

Water Engagement Initiative Main Table videoconference Meeting 17

Wednesday, March 10, 2021

9:00 am to 12:00 pm



Draft Agenda

- Welcome, introductions, and agenda review
- Action item review
- Confirm Water Engagement Initiative (WEI) intent, work to date, pathway ahead, and conceptual schedule
 - Review of WEI intent and scope
 - Elements
 - Work to date: communication, reservoir, and Technical Working Group efforts
 - Tasks ahead
 - Conceptual schedule
- Break

Draft Agenda (2)

- Agriculture and the Nechako – Presentation by Lyla Brophy – Nechako Valley Regional Cattleman's Association
- Next Main Table meeting dates
- Land Use Planning Initiative – Presentation by Justin Calof, Province of British Columbia
- Adjourn

Water Engagement Initiative Guiding Principles

- We reviewed the draft WEI Guiding Principles during our first meeting
- Participants approved the principles at our second meeting

<https://www.getinvolvednechako.ca/7037/widgets/27362/documents/18050>

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”.

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

WEI Scope (2)

- Infrastructure
- Research
- Communication
- It should be noted that as part of the Process, other interests brought forward by participants will be considered.”

Preliminary issues and interests

- When we were meeting in person, we had meetings in Vanderhoof, Burns Lake, and Prince George and took a field trip to the Southside.
- We were planning meetings in Fraser Lake and a field trip to the Cheslatta watershed
- Then COVID arrived. We 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>

Elements: issue and interest categories

The issues and interests were broken into four categories:

- Flow-related interests
- Reservoir/Southside interests
- Communication and planning interests
- Related initiatives

Flow-related interests

- Preliminary list of Main Table issues and interests compiled
- TWG requested by Main Table to focus on technical aspects (September meeting)

Flow-related interests (2)

- All steps have extensive Main Table involvement
- 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)

Flow-related interests (3)

- 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)

Reservoir/Southside efforts

- 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

- Erosion
- Driftwood
- Livestock
- Water pumps/intakes
- Water Quality
- Navigation
- Recreation
- Wildlife
- Funding
- Wildfire
- Communications and Power
- Adaptive Management

Communication and planning interests

- Communication Recommendation 1: Flow Facts
- Communication recommendation 2: Flood Emergency Planning
- Communication recommendation 3: Team member awareness and communication efficiency
- Communication recommendation 4: Maintain “Get Involved Nechako” Website

Related initiatives

- The following initiatives are being led by other organizations/entities, but influence Rio Tinto operations
 - 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
 - Kenney Dam Water Release Facility

Participant questions

1. Increasing the downstream flows with a "natural" hydrograph, for sturgeon and the other aquatic life.
2. What is the natural attrition rate of the sturgeon, and how will this affect restocking the river with sturgeon?
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?

Participant questions

4. What does the science say about the open water all through the Jan/Feb.2021 cold snap? As a 25 year Vanderhoof resident, I don't remember seeing this before.
5. How are other participants feeling about the 'open and radically transparent ' process, after almost 2 years into the WEI?

Presentation by Lyla Brophy

- Agriculture and the Nechako – Presentation by Lyla Brophy – Nechako Valley Regional Cattleman's Association

AGRICULTURE AND
THE NECHAKO RIVER
AND
RIO TINTO

PRESENTATION

By Lyla Brophy

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Communications
2. Fences
3. Erosion
4. Irrigation
5. BC Code-Environmental

1. Timely Communication

- Need for notice of intention to raise the water level of the river approximately 4 days before the gates at Skins Lake are actually opened whether by e-mail, phone, etc.
- This is needed to be able to plan cattle movement when needed. This may be a good plan for recreation and hunting considerations also.
- Many places on the river have no access to cell phone coverage in case of an emergency.

2. Fences

The raising and lowering of the river waters creates problems with the fences to control cattle. They are washed out when river rises at higher speeds. When the river is low, cattle are able to go around the end of the fences. Hence there is no control.

3. Erosion

- Damage as shown in pictures. At least 2 farms have lost at least 3 acres each due to floods or high moving water.
- Another ranch has been able to save their land a few years ago by hauling rocks in to create stability on their river banks.
- One ranch is in danger of losing their well very soon.

4. Irrigation

- Problems occur when water too high or too low.
- At extra high water the irrigation pumps and equipment are flooded and can be ruined. Equipment can be moved higher if knowledge is conveyed to the ranchers and the farmers soon enough.

4. Irrigation

- When the water is low the irrigation equipment cannot reach the water to put on their lands.
- Ice jams have caused problems when water backs up into the irrigation equipment. One rancher lost his pump house, pump and all electric equipment. Several have lost their pumps over the years.

5. BC Code of Practice for Agri-Enviromental Management

This code deals with fertilizer, manure etc. as applied near different water sources. See Code.

New Code

FEATURE

New Code

Important NEW CODE IN FORCE THIS FALL

By now you have likely heard that the new regulations replacing the old agricultural waste ones are coming into effect, but do you know what it will mean for you? As you read in Beef in BC (May/June 2019, pp 34-35) there is a new agricultural environment regulation that all BC ranchers and farmers need to be aware of – the Code of Practice for Agricultural Environmental Management or “the Code”. The Code applies to all agricultural operations in BC, including the beef industry.

Why the new changes?

As written in the May article, the new rules are intended to provide additional clarity through more clearly outlining the requirements for agriculture, while improving the protection of the environment.

What do you need to know in 2019?

As a rancher it is important for you to know how these changes will immediately affect your ranch. While the Code is being phased in over the next 10 years, there are several requirements that should be on the producer’s radar starting in 2019. In this Beef in BC article, we will touch on two of these: soil testing and records. Future articles are planned that will cover additional topics.

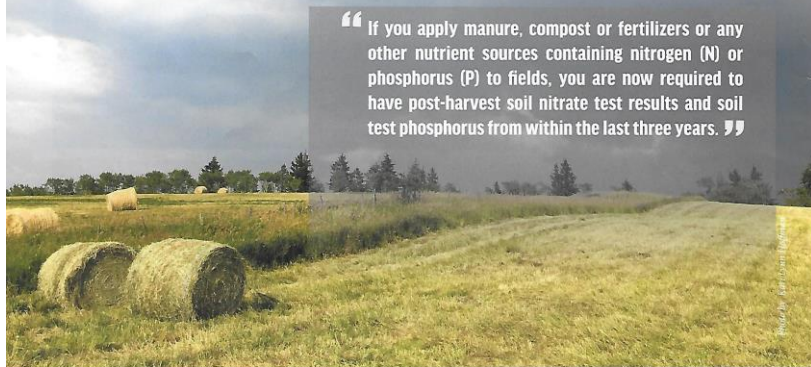
Soil testing

If you apply manure, compost or fertilizers or any other nutrient sources containing nitrogen (N) or phosphorus (P) to fields, you are now required to have post-harvest soil nitrate test results and soil test phosphorus from within the last three years. These should be what you are using to help inform your nutrient application rates. This does not include areas that

receive manure directly from livestock, only manure that is collected and applied to land. If you have not taken soil tests in the last three years, samples must be taken after your last crop harvest, but before manure or nutrient applications this fall.

- The post-harvest soil nitrate test is intended to quantify any residual nitrate left in the soil at the end of the growing season. Samples for nitrate should be collected to a depth of 30 cm (12 inches) in the fall or early spring.
- If the post-harvest nitrate test result is over 100 kg N/ha (25 ppm for a 30 cm/12 in sample) the area needs to be sampled again the following year.
- Each sample for post-harvest nitrate should be representative of areas with similar management (crop, fertilizer applications, and irrigation) and soil. Fields or sections may be grouped if they are similar as long as all areas are sampled accordingly.
- See the Ministry of Agriculture’s website for more information and recommendations on soil sampling and testing. (Also see page 26 for more information)

“If you apply manure, compost or fertilizers or any other nutrient sources containing nitrogen (N) or phosphorus (P) to fields, you are now required to have post-harvest soil nitrate test results and soil test phosphorus from within the last three years.”



Application of manure, fertilizer, or compost

- Manure, fertilizer, or compost must not be spread on frozen or snow-covered ground.
- In high-precipitation areas (found mostly on the South Coast), no manure should be applied during November, December, or January.
 - o Note: High precipitation areas are defined as areas receiving over 600mm of rainfall between October 1st and April 1st. You can find out if you are in a high precipitation area by visiting: <https://governmentofbc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=c16cde73574c43da877674f423304ac9>
- In high precipitation areas a risk assessment should be completed in October, February, and March before any manure is land-applied. An online risk assessment tool will be available from the Ministry of Agriculture.
- Manure, fertilizer, and other sources of nitrogen must not be applied in excess of the crop nitrogen requirement.

There are now specific setbacks from watercourses, wells, and property boundaries for spreading fertilizer and manure.

- Keep surface applied manure 3 meters away
- Keep fertilizer or injected manure 1.5 meters away
- Keep 30 meters away from drinking water sources like wells or surface water diversion points

Records

Keeping records of your farm activities will help show that you are meeting the expectations of the new regulation. Records are not required to be submitted to anyone but must be kept at least five years as your own back up and could be requested during an inspection by provincial environmental protection staff. If asked, you need to be able to show your records within five days of the request. Records can take many forms and it is likely ranchers are already keeping the information needed. Records can include receipts, Form 3s, and information documented in notebooks or pads. How the records are kept is not as important as the type of information that needs to be included in the records.

If requested, you should be able to provide records within five days that show:

- Animal numbers and the amount of manure generated on farm. Records should indicate how much of the manure is used on farm and amounts of any manure exported to other operations.
- If manure leaves the farm operation, records are required to document the overall amount, and if in lots of 5 m³ (6.5 yards³) or greater include a log with lot size and receiver information.

- If you have manure stored temporarily (see note below re: temporary storage of manure) in the field, keep a weekly monitoring record.
- Use of commercial fertilizers and other nutrient sources containing N and P, such as manure or compost, on forage (hay, silage, pasture) land. Record how much, what product, when, and where.
- Yields for fields that are fertilized (ie., how much hay did you produce – number and type of bales and weight).

A complete list of activities requiring records can be found through the Agricultural Environmental Management website: www.gov.bc.ca/Agricultural-Environmental-Management



On February 28 2019, the Code of Practice for Agricultural Environmental Management replaced the Agricultural Waste Control Regulation (AWCR). To learn more, visit the website: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/waste-management/industrial-waste/agriculture>



This interactive map tool shows the geographic high precipitation areas throughout B.C.

A high precipitation area is an area that receives 600 mm or more of precipitation between October 1 and April 30. To access the map, visit <https://bit.ly/3SGFCTP>

Feedback

After contacting 31 of 36 licensees for irrigation, I found that –

3 people were completely happy with Rio Tinto and the river.

4 people were troubled with erosion plus 1 person had their problem solved.

1 person who represents 3 licensees had problems with an ice jam.

5 people have to replace fences every year, some short areas and some long areas.

Several have lost irrigations pumps over the years due to high water levels.

Feedback (2)

9 people have emphasized the need for earlier communication.

1 person said that Rio Tinto has all the information they need for their situation.

All persons feel the need for a more stable river. This would reduce erosion, loss of fences, loss of irrigation ability and limit cattle movement across the river.

Lyla Brophy
Nechako Valley Regional Cattleman's Association























Related initiative: land use planning

- Land Use Planning Initiative – Presentation by Justin Calof, Province of British Columbia

Adjourn