
To: WEI Southside Working Group Meeting Participants

From: Rahul Ray

Date: November 19, 2021

Re: Final Southside Working Group Workshop 3 (Videoconference) Summary, November 2, 2021

A videoconference for the Southside Working Group was held on November 2, 2021, from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. The videoconference was held instead of an in-person meeting to promote social distancing in response to COVID-19, while making progress on Reservoir interests. This was the third workshop.

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

The facilitator was Rahul Ray (RR) from EDI Environmental Dynamics Inc. (EDI). Tanya Guenther, also from EDI, took notes during the workshop and prepared this meeting summary. JK (JK) from Ecofish Research participated as the Technical Working Group (TWG) coordinator.

A draft agenda was shared with invitation to this meeting.

Table 1. November 2, 2021 – Southside Working Group Workshop Participants

Individual	Organization
Gary (GB) and Julie Blackwell (JB)	WEI Main Table participant/Southside representatives
Andy Lecuyer (AL)	Rio Tinto, Senior Environmental Advisor
Tim Plesko	WEI Main Table participant/Southside representative
Mike Robertson (MR)	WEI Main Table participant/Southside representative/Cheslatta Carrier Nation
Devrie Sanghera	Rio Tinto, Communities and Social Performance Advisor
Jayson Kurtz	WEI Technical Working Group coordinator, Ecofish Research
Clint Lambert (CL)	Regional District of Bulkley Nechako
Colin Parkinson (CP)	EDI – Navigation specialist
Rahul Ray	EDI - Facilitator
Tanya Guenther	EDI – Note taker

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

- **Introductions: New participants:**
 - Tanya Guenther: EDI Writing Support Team member and is providing support for taking notes and preparing the meeting summary.
 - Colin Parkinson: Background worked for the coast guard, on vessels, navigable waters protection officer, retired in 2019. Worked on this reservoir for the Tahtsa Narrows dredging project, Skins Lake Spillway upgrade, and Kemano tunnel. Worked on permits for Site C for *Navigable Waters Act*, now *Canadian Navigable Waters Act*. CP has joined the EDI team as an independent facilitator and will be a resource regarding navigation.

- **Review of the intent of the Southside Working Group**
 - Identify reservoir specific issues and develop pathways to address the issues.
 - Not focused on flow changes (part of the structured decision-making process).
 - All decisions will go to the main table as part of the overall actions.

- **Issues identified to date include:**
 - Erosion
 - Livestock
 - Water pumps and intakes
 - Water quality
 - Navigation
 - Recreation
 - Wildlife
 - Funding
 - Wildfire
 - Communication
 - Power

- **Action items from previous meeting were reviewed and updates provided below.**

Table 2. Updates to action items.

Date	Action Item	Assigned to
April 2021	Organize detailed inventory of erosional hotspots on the reservoir. To be conducted by a team of technical experts and GB.	Rio Tinto/TWG
.	Update:	

	AL: Maps were included with the memo and further details will be included with updated imagery	
April 2021	Discuss details for collection of aerial imagery for the reservoir.	TWG
	<p>Update:</p> <p>AL: Some aerial images are available of Cheslatta on the southern end, but not the entire reservoir. Ortho or lidar would be important.</p> <p>MR: Has there been a detailed overview of driftwood in the past? If so, would be valuable. On the tour we saw 6-foot waves and bays clogged with driftwood. There are a lot of erosion issues.</p> <p>Action: Based on tour – JK and AL will review the reservoir map to identify key areas to focus on obtaining imagery. They will circulate to the group for feedback on key areas.</p> <p>**Be aware after high water is when there is a large amount of debris on the water surface. (July). Need to consider the timing of aerial images.</p>	
April 2021	Assess the situation, determine the best approach to facilitate cattle not being trapped in the Bear Lake Saddle Dam No. 2 ditch, and implement the work.	Rio Tinto work with Cheslatta Contracting group
	<p>Update: Work did take place this year. Trees were removed, a ditch was created and a road was built down to the lake saddle dame.</p> <p>MR: Big challenges with cattle getting into the mud. Do we have any updates on the results and impacts of the work completed? Could we circulate some pictures of before and after along with a summary of success of the work?</p> <p>Action: AL to obtain before and after pictures.</p> <p>There have been some people asking if there is still talk about fencing. Lake fencing was ruled out. It was determined the road and access in and out would be sufficient for the task. Main challenge with fencing is the long-term maintenance.</p> <p>Potential of trapping some beavers as it is getting a bit wet. Water is backing up and creating a bog in the low-lying area.</p> <p>Getting west of the spillway into ranching country, the question of containment and fencing is an issue. Out west, ranchers have different concerns for mitigation.</p> <p>Other areas have used boulders in the water as a fence line option. Another option is to anchor a boom log. The cattle can step over one log, but the boulders/logs could be a way to do it. They will float at high water and drop down with lower water levels.</p> <p>Windy areas would be hard to anchor a boom log. Tough to get boulders here.</p>	

	<p>Action: JK to follow up with GB and map out where fencing is an issue. This will be to provide a better understanding of the issues of fencing in the water reservoir.</p> <p>Currently there are panels in the water and some panels are lost over the winter. They are to keep them in the pasture. With changing water levels it is hard to keep the cattle in the pastures.</p> <p><i>After the meeting, Julie and Gary Blackwell wrote, "The fencing for ranchers on the Reservoir is a problem for both the East and West ends."</i></p>	
April 2021	Communicate the water pumps and intake information to other residents on a case-by-case basis.	SWG participants
	<p>Update:</p> <p>Memo was circulated at last meeting related to water intakes. We looked at it on the tour as well. Complete.</p>	
April 2021	Update Water Pumps and Intake memo with information on how to potentially address turbidity issues.	TWG participants
	<p>Update:</p> <p>AL: Memo addressed pumping issue, but not sure about turbidity.</p> <p>Action: AL to review the memo.</p>	
April 2021	Activate individual identified as the Navigation Table Technical Coordinator.	TWG
	<p>Update:</p> <p>CP has been identified as the navigation table technical coordinator. Complete.</p>	
April 2021	Form a navigation table to address navigation issues in the reservoir	Navigational Technical Coordinator
	<p>Update:</p> <p>CP will begin work on this action item.</p>	
April 2021	Continue follow up with GB about wildlife issues on the reservoir.	JK
	<p>Update:</p> <p>Discussed some of the issues on the boat tour. The area where the cow moose have their calves, the debris on the shores.</p>	
April 2021	Follow up with TP about cormorant nesting on the reservoir.	JK

	<p>Update:</p> <p>TP will be putting more information together and forwarding to JK.</p> <p>Suggestion to go back for another tour in the spring when the water is low to reassess. Suggested timing is as soon as the ice is off the lake, mid to end of May.</p>	
April 2021	Provide updates on 3 Phase Power.	CL
	<p>CL: Not too much happened over the summer. Still trying to obtain estimates for upgrades. In the works, but is moving slow.</p> <p>Before the boat trip, CL shared some stories of when he was younger and a young men’s group would go out to Blue Creek. They would canoe around the chain of lakes, camp on the island, and swim in and out of the creek. They would watch the fish underneath them. They would float in lifejackets with their fishing poles and try to catch fish.</p> <p>They used to go with church groups and use Blue Creek and fish and swim. Recollections of Blue Creek and the special place it was. This was 30 years ago and there were quite a few fish in the creek there at that time.</p> <p>Ongoing. CL to provide periodic updates.</p>	
April 2021	Provide updates on communications upgrades.	CL
	<p>Update: Ongoing. CL to provide periodic updates.</p>	
April 2021	Review draft Southside Adaptive Management Plan and provide feedback by the end of April 2021.	SWG participants
	<p>Update: Rahul to advance</p>	

- **Southside boat tour review (memo and photo)**
 - Thanks to everyone who took the time to join the tour and share concerns and knowledge.
 - Issues identified included:
 - navigation;
 - debris; and,
 - shoreline access for livestock and wildlife.
 - Access was not easy through may of the areas the group travelled. Went further down to key creeks where there has historically been good fishing. We saw a few reds in the gravel. Beautiful, special spots, and thank you for sharing it with us!
 - The furthest reach was between Tahtsa and the narrows. There was a camp set up with folks working on a Rio Tinto project.

- Would be great if we could do a better job of communicating when a teams will be out working and receive regular updates. This team will be working until Christmas and then the work will slow down in the new year.
- In the afternoon the tour moved to erosion as the main topic.
- Information gained/discussed during the boat tour:
 - Fish utilization in the narrows. Not a lot of data right now. GB shared there has been good fishing in the narrows as there is a gravel bottom. Need to better understand fish utilization.
 - Dredging the narrows: Not currently a Rio Tinto project, but it has been highlighted by other parties as a potential project.
 - Fish species: There has been some work done in terms of fish species but there is a data gap in the reservoir.
 - Should take some action in future at Andrews creek/Wistaria to use local resources and consultants to get a better look at those locations.
 - Past fishing derby data: Great opportunity here for data that may help with fish presences or absences.
 - Cheslatta Band Office: The band office has resources. This group could spend time at the band office to tap into the wealth of information available there, including pre-reservoir and the First People's utilization of the area. Could bring people from Southside to have a meeting in the band office.
 - Erosion: The tour really showed us the vast areas where there is substrate gravel and sand that are easily erodible. Will need to consider if there are opportunities for improvement design.
 - Cabin about 200 feet away from erosion line, infrastructure is now at risk. GB lost a few cattle this year as well.
 - Residents are not able to build residential structures below 2820 because of erosion. With the license, the water can be brought up to that level. We think the Kenney Dam is below that.
- Tour Highlights:
 - The tour highlighted the benefits of spending time together and discussing the data and knowledge out there. Never underestimate the knowledge and information locals have to share.
 - MR: Trip to Tahtsa Narrows was a spectacular trip. Highlight was going out on GB's boat with the smaller motor and understanding the power of the 4 to 6 foot swells while we were out there.
 - Andy: Sitting with GB after the tour. The thought about having a local representative for the Southside for people who do not want to participate in this meeting, and having a spokesperson for the group.

- GB: During the kokanee run there were more birds and smells of the fish. Did not see any bald eagles on this trip, a bit too late in the year for them. Buster's creek used to have a big kokanee run, across from Wistaria Creek.
 - Talking with everyone. Being there and able to share with each other.
 - Tim: We spent time on the water and it was great to see the differences in areas. The west end of the lake was calm, flat water with snow. On the lake, we had the natural winds we had every day. Showed the challenges of varying conditions in the large watershed.
- Other discussions arising from tour:
 - It would be helpful to look at the different systems throughout the year so we can get a better understanding.
 - Communication of activities:
 - Would be helpful if there was a better communication process for activity and people are working or moving in and out of the area.
 - The activity has an impact on the guiding business. People moving back and forth disturbs the wildlife.
 - DS shared that Rio Tinto has different channels of communication in place currently. For Spillway activity, there are emails, social media, and phone calls. It is part of an engagement stakeholder system. We can specify different engagement plans and alert people based on their preferences, and even go to radio announcements for some notifications. It is decided on a case-by-case basis.

After the meeting, Gary and Julie Blackwell wrote to Rahul, "We would like to emphasize that Rio Tinto should notify the other users, such as Guide Outfitters and Trappers when projects are going to take place on the Reservoir. A man camp, with boats coming and going, makes a huge impact on a Guide area."

- **Navigation issues**

- Introduction of CP, Navigational Technical Coordinator.
- CP provided an overview of the regulatory responsibility for navigation in the reservoir.
 - Navigation is a common right. The Act was modified in 2014. A big change was introducing the concept of scheduled waters. Scheduled waters are water ways that are required to get an approval before stating work. In unscheduled waters, pre-approval is not required. For unscheduled waters, there must be a public notification. Ootsa and Nechako are unscheduled. Skins Lake, Kenney Dam, and the tunnel all have approvals and any alterations to them would need approval.

- Major works: would apply to water control structures and would require an application to the Nav Protection Program.
 - In this case, a lot of the works we would like to do (upgrade/building of new boat launch) would require a notification be posted on the site, 45 days for public comment, and then the proponent and commenter are to resolve the problem. If not resolved, then it goes to Nav Protection Program to determine if an approval is required.
 - Not clear if Wistaria with an existing piece of infrastructure would still need a notification. Minor works can apply to certain things and may apply to the boat launch, but not sure if Wistaria has an approval or not.
 - Rio Tinto can apply to the Nav Protection Program to get a list of approvals that exist for the Rio Tinto. For all approvals would need to do a freedom of information request.
 - We think Rio Tinto retains the occupant license to cut underwater timber, but there is an agreement between Rio Tinto and Cheslatta Carrier Nation that Cheslatta Carrier Nation has the right of first refusal to harvest the wood.
 - **Action: CP to get a list of Rio Tinto approvals under the Nav Protection Program.**
 - **Action: CP to get information about requirements for upgrades to dock and costs.**
 - **Action: CP to pull together a regulatory framework to share with the group.**
- Navigation issues identified to date:
- Dead standing trees
 - Shoreline access
 - Shallow access
 - Would be great to have some markers in the danger spots. It was clarified that anyone can put of a private aid to navigation.
 - The biggest challenge is lack of information to the public about how to get anywhere in the water.
 - There were quite a few markers towards Whitesail at one time, but the wind takes them out, and they would need to be maintained annually.
 - The underwater channels were logged to make navigation safer, but the information was not shared with the public, the area was not marked, and people do not know where it is safe.
 - There is a need for maps and information about safe access. This would aid in navigation, and would also be helpful if there is an accident. Discussed options of boat users to download their GPS tracks as a starting point.
 - Should be some information/data available somewhere about the underwater logging.

- Hance Wagner came up with a public program to put buoys, but there were questions from Alcan about liability and they were taken out.
- Draft workplan
 - **Action:** CP to outline some of the tools that exist in the workplan, and we get a cost estimate.
- Pathway to address issues
 - Cost estimates
 - New dock
 - Buoys
 - Tree removal
 - Erosion
 - Fence installation
- **Southside Implementation Committee**
 - Intent is better communication and action post-WEI and is part of the WEI adaptive management plan.
 - Approach is collaborative with representatives.
 - Committee to hold meetings on regular basis.
 - Committee will review results from monitoring.
 - Structure: Chairperson and a coordinator to do the leg work.
 - Does this approach make sense?
 - The group agreed this is a good approach and would like to move forward, and had the following thoughts:
 - It needs to be funded.
 - It is a mechanism to implement projects.
 - It will keep wind in the sails and keep the momentum.
 - It fits into the overall WEI, with the understanding that there are some specific issues on the southside.
 - GB shared that he really respects the the fact that Rio Tinto is willing to do this. He has worked many hours over the years with major licensees and gets to the point where they won't listen at all.
 - This is an opportunity for accountability, partnership and keeping the main topics alive – a holistic approach from everybody.
 - This is uncharted water for the locals as they deal with the realities of the operators of the reservoir. It will take a lot of time, expertise, and skill to change the perspective of the local community and we need to continue to build trust.

- AL: This team is willing to listen and help where we can. You have the ears of Rio Tinto right now. WEI and other interest groups are doing our best and appreciate everyone taking the time to partake in these meetings. It is easy to throw stones at the wall, but if you are not facing us and bringing it to us we don't know. It may take us a while to get to all these things. It will take time to tackle the larger problems, but let's keep chipping away.
 - A great part of the tour, from MR, was for AL and JK to get to know the Southsiders better and build up the level of trust. MR can vouch for the credibility, energy and understanding of AL wanting to get involved and doing the right things. Andrew C and up the ladder are the people we've needed for a long time. It is exciting to work with the whole team including DS and others. This can work if everyone is honest and forthcoming, and we communicate this to the public.
 - Early every fall, Rio Tinto provides an opportunity for public to gather at the spillway. We can use this as an opportunity to make a presentation and share with the community. It needs to be shared with the community at large that it is different company than what we've dealt with in the past.
 - **Action: Rahul to draft and circulate to the group press release about implementation committee.**
- Next meeting: Tuesday January 11, 2022, from 4 to 6 p.m.
 - Adjournment 5:51 p.m.

New ACTION ITEMS

Date	Action Item
Nov 2021	Colin to obtain a list of Rio Tinto approvals under the Nav Protection Program
Nov 2021	Colin: Obtain Information about requirements for upgrades to Wistaria dock and the costs.
Nov 2021	Colin: Compile a list of who has regulatory responsibility for what items on the waterway.
Nov 2021	Rahul: Draft a press release about the Southside Implementation Committee, and circulate to the group for feedback.