



To: WEI Meeting participants
From: Rahul Ray and Jason Collier
Date: March 30, 2020
Re: Final Rio Tinto WEI Table Teleconference Summary - Wednesday, March 18, 2020

A teleconference for the Rio Tinto Water Engagement Initiative (WEI) was held on March 18, 2020, from 9:15 am to 11:05 am. The Main Table Meeting (Meeting 8) was planned to be held in Fraser Lake, but was changed to a teleconference to promote social distancing in response to concerns of the Corona virus (COVID-19), while keeping progressing on aspects of the WEI.

This document is a summary of the teleconference 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. They prepared this meeting summary. Jayson Kurtz (JK) from Ecofish Research participated as the Technical Working Group (TWG) coordinator.

Justus Benckhuysen (JB), Rio Tinto Nechako Operations Coordinator, and Danielle De Kay, Rio Tinto Communities & Communications Advisor participated in the teleconference. Andrew Czornohalan (AC), Operations Director - Power & Services, Kitimat and Kemano was not present for the teleconference.

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

- Anticipated Meeting Outcomes: Discussion components of a healthy river
- Welcome, introductions, and agenda review
- DFO presentation: Components of a healthy river
- New Day agreement update
- Confirmation of topics, information needs, and suggested specialists
- Next meeting dates

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

Table 1. March 18, 2020 - WEI Teleconference Participants

Individual	Organization
Tim Plesko	Public participant/Southside representative
Stephen Dery	UNBC
Mark Parker	Regional District of Bulkley Nechako
Donna Klingspohn	Public participant
Ray Klingspohn	Public participant
Gerry Thiessen	District of Vanderhoof
Linda Sjodin	Public participant
Phillip Krauskopf	FLNRORD
Lyla Brophy	Nechako Regional Cattlemen's Association
Wayne Salewski	Public participant / NEWSS
Gerd Erasmus	Public participant
June Wood	Public participant
Dennis Wood	Public participant
Kevin Moutray	District of Vanderhoof
Dan Sneep	Department of Fisheries and Oceans
Henry Klassen	Public participant
David Creighton	Northern Health
Jerry Petersen	Regional District of Bulkley Nechako

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

- Rahul opened the call by welcoming participants and explained the reasons for cancelling the face-to-face meeting—which pertained to the COVID-19 virus—and replacing it with the teleconference.
- Rahul mentioned that one of the main focuses for the teleconference will be to better understand the components of a healthy river and habitat requirements for fish.
- Rahul provided the updates on action items from previous meetings:
 - The Structured Decision Making (SDM) process diagram will be updated based on the feedback received.
 - The Communication Working Group (CWG) met on March 5 and have identified five components/areas to improve or address, which includes emergency response planning. These changes are not related to flows, but will be part of the WEI package. The CWG meeting summary was distributed to participants in the pre-meeting reading.
 - Information to subscribe to Rio Tinto’s Flow Facts was distributed and is on the Get Involved Nechako website
 - Justus provided information on how to access live temperature stations.
 - Ice jam communications protocol will be part of the Flood Emergency Plan.
 - Investigations have begun regarding impacts of backflow from the Nechako on Fraser Lake and results will be presented at the next meeting.
 - Overflight photos have been georeferenced and uploaded to the interactive map on the Get Involved Nechako website.
 - Northwest Hydraulic Consultants Ltd. have been assessing sedimentation in the Nechako River. A draft report was received March 17, is being reviewed, and the TWG will present the results at the next meeting.
 - Justus confirmed that baseline mapping has been updated based on Table recommendations. Maps are available in the Document Library on the Get Involved Nechako website, which show the respective watersheds, sturgeon distribution and critical habitats, caribou herd ranges and historic topographic mapping for the Reservoir (47 maps).
- **ACTION ITEM: TWG to present result of the investigation into the impacts of backflow from the Nechako on Fraser Lake.**

- **ACTION ITEM: TWG to present results of the NHC Report regarding sedimentation at the next meeting.**
- Dan Sneep from DFO gave a presentation on the components of a healthy river. The PowerPoint, *Hydro Effects on Fish and Fish Habitat: A Baseline for Improving Watershed Health*, is available on the Get Involved Nechako website. Dan touched on several topics during his presentation, which included the approach taken to define a “healthy river”; fish species of interests; fish life history; fish habitat requirements; footprint impacts; operational effects on the reservoir and the river; and next steps. Dan mentioned that this is a big discussion and that he is also looking for feedback on which effects are specific to the Nechako.
- A comment was made during the presentation that we are “chasing our tails” if Rio Tinto is not willing to change the footprint impacts (i.e. original construction). Dan commented that it is challenging to mitigate the footprint impacts, but that there are many options that can improve the system from an operational perspective.
- A discussion centered around woody debris recruitment. It was mentioned that stability is needed in the system to recruit woody debris. Dan commented that in a normal riparian situation, structures on banks will eventually get eroded, drift downstream and get caught-up somewhere. However, in a “simple river system” river such as the present Nechako, the structures don’t get caught up. It was mentioned that approximately 20 years ago, “debris catchers” were introduced into the system with some success. The take-away was that there is a need to retain woody debris in the system.
- A comment was made that the Nechako is not the same as typical hydroelectric systems, as water is taken out of the Nechako system. Dan commented that the Nechako is now a smaller river which has been affected. It is now a simpler channel.
- A comment was made that mitigation can only go so far, and the system depends on “how far Rio Tinto is willing to bend”. Dan commented that this situation is different from BC Hydro’s processes. At this point, Rio Tinto has not identified a bottom line, so we should not take infrastructure options off the table, but may want to start with operational changes and offsetting.
- **ACTION ITEM: Add rainbow trout to the fish species of interest list and remove Inconnu (Slide 4).**
- **ACTION ITEM: Add finding ways of retaining woody debris in the system to WEI list of interests.**
- Henry commented he submitted a document to the table that presented his take on the definition of a healthy river. He went on to say that the reality is that we now have a smaller river and we can’t go back on that and we need to find the balance between power and a healthy river. We don’t have a lot of time. Salmon and sturgeon should now be the measure of a healthy system. Sturgeon, and their habitat, should be at the top of the list as they are resident species and are not able to make redds. Henry commented that there are two main things that need to be considered: a natural hydrograph and enough water to support the system. There was ensuing discussion on the importance of sturgeon and the need to protect them, and well as consensus that focus should be placed on sturgeon as a keystone species for the system. Dan

commented that there is plenty of work/research being done on sturgeon by the recovery team, but that there are still some unknowns.

- **ACTION ITEM: TWG to amalgamate sturgeon information in a pre-meeting summary sheet and coordinate informational presentation for the next meeting.**
- In response to a comment made during a previous meeting from a southside resident regarding the possibility of fish getting into the tunnel intake, a participant wanted to know if cameras could be placed at the entrance of the tunnel to determine if this was in fact occurring.
- **ACTION ITEM: Investigate the potential need to install a camera at the entrance to the tunnel.**
- As Andrew and Mike Robertson were not on the teleconference, the decision was made to defer the update on the New Day Agreement until the next meeting.
- **ACTION ITEM: Andrew and Mike to provide update on the New Day Agreement at the next meeting.**
- Rahul solicited feedback on the effectiveness of the teleconference, which may replace in-person meetings for the time being until COVID-19 is no longer an issue. Participants discussed the potential duration of the teleconferences, the frequency and the technology. It was determined that to be effective teleconferences should utilize technology that could allow “raised hands” to avoid participants talking over each other, should not exceed approximately 2.5 hours in duration, that the frequency of the meetings can be reassessed, and that pre-read informational packages are useful, so that participants can be prepared.
- **ACTION ITEM: Rahul to develop a potential schedule for the teleconferences.**
- Next teleconference date was scheduled for April 15, 2020.
- The teleconference ended at 11:05 am.

Action Items

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