
To: WEI Meeting Participants

From: Brodie Smith, Jason Collier, and Rahul Ray

Date: March 25, 2021

Re: Final Rio Tinto WEI Table Meeting 17 (Videoconference) Summary, March 10, 2021

A videoconference for the Rio Tinto Water Engagement Initiative (WEI) was held on Wednesday, March 10, 2021, from 9:00 am to 12:15 pm. The videoconference was held instead of an in-person Main Table meeting to promote social distancing in response to COVID-19, while making progress on aspects of the WEI.

This document is a summary of the videoconference and not word-for-word “meeting minutes”. The information presented highlights the topics raised, key discussions, conclusions, and identified action items.

The facilitators were Rahul Ray (RR) and Jason Collier (JC) from EDI. Brodie Smith, also from EDI, took notes during the meeting and prepared this summary. Jayson Kurtz (JK) and Jennifer Carter (JCa) from Ecofish Research participated as the Technical Working Group (TWG) coordinators.

Andrew Czornohalan (AC), Operations Director - Power and Services, Kitimat and Kemano participated as a WEI Table member. Justus Benckhuysen (JB), Nechako Operations Coordinator; Andy Lecuyer (AL), Senior Environmental Advisor; and Devrie Sanghera (DS), Communities & Social Performance Advisor for Rio Tinto participated in the videoconference as support.

A draft agenda was included in the invitation, and outlined the anticipated meeting topics:

- Action item review
- Confirm WEI intent, work to date, pathway ahead, and conceptual schedule
 - Review of WEI intent and scope
 - Elements
 - Work to date: communication, reservoir and TWG efforts
 - Tasks ahead
 - Conceptual schedule
- Agriculture and the Nechako presentation by Lyla Brophy
- Next Main Table meeting dates
- Land Use Planning Initiative presentation by Lori Borth and Justin Calof, Province of FLNRORD

Table 1 lists the participants that were involved in the videoconference and the organizations they represent.

Table 1. March 10, 2021 - WEI Videoconference Participants

Individual	Organization
John Alderliesten	Public participant
Lori Borth	FLNRORD
Lyla Brophy	Nechako Regional Cattlemen's Association
Justin Calof	FLNRORD
David Creighton	Northern Health
Andrew Czornohalan	Rio Tinto
Stephen Dery	UNBC
Leanne Elliot	FLNRORD
Gerd Erasmus	Public participant
James Jacklin	FLNRORD
Henry Klassen	Public participant
Donna Klingspohn	Public participant
Ray Klingspohn	Public participant
Phillip Krauskopf	FLNRORD
Clint Lambert	Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako
Gina Layte-Listen	Public participant
Jason Llewellyn	Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako
Kim Menounos	Fraser Basin Council
Kevin Moutray	District of Vanderhoof
Lisa Mueller	Rio Tinto
Mark Parker	Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako
Jerry Petersen	Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako
Tim Plesko	Public participant/Southside representative
Ray Pillipow	FLNRORD
Mike Robertson	Southside representative / Cheslatta Carrier Nation
Wayne Salewski	Public participant / NEWSS
Carrie Smith	MLA John Rustad's office
Dan Sneep	Department of Fisheries and Oceans
Gerry Thiessen	District of Vanderhoof / Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako
Ewing Ting	Carrier Sekani Tribal Council
Dennis Wood	Public participant
June Wood	Public participant

The following provides a summary of the topics discussed during the videoconference.

- RR opened the meeting by welcoming participants and reviewing the draft agenda. RR asked participants if they wanted to shift the agenda to immediately address concerns raised in letter that was recently sent to the Main Table by WEI participant John Alderliesten (JA), or if they wished to review the TWG presentation first, as it may clear up some of the John's concerns. It was agreed that the concerns in the letter be dealt with first. RR presented slides containing the five concerns outlined in the letter and discussions were centered around them.
- **Participant Concern 1:** Will Rio Tinto be increasing the downstream flows with a "natural" hydrograph, for sturgeon and the other aquatic life.
- JK stated that the TWG is looking at various interests raised by the Main Table, identifying performance measures, modeling flows, and ultimately developing alternative flow scenarios, including natural flow scenarios, to address and maximize each particular interest. Work is ongoing, and the TWG will be presenting the different flow scenarios at upcoming meetings. AC reinforced that we first need to work through the process to identify priorities before developing flow alternatives, and that the different flow scenarios are needed for decision making.
- JA commented that the sturgeon work has been ongoing for 20 years and it was time for some action, and we (including the Province and DFO) need to move faster on these issues. AC responded that he understands the concern, that he cannot speak for the last 20 years, and can only speak for the current WEI process, where the intent is to make progress.
- James Jacklin (JJ) from FLNRORD commented that for sturgeon recovery initiatives, flows are a component, but not the only component. For example, a study that looked at the best years for sturgeon recovery showed very different flows between them and there is uncertainty between the needed flows and recovery opportunity. Many other factors come in to play (e.g., sedimentation, habitat) for the success of sturgeon, and it is very complicated. Flows are one of several factors that need to be considered to recover sturgeon populations.
- A participant stated that the meetings are frustrating. Participants bring up concerns and then these concerns are not reflected in the agenda of the next meeting. The participant commented that the connection between the Main Table and the TWG seems to be limited, and they are concerned that this process will be a green-washing exercise. The Main Table participants spend a lot of time listening to presentations and have very little time for discussion during the meetings.
- A participant asked if there was a projected date for the completion of the flow scenarios. JK responded that, as planned, the TWG will be bringing the flow scenarios to the Main Table this summer. The participant noted that they thought this part of the process was supposed to start in April and asked if there had been a delay. JK responded that there is no delay, and the release of the information will follow a staggered

approach. Some of the information from the TWG will be presented today, and information will continue to flow to the Main Table from now and through the summer.

- **Participant Question 2:** What is the natural attrition rate of the sturgeon, and how will this affect restocking the river with sturgeon?
- RR stated that he sent the letter authorized by the Main Table to the sturgeon recovery group with a request for the WEI to work with them, and that this question could be answered in more detail by the Nechako White Sturgeon Recovery Initiative (NWSRI). JJ noted that the chair of the NWSRI will be presenting to the Main Table next month. He also stated that there is still a lot of uncertainty when it comes to understanding sturgeon. Generally, there is a 3-4% mortality of adult sturgeon in the system. Overall, there is still not a good understanding of natural recruitment of sturgeon, other than it is insufficient. There are many factors involved and it is very complex (for example, predation by otters). He stated that stocking rates and densities are adjusted annually. JK affirmed that generally, there is an assumed mortality rate around 4% for sturgeon, and this is absolutely factored into stocking program and included in the recovery program. A participant commented that the attrition rate of sturgeon in the Nechako is what is important, and not what is says in the literature. The WEI needs to get to the point.
- A participant stated that the NWSRI does great work and have a good amount of knowledge on the sturgeon issue, and that the WEI is in no position to start making recommendations, nor at any point was it decided by the Main Table that sturgeon was going to be used as the “canary in a coal mine” to determine the overall health of the system. They stated that the group needs to base our work on science and not emotion. The participant also reminded participants that when the Chair of the NWSRI presented to the Main Table, they stated that flows were not the only issue.
- A participant stated that they felt the meeting summaries were vague and information was being lost. They requested exact meeting minutes be recorded. JC responded that the current meeting summaries are not exact minutes but do include detailed summaries of all the topics discussed in the meetings and outline the action items decided upon by the Main Table. JC and RR reminded the participants that the meeting summaries are sent out for input and review before being finalized. If participants feel there is information missing in the summaries, they should take the opportunity to provide input and correct this during the review of the draft meeting summary. Once the meeting summaries are finalized, they are all posted on the Get Involved Nechako website.
- **Participant Question 3:** Tahtsa Narrows - What is the present situation, and what are Rio Tinto's future plans, short term and long term? What are the financial and ecological implications of these plans for the river, reservoir, for Rio Tinto, and the Province?
- AC stated that he was surprised by this question. He went through the meeting minutes and found his updates to the Main Table on this topic since starting the WEI. Since then, he made a commitment to present again when research is complete or new information is available. He confirmed that Rio Tinto does not have any interests at this time in pursuing this project.

- JA stated that he was asking these questions because he does not think the full story is being told. He asked if the other Main Table participants were happy with this answer. A participant stated that they were happy with the answer and understood the implications of what AC had presented, as they had reviewed in detail the scoping documents, which presented each case (i.e., partial and full dredge). Mike Robertson (MR) said he had also read the scoping documents, has gone through every meeting of the scoping group, and can confirm what AC says. There is no active proposal to do any dredging and information gathering is ongoing.
- AC thanked MR for access to the Cheslatta archives, where he has been able to source much information. AC stated that on the topic of transparency, from his perspective, giving a hard yes or no is more dishonest at this point as there no plan to pursue at this time. However, we cannot speak for the future, as we don't know what that will entail, but we can commit to being transparent.
- **Participant Question 4:** What does the science say about the open water all through the January and February 2021 cold snap? As a 25 year Vanderhoof resident, I don't remember seeing this before.
- AC said he pulled historic data through the river forecast center and water temperature logger data from the Province and consultants, and this year is one of the warmer winters on record. He stated that the District of Vanderhoof is doing some work to look into the issue of the ice jams.
- A participant stated that people living here since the 1970s do not remember 85 m³ flowing all winter and that they do not remember the river being this deep. AC responded that since 2000, there have been five other years with flows that are the same as this year. He added that he was comparing monthly averages, so there may be more variation in day-to-day flows. AC offered to present this data to the Main Table.
- **ACTION ITEM: AC will present monthly average flow data since 2000 to compare winter flow rates.**
- **Participant Question 5:** How are other participants feeling about the 'open and radically transparent ' process, after almost 2 years into the WEI?
- RR stated that he is working hard to make sure the WEI is transparent. Meeting materials are posted on: <https://www.getinvolvednechako.ca/wei>. Due to the restrictions of the pandemic, face to face meetings are not currently possible and we have moved to videoconferences. He noted that there is tremendous value in meeting in person and that cannot be replaced. He asked AC to expand on his term “Radical Transparency.”
- AC stated that the intent of “Radical Transparency” was to have everything available for all, and that is why the Get Involved Nechako website was developed. He stated that he has always tried to answer everything honestly. However, he is respectful of the ongoing court proceedings with two First Nations, and there is some information that he cannot share in that regard. He noted that radical transparency is a principle for him both professionally and personally as a member of the community. Throughout the WEI process, he has tried hard to continue to bring in specialists and outside perspectives. He is always happy to hear feedback and concerns.

- Dan Sneep from DFO stated that he has been through this process many times, mostly with BC Hydro. He has confidence that this group can also make it through the process. He still believes it can work, the Main Table participants need to have patience and faith in the process. Another participant noted that going to court with Rio Tinto has not led to any solutions so far. They commented that they had been involved in the Nechako conversation for a long time, and, while not enthralled with progress, they acknowledged that using the WEI process and having these conversations was likely the best and possibly the only way to develop solutions.
- RR asked JA if he was happy with the answers to his questions. JA wanted to know how long do we have to wait for solutions. RR noted that he sent out the WEI process schedule as part of the pre-reading package, and that the WEI will be working to keep to that schedule.
- A participant stated that there was not enough input from the Province or DFO, and they were concerned that the Main Table and WEI process would only be able to make recommendations but did not have any legal authority. They were concerned as to how they could convince Rio Tinto to make changes when Rio Tinto already has a good deal and is already getting what they want out of the Nechako system. JJ stated that the Province is committed to the process, has staff on the TWG, and is working to develop good science-based options. Dan Sneep from DFO reminded participants that DFO is also working with the process and that Main Table participants do not always know about TWG efforts that are happening. He suggested that assumptions should not be made.
- A participant stated that there was a missed opportunity for the Gantt chart to be viewed regularly so that participants can see progress and avoid the feelings of frustration. The progress chart is important, and the participants can use it for reference. Another participant stated that they had been involved in similar processes, and regular reviews of the Gantt chart help the participants to understand where they were at in the process, if and why any delays occurred, and discuss changes in process dates and deadlines. It was a useful tool to understand where they were at, what they had accomplished and where they were going. RR commented that the overall schedule was sent out in the pre-read package, and confirmed that he will be reviewing the overall schedule at the beginning of each meeting.
- **ACTION ITEM: Review the Main Table Gantt chart/Schedule at the beginning of each Main Table meeting.**
- AC noted that there are many ways to affect change. One way is “headbutting,” in other words, going to court. The other option is to work together, find win/win solutions, and collaborate with the best science, data, and knowledge. If the WEI can find wins, continue to collaborate, then more wins will result. AC noted that the process does not always move as fast as we would like. He stated that pathways through collaboration will open more doors (for instance, the New Day Agreement with the Cheslatta Nation and the NeToo project) and the WEI has already had lots of wins so far. More collaboration will lead to more gains and wins for everyone. Other comments from participants were made regarding the need to stay focused on the process, to have patience and respect for others. We are all here to help the river and have the same goal in mind. The issues are complex and there are no quick fixes. There is a lot of information to

sort through, and the Province, DFO, and elected officials are all here to provide support. We have a good start, and it would be a shame to lose traction.

- JA asked how are other participants feeling about the process and if there were any other comments. There were no further questions or comments from Main Table participants.
- RR asked Gerry Thiessen (GT), the Chair for the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako (RDBN), to provide a summary of the press release published this morning.
- GT noted that everyone should have received the press release (*“Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako supports Indigenous efforts to rehabilitate and co-manage the Nechako River”*). He stated that the RDBN has built a strong relationship with First Nations and acknowledged that we live in their territory. The press release states that: “The RDBN acknowledges the long-standing interference on the claim of Aboriginal rights and title on First Nations caused by the construction and operation of the Kenney Dam and the Nechako Reservoir. The RDBN is voicing its support for the Nechako First Nations to restore more natural flows to the Nechako River and its affected tributaries.” GT stated that this was a first step, and that future river management needs to include First Nations and residents. The people of the Nechako are deeply engaged and committed to working with the Nechako First Nations towards a healthy river.
- A participant asked how this statement will change the WEI process and if there was now a second process occurring. GT stated that everyone will stay engaged in the WEI process. It is a confirmation on the support of Nechako First Nations. AC stated that there was no second process other than the ongoing court cases, and the NeToo process.
- MR commented that the NeToo project is focused on the feasibility aspects of the water release facility at Kenney Dam, and is looking at the environmental components. Should the project move forward, there will be a need for public consultation and a full environmental assessment.
- Clint Lambert from the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako reminded participants that elected directors are at these meetings to ensure the residents are being represented. Some of the elected representatives have to take time off work to ensure they are doing their elected duty.
- AC wanted to comment on work that is happening with the WEI. He stated that there was an impressive amount of data collected and work completed already, including a comprehensive list of 84 interests. Any future changes to the system will have to be assessed, and the work done here will be critical in being able to make those changes. The development of this scientifically sound database of interests is very important and a critical foundation for ongoing and future work. We should be proud.
- A participant wanted to know what 1 m³ cost to Rio Tinto if that water allocation is used in the Nechako River instead of for the smelter. RR asked if the participant could wait for an answer to that and any other questions until after JK presents the update from the TWG, as the presentation may provide the context of when that question will be addressed. The participant agreed.

- Due to the time spent on additional items, RR noted that not all the agenda items will be addressed today. RR proposed having two meetings in April: one to cover the remaining items from today’s agenda, and a second meeting for the regular scheduled Main Table meeting. RR proposed meeting dates of April 7 and April 21, 2021. There was no objection to these dates. In order to not have a conflict with the Nechako Watershed Roundtable meeting, the April 7th Main Table meeting will be held in the morning.
- RR reviewed the WEI Guiding Principles, when they were developed, and where to find them:
 - Draft WEI guiding principles were reviewed during the first Main Table meeting
 - Participants approved the principles at the second meeting (<https://www.getinvolvednechako.ca/7037/widgets/27362/documents/18050>)
- RR reviewed the WEI Mandate and Purpose:
 - Section 2.1 of the WEI Guiding Principles outlines, “The WEI Process is intended to provide a vehicle to share interests, review information, develop alternative operating options, and select a preferred option for Rio Tinto to implement in the Nechako region. This option will remain responsive, rather than a plan that “sits on a shelf.”
- RR reviewed the WEI Scope:
 - Section 3.2 outlines topics that might be considered as part of the Process. Examples include spillway discharge schedules, flood management measures, reservoir levels, downstream flow and water temperature targets, fisheries and monitoring plans, infrastructure, research, and communication. As part of the Process, other interests brought forward by participants will be considered.
- RR reviewed the process to develop the list of preliminary WEI issues and interests.
 - In person Main Table meetings were held in Vanderhoof, Burns Lake, and Prince George, and included a field trip to the Southside. With the arrival of COVID-19, meetings were moved to videoconferences.
 - A preliminary list of issues was identified by WEI participants and was compiled (<https://www.getinvolvednechako.ca/7037/widgets/27362/documents/36842>). The Main Table requested that the TWG focus on the technical aspects of these issues and interests and bring information back to the Table for review and discussion.
- RR stated that due to time constraint during this meeting, a full and thorough TWG update will be presented at the April 7th meeting instead. RR asked JK for a brief update on the TWG.

- JK stated that the TWG continues to meet twice a month and they are working through the list of interests, including completing assessments and determining performance measures. They are about 50% to 60% of the way through the studies that need to be completed. There are many studies in draft form that will soon be released to the Main Table for review.
- RR reviewed the conceptual schedule and how it relates to the WEI interests. The issues and interests were broken into four categories. All steps will have extensive Main Table involvement. The TWG is working on the technical aspects.

1. Flow-related interests:

- Develop draft objectives and performance measures (January-July 2021)
- Present objectives and performance measures to Main Table (April-July 2021)
- Implement ready improvements (May-December 2021)
- Develop flow alternatives and tradeoff analysis (May-July 2021)
- Scope potential regulatory revisions (February-November 2021)
- Consider physical works or other non-flow options to meet objectives (April-September 2021)
- Draft flow scenario (August-September 2021)
- Engagement on draft flow scenario (August-December 2021)
- Finalize flow scenario (December 2021)

2. Reservoir/Southside interests:

- Southside additional information gathering / inventory (Completed in 2020)
- Reservoir working group (initial working group held in 2020, additional working groups being planned)
- Present recommendations to the Main Table (February-August 2021)
- Integrate results into Flow, Communications, and Non-flow physical works improvement process, as needed (March-December 2021)

- Southside non-flow recommendations are in the works for erosion, driftwood, livestock, water pumps/intakes, water quality, navigation, recreation, wildlife, funding, wildfire, communications and power, and adaptive management.
3. Communication and planning interests:
- Work is ongoing for these interests
 - Current recommendations include Communication Recommendation 1: Flow Facts, Communication recommendation 2: Flood Emergency Planning, Communication recommendation 3: Team member awareness and communication efficiency, and Communication recommendation 4: Maintain “Get Involved Nechako” Website
4. Related initiatives
- These are initiatives that are being led by other organizations/entities, but influence Rio Tinto operations, including Nechako Fisheries Conservation Program (NFCP), Climate change research, Nechako Environmental Enhancement Fund (NEEF), Nechako White Sturgeon Recovery Initiative (NWSRI), Province of British Columbia Land Use Planning, and Kenney Dam Water Release Facility.
- RR confirmed again that each meeting going forward will start with a review of the schedule.
 - Lyla Brophy, of the Nechako Valley Regional Cattleman’s Association, presented “Agriculture and the Nechako.” The presentation was an overview of some of the issues faced by agriculturalists along the Nechako River. She discussed four main issues including communications, fences, erosion, and irrigation. She reviewed the BC Code of Practice for Agri-Environmental Management which deals with the application of fertilizer and manure near different water sources. She also reviewed the feedback she received from agricultural licensees about their views of Rio Tinto operations and the issues she stated earlier in the presentation. The presentation is available on the Get Involved Nechako website.
 - AC thanked Lyla Brophy for the presentation and really appreciated the conversation and slides she provided. They will continue to improve communications.
 - A participant stated that Riparian Zone Management might help to prevent erosion in the areas where agriculture fields are eroding into the river. This would involve planting vegetation such as willows. Dan Sneep from DFO said this is the best way to prevent erosion, as the roots help stabilize the riverbank. A participant noted that often the agricultural practices themselves cause these issues, by removing riverside vegetation. Replanting and re-establishing vegetation will take a while and is not an immediate fix. Lyla Brophy noted that this has been attempted in some areas already.

- Another participant noted that bank erosion is a common issue to all rivers and not specific to the Nechako River. They did not believe this was an issue caused by Rio Tinto operations and therefore, Rio Tinto did not need to be involved in the solution.
- JK thanked Lyla Brophy for her presentation. He mentioned that one of the TWG summaries in progress was addressing the issue of erosion. It will include a summary of activities to prevent erosion and restore banks for both the reservoir and the river. The TWG has reached out to the Cattlemen’s association for information.
- A participant noted that the photos in the presentation showing bank erosion looked very similar to what is occurring in the reservoir. In the reservoir, bank erosion is occurring in untouched, vegetated areas as well. They believe this is due to sustained high levels of reservoir levels (e.g. last summer) that causes this erosion. High and low water levels tend to erode beaches.
- RR thanked Lyla Brophy for her presentation. He asked participants if they were ok with postponing the TWG progress presentation until the April 7th meeting, and there was no disagreement.
- Lori Borth and Justin Calof, Directors of Strategic Initiatives North Area of FLNRORD, presented “Resource Management Planning in Our Region.” The presentation included an overview of the scope of their engagement, an overview of the region, and existing land use planning. Conceptually, land use planning efforts will focus on moose habitat, forest biodiversity, and watershed health. Future resource management planning will incorporate key values, including stewardship, cultural values, economic values, and social values. They will be completing outreach activities over the next few months and would value any input from Main Table members. For any questions, comments, or to participate in their survey, send an email to Omineca.RMP@gov.bc.ca
- AC noted that it will be interesting to see how the land use planning work develops and the conversations that come out of it. There will likely be some cross over with the WEI and he would like to know how to share knowledge and interface with the program.
- A participant asked Justin about the change in focus to forest biodiversity rather than forest monocultures, and if resource planning will no longer include the use of herbicides. Justin replied that they will not completely move away from monocultures and herbicide use, but that they were focusing more on creating biodiverse forests. Due to issues such as climate change, silviculture practices that include more diversity will likely be a more prominent part of the planning process.
- RR thanked Lori Borth and Justin Calof for their presentation. RR will pass on contact info to the Main Table members so the member can contact Lori and Justin directly.
- **ACTION ITEM: RR will pass on Lori Borth and Justin Calof’s contact information to Main Table participants.**

- AC asked if it was possible to get the draft TWG reports to read before the meetings. Two participants agreed that this would be very useful. If they can read the reports before the meeting the Main Table participants can have more meaningful input ready to share in the meeting. JK said they would distribute the relevant TWG reports before the next meeting.
- **ACTION ITEM: JK will include relevant TWG reports in Main Table pre-reading package.**
- RR requested that if there are any future concerns about the process or interests, that the Main Table participants bring them to the meeting rather than sending out a letter. They can be addressed directly during the meetings to clear up any issues.
- RR asked if there were any final comments and thanked everyone for joining the meeting.
- Meeting adjourned at 12:15 pm.

ACTION ITEMS

- **ACTION ITEM: AC will present monthly average flow data since 2000 to compare winter flow rates.**
- **ACTION ITEM: Review the Main Table Gantt chart/schedule at the beginning of each Main Table meeting.**
- **ACTION ITEM: RR will pass on Lori Borth and Justin Calof's contact information to Main Table participants.**
- **ACTION ITEM: JK will include relevant TWG reports in Main Table pre-reading package.**