



Southside Community Update: January, 2022

The Rio Tinto Water Engagement Initiative (WEI) was designed to be an inclusive public process, where interests are shared to improve water management in the Nechako system, which includes the Nechako Reservoir, the Cheslatta/Murray Lake system, and the Nechako River.

Since June 2019, approximately 40 individuals from various communities and organizations have been actively participating in the WEI, sharing a wide range of issues and concerns, and identifying opportunities to better address these interests. The WEI process is led by independent facilitators and supported by technical specialists. To learn more visit: <https://www.getinvolvednechako.ca/water-engagement-initiative/>

Early in the WEI process, participants identified that residents along the Nechako Reservoir face specific challenges. In response, the Southside Working Group (SWG) was formed to identify the interests, gather information, and discuss ways to address the challenges.

Recent participants in the SWG have included Tim Plesko, Gary and Julie Blackwell, Mike Robertson, Charlie Rensby, Clint Lambert, and James Rakochy. Rio Tinto participants have included Andrew Czornohalan, Andy Lecuyer, and Devrie Sanghera. Independent technical and facilitation support includes Rahul Ray, Jayson Kurtz, and Colin Parkinson.

Some of the issues identified to date have included: erosion, livestock, water pumps and intakes, water quality, navigation, recreation, wildlife, funding, wildfire, communication, and power. Some of these issues can be addressed by the WEI. However, other issues not directly related to Rio Tinto operations are being addressed through other processes. Regardless, the SWG will make sure that a pathway is outlined for each issue that needs to be addressed and will provide updates as their work advances.

Once the WEI process is complete, a Southside Implementation Committee will meet once or twice per year to review results from monitoring efforts, discuss emerging issues, identify information gaps, and confirm actions needed. To start, Tim Plesko, Gary Blackwell, Mike Robertson, Andy Lecuyer, and Andrew Czornohalan have volunteered to lead the Southside Implementation Committee.

If you are interested in learning more about the SWG, the work that is being undertaken, or to share your interests, please reach out to one of these individuals.

- Tim Plesko: WEI participant, Southside resident, tjplesko@gmail.com (250-694-3377)
- Gary and Julie Blackwell: WEI participant, Southside resident, wistaria@telus.net (250-694-3459)
- Mike Robertson: WEI participant, Cheslatta Carrier Nation and Southside resident, mrobertson@cheslatta.com (250 692-9214)
- Andy Lecuyer: Rio Tinto, andy.lecuyer@riotinto.com , (778-876 8380)
- Andrew Czornohalan: Rio Tinto, andrew.czornohalan@riotinto.com
- Rahul Ray: Independent facilitator, r-ray@edynamics.com , (250-590-0072)