, Regional Agrologist & Grape Specialist (online)
Miranda Galda	RDKB, Recording Secretary
Natasha Neumann	MOF, Regional Hydrologist (online)
Sharen Gibbs	Area E, West Boundary Director
Stefany Rasmussen	MOF (Range) Range Agrologist
Steve Arndt	WLRS, Aquatic Ecosystem Biologist

1. Welcome and Introductions

K. Anderson called the meeting to order at 9:30 am, welcoming those in attendance. Followed by a round of introductions.

2. Approval of agenda for February 25, 2025

Agenda approved as presented.

3. Approval of Minutes from September 24th, 2024

Minutes approved as presented.

4. Action Items from the September 24th, 2024 meeting

All action items have been completed.

5. Working Group Updates

- i. **Water & Agriculture Initiatives** (Lead: G. Harfman). Members include G. Harfman, F. Van Oyen, A. Siemens, L. Hainstock, S. Gibbs and K. Anderson. Noted that they were unsuccessful in the Disaster Resilience and Innovation Fund, but there is interest in submitting applications for future grants. Investment Agriculture Foundation Grant is available for water retention for agriculture. Best Management practices and Water Storage – an environment farm plan is needed to be eligible. The finding for B&P projects are year-round for planning/irrigation and work detecting leaks/prep work etc. Direct inquiries to L. Hainstock for assistance, and she encourages others to sign up for the newsletter. We need more water storage. Next meeting is pending.
- ii. **Boundary Access Management Group** (Lead: J. Podealuk) Members include J. Podealuk, B. Stewart, B. Sperling, T. Frehr-Smith, R. Trerise, and K. Anderson. Meeting in September – no updates. Still looking to redefining the purpose and terms of references of the group. Follow up meeting pending.

6. Forest Practices Board Report

In response to a request at the previous meeting, time was provided to discuss the 2024 Forest Practices Board report: Did Licensees meet cutblock size rules in the Kettle River Watershed? As a watchdog agency, the FPB reviews focus on whether there was compliance with legislation. The report does show there has been compliance with legislation, however not everyone agrees with the legislation.

7. KRWAC Sector Updates

Forest Tenure (Lg). B. Sperling: BC Timber Sales Forest Stewardship Plan review is underway. Framework attached to the FSP. New FSP follows that framework when it is applicable.

Forest Tenure (Lg). T. Frehr-Smith: Wrapping up projects from 2024. 2025 will see some projects in the area, which will include some watershed assessments. Paying attention to freshet season, which appears to be coming sooner than later. Our bigger picture will be tied to the US tariff situation and working to keep mills operating and people employed.

Forest Tenure (Sm): P. Flett:

Nk'Mip Forestry/OIB: No active harvesting- focusing on other projects, wildfire risk management, cultural and prescribed burns- one of those is in Rock Creek fairground area. Training for new WorkSafe is starting in Spring, wildfire suppression courses, refreshers etc.. Working with variety of partners on development.

West Boundary Community Forests: Working on enhancing wildfire risk reduction. Applications out for various projects in the Boundary, west of Grand Forks and Mt. Baldy area as well. Focus on education and outreach- which includes our outdoor Ed program at Wilgress Lake. Active harvesting but at a slightly lower level than previous years.

NGO/Environmental - L. Wolf: Quiet here at the CLSS. A lot of grant writing, I am on my own at the moment but will be getting some hired help come May. We will continue with public outreach, youth programming, some new adult workshops and will continue with our water quality monitoring, mussel monitoring and fish enumerations. Looking to expand our educational garden to include a riparian section.

NGO/Environmental - R. Hanson: Sponsored 5 meetings around the Province to initiate and advocate for a new forest act. One that is based on ecological rather than forest harvesting. Met with individuals and groups around the province, and a group in the Okanagan – interior watershed taskforce. Looking at problems in the forest. If anyone is interested about the information from those meetings, it is on the website at boundaryforest.org.

Water Supplier. Not in attendance.

Agriculture. O. Broad: We realize that the aquifer recharge is dependent on freshet and so waiting to see how it is looking this spring when spring melt is over. So far, things are still okay, some moisture in the soil.

Agriculture. F. Van Oyen: US tariffs are coming through and we are concerned about how that could affect things with cattle sales, will be watching to see what happens.

Community at Large. V. Gee: The modular vertical farms - timely with supply chain issues in this political climate. TTTB has recently taken on a cycling tour company (KVR Outfitters) and looking at what we can do to create better habits amongst visitors as they are on our rail trail (sensitive corridors etc.) Grant to do a new website and looking to promote cultures of change amongst our visitors.

Tourism/Recreation. C. Sander: The Rec sites – Trails BC and BC Parks are merged under the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change. Operating under a new umbrella that will be more consistent with the way that Recreation is represented in the region. Still encouraging a Boundary Trails Master Plan.

Mining. L. Caron. Big changes coming to the Tenure Act to make it align with UNDRIP. Lots of good can come out of involvement of First Nations consultation from the beginning. Realizing sometimes one would be having to deal with around 9-12 different First Nations Bands, and some may not have the capacity to review in a timely basis. Right now, if someone wants to stake a claim there is a map-based staking system. Changes and reforms are absolutely needed due to a new group of people that are nuisance makers. In terms of legitimate industry, however, when you select a claim, it will be now held and referred to First Nations before it is granted tenure. There are lots of concerns over confidentiality, as they will need to disclose ideas before securing tenure. Concerns with competition etc. This is to be rolled out on March 25. Not sure how it is going to affect the industry. In response to tariffs and critical minerals, the government is fast-tracking 17 projects. We hope fast-tracking won't avoid environmental review. All the science is done before they get their final approval. It

takes 10 years to develop a mine. It will be an interesting time for the mining industry. More locally, you might be aware of the bankruptcy of a mining company in the Phoenix area. Kettle River Resources, the subsidiary, was an exploration company who was taken over. Everything they worked for 40 years has gone. It has left a black mark on the industry but is an outlier and just an unfortunate situation.

Recreation: C. Zorn: Grand Forks ATV is applying for grants to do maintenance in the North Fork Area, education and awareness. Focusing on main trails that have the most recreational value, reducing footprint. Collaborating with other recreation groups in the region.

Community at Large, B. Stewart: Applied for funding for Invasive mussel monitoring to include Jewel Lake this year. Potentially next year E-DNA, which looks for fragments which will tell if a species is present through water samples. BISS would love to see more happening on the prevention side. FPB has a new initiative that is coming out. Whirling disease updates coming from the Province. Boats and kayaks should be cleaned. At this point Kettle is okay.

Knotweed in Granby River system- agriculture impacts in the future. Province is working on it, as well as Farmland Advantage Program through riparian planting – which includes 13 farms where riparian restoration is happening. Program is covering 100% of the cost. Bioengineering, plant protections etc. Program is having support from the Feds. Farmers – trying to fix all the land clearing. Mid Granby to South.

Industry: G. Rowland: Due to the warmer winter the creeks at Big White Resorts have been steady flowing up until this cold snap. Powder basin is still flowing into the creek. Water treatment plant has helped, as the water continues to flow over the spillway. Rhonda will start spilling by May/June. January was dry but rebounding now with more moisture. Pre-covid numbers (skiers) coming back to the Resort.

Provincial Updates

Ministry of Forests (Research Program). N. Neumann: Use water chemistry to see how land use might be affecting water pathways (rain to streams). How is water moving from snow melt at high elevation, how long, variability across the Kettle. Collaborating with Okanagan Nation Alliance on projects, K. Anderson and community members for samples.

WLRS, Fisheries, Kootenay Boundary Region. A. Turner: With fiscal year ending next month, currently working under program budget constraints.

WLRS, Aquatic Ecosystem, Kootenay Boundary Region. S. Arndt: no update specific to Kettle River. Processing riparian work applications. Budgets are tight and will see how things unfold in the next month or two.

Ministry of Forest (Range). S. Rasmussen: Business as usual and working with local farmers. Range units in Selkirk not fully stocked. Fences are not being well-maintained. There was a Forest Practices Board report that was released talking about the Overton Moody Range unit. This was less to do with ecological use but more to do with Legislation surrounding Ranges plan and cattle out of rotation. The tenures that were on there are both inactive. Some learnings in terms of documentation of the range program was to ensure we are documenting when we are going out in terms of compliance and enforcement. Happy to discuss with anyone interested, lot of learning of due diligence moving forward on that Range unit. Lot of work to do and lots of fences that are falling and in disrepair. It is a contentious Range unit in a fragile ecosystem. Potential for virtual fencing, along with special license condition. Stay tuned, it likely will not be offered for the next couple of years.

Agriculture, L.Hainstock: Drought conversations. Funding potentials but environmental farm plans.

Ministry of Forests: J. Podealuk: No updates.

Break at 11:00- 11:20am

K. Anderson presented on Groundwater & GW Mapping.

Importance of groundwater and aquifers. Midway Groundwater Observation Well No.444 in the region. Diagram of groundwater flow, showing the connectivity of the kettle river with many of the local wells (called an unconfined aquifer). Discussed artesian wells, the observation well system, and water storage.

IMAPBC offers the aquifer mapping known for the Boundary Region, as well as identifying if the aquifer is confined or unconfined. The Province tries to update the aquifer mapping every 10 years. Concerns have been reported about the mapping of the Nine Mile Creek aquifers.

Observation Well 444: This well has 5 years of data, so less than the 10 years normally asked for, but still able to look at recent average, min and max levels. This well is 670m from the Kettle River, and is hydrologically connected to Kettle River. Shows the permeability of the aquifer that we are in.

8. RDKB/BIWS Update: K. Anderson

The RDKB was successful on a grant application to complete the remaining high priority areas requiring floodplain mapping updates. BIWS offers a grant for community projects that address KRWMP and CL Management Plan action items. The grant process is open and accepting applications for projects. A 2-day Ripple Effect Forum- please have a representative attend and please register for the forum, free food for those that register. Looking to highlight changes in hydrological/meteorological change and land use, biodiversity, nature-based solutions, and have a rep from generational families present local knowledge. We are working to incorporate Indigenous Knowledge, understanding how we need to intertwine it with the Western science approaches. We need all the voices.

Burrell Creek site- restoration project, 12,000 plants, including staking work and bioengineering. Looking to expand again this fall with water licensing and will be able to present more information on that at the forum. A KRWAC poster will be presented at the forum.

9. Questions from the Public

There were no questions from the public.

10. RDKB Director Updates:

Area E/ West Boundary Director. S. Gibbs: Boundary Services Committee has been working hard on the next stages of the RDKB community forest. In Beavertown, many trees fell from the recent wind storm. Community members are looking for portable mills, downed trees on private and public lands.

Area D/ Rural Grand Forks Director. Linda Kay Wiese: Watching the Granby and Kettle with bated breath, hoping there are no high water concerns.

Greendwood Director. G. Shaw: Nothing to report. Watching closely for spring melt.

11. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on June 24, 2025, in Christina Lake.

12. Closing Remarks

B. Stewart thanked all those who attended for their participation.

13. Adjourned

B. Stewart adjourned the meeting at 12:00 pm.