



To: WEI Meeting Participants

From: Rahul Ray and Jason Collier

Date: December 19, 2024

Re: Final Rio Tinto WEI Main Table Meeting Summary, Thursday, December 5, 2024

An in-person meeting for the Rio Tinto Water Engagement Initiative (WEI) was held on Thursday, December 5, 2024, from 9 am to 12 pm PST in Vanderhoof. Lunch was provided at the venue after the meeting. A videoconference option was available for the meeting for those who could not join in person.

This document provides a meeting summary and is not a word-for-word transcription of meeting discussions. The information presented highlights the topics raised, key discussions, and identified action items.

The facilitator was **Rahul Ray** (RR) from EDI. **Jason Collier**, from EDI, took notes during the meeting and supported this summary. **Jayson Kurtz** from Ecofish Research participated as the Technical Working Group (TWG) coordinator. **Rachel Chudnow** and **Kristen Lyle** (videoconference) from Ecofish were present as process technical support. **Aman Parhar, Quinten Beach, and Andy Lecuyer** were present as Rio Tinto support representatives.

Andre Zimmerman and **Simon Gauthier** from Northwest Hydraulics Consultants (NHC) participated as presenters.

Steve Litke attended as a Fraser Basin Council representative.

Andrew Czornohalan (AC), Rio Tinto Operations Director Power and Services, Kitimat and Kemano participated as a WEI Main Table member.

The attendance for the WEI meeting on December 5, 2024, is listed in Table 1.

Table 1. December 5, 2024 – WEI Main Table Meeting Participants

Individual	Organization
Andrew Czornohalan	Rio Tinto
Clint Lambert	Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako
Denis Wood	Public participant
Donna Klingspohn	Public Participant
Gerd Erasmus	Public participant
Heather Proctor	Ministry of Forests, Water Authorizations
Jim D’Andrea	Cheslatta Carrier Nation (videoconference)

Individual	Organization
June Wood	Public participant
Kevin Moutray	District of Vanderhoof
Kim Menounos	Fraser Basin Council/Nechako Watershed Roundtable
Linda Sjodin	Public Participant
Lyla Brophy	Public Participant (videoconference)
Mike Robertson	Cheslatta Carrier Nation
Phillip Krauskopf	Ministry of Forests, Water Authorizations
Ray Klingspohn	Public participant
Shirley Moon	Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako
Stephen Dery	University of Northern British Columbia (videoconference)
Steve Gordon	Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
Tim Plesko	Public participant/Southside representative (videoconference)
Wayne Salewski	Public participant/NEWSS
Cody Reid	Cheslatta Carrier Nation

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

WELCOME AND UPDATES

Attendees were welcomed to the meeting. The agenda for December 5 was reviewed. No additions or deletions were made.

PHASE 1 REPORT

Rahul walked through the Final Phase 1 report. Each in-person attendee was provided with a hard copy. The report summarizes the efforts of WEI participants since 2019. Rahul realizes that many participants are seeking more substantive change. Phase 1 is a start and more work will be done as the WEI has a lot of moving parts.

Rahul walked through Table of Contents for the report. He then reviewed the process to finalize the document. This included:

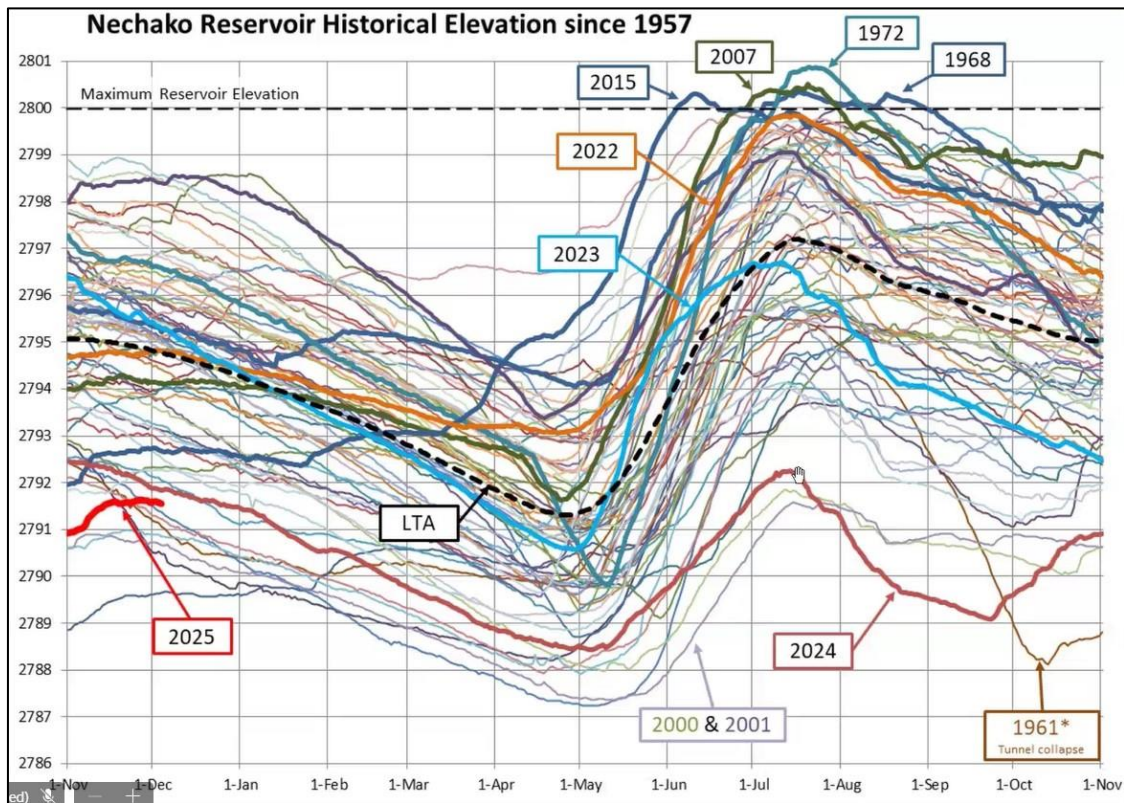
- Prepared draft report
- Circulated report to the Main Table and Technical Working Group (TWG) for comment
- Received responses from 9 participants, with 4 sets of comments to address
- Addressed comments in line with Main Table discussions (no new decisions or outcomes)
- Prepared final report

Rahul reviewed some of the tangible benefits of Phase 1:

- Better understanding of community interests
- Community input into Rio Tinto operations
- Improved communication (Flow Facts)
- Southside Working Group
- Community Leaders Forum collaboration
- Information compilation
- Identification of data gaps, research needs, and monitoring interests
- Structured Decision Making (SDM) assessment framework to support future WEI phases

SUMMARY OF 2024 WATER YEAR AND PHASE 1 FLOW ALTERNATIVE

Andrew gave a presentation on the 2024 water year, including discussion of the drought, which is not over, although some relief came in the fall during precipitation events. Unfortunately, the drought impacted the ability to implement the flow regime decided on in Phase 1. Andrew presented the Reservoir data from the last 12 months. Inflows for the year are 70% of the Long Term Average (LTA). Reservoir Level is well below the historical elevations since 1957.



During the drought, Rio Tinto bought energy to preserve water levels in the Reservoir, but still release the STMP. During September, Rio Tinto was looking at the worst-case scenarios on how to handle the drought. Rain events in the fall brought Reservoir levels up to where they were approximately at the same time as last year, which still isn't a great spot to be. Reservoir levels are still ~ 3.5 ft below LTA historical levels.

Andrew presented information on the predicted seasonal averages and there is a strong signal that precipitation will be above average. Stephen Dery (UNBC) mentioned that El Nina is occurring, which typically brings cooler temperatures and more precipitation (good snowpack). Andrew confirmed that the snowpack around the Reservoir is still below average for this time of year, although the rain that has been occurring is making its way into the reservoir.

Gerd asked if Rio Tinto measures the snowpack for water content rather than just high, for instance. Andrew replied that Rio Tinto measures the snow for water equivalents.

Andrew touched on observed inflows and discharge and forecasted release as the Skins Lake Spillway. He mentioned that the Nautley River is also at historical low levels.

Wayne asked if the STMP flows could be adjusted to provide benefits elsewhere at different times of year. Andrew replied that those changes would need to be worked out with DFO, but if there is buy in from others (such as First Nations, stakeholders, science, etc.) there could be a way to move forward on that.

Wayne provided a summary on the interesting work he and others are doing with installations of analogous beaver dams to help address drought situations for farmers and ranchers. Funding was provided through NEEF, Rio Tinto, and others. 40 Beaver Dam Analogues (BDAs) have been installed with 18 monitoring wells.

Andrew provided a high-level summary of the incident that occurred when a helicopter hit one of BC Hydro's powerlines, and Rio Tinto needed to respond to keep the electrical load up for the north.

PHASE 1 NON-FLOW ALTERNATIVE COMPONENTS

Jayson Kurtz and Rachel Chudnow gave a presentation entitled, "TWG Update on Phase 1: Reporting and Implementation". They spoke about:

- Study plans for data gaps
- Physical works (design/review)
- Implementation update:
 - Osprey nesting physical works update
 - Kokanee Reconnaissance Survey

There was some discussion on the results of the Kokanee survey. Rachel provided context that the survey conducted was just the initial survey and there were more targeted surveys to come. Just because no Kokanee were noticed during the one-day survey does not mean that they are not present. There was also some discussion around historical spawning grounds, as well as some questions and discuss around the potential of beavers being responsible for the decline of the Kokanee populations. Jayson replied that there is lots we don't know about Kokanee and Rainbow trout. There has been lots of change with beaver populations and fish are known to work around beaver dams so it's hard to say what the cause is. There was some discussion that water temperature could be a factor, as well. The TWG is going to lay out the steps to try and answer these questions.

SOUTHSIDE WORKING GROUP

Quinten provided an update on the efforts of the Southside Working Group (SWG).

He mentioned:

- That the SWG is active, with two meetings held this year
- Quinten, Andy, and Aman are leading the meetings, with opportunities available for SWG members to lead the meetings
- The navigation buoys have been well-received by boaters. The SWG will be working with BC Parks to add more buoys and improve the anchor system

- Plans are being made for upgrades for the boat launch at Wistaria Landing.
- Took a flight with Gary Blackwell to look at Kokanee spawning areas at Tahtsa reach.
- Will be sending out a poll for the next SWG meeting to be held in January.

DAM EMERGENCY PLANNING

Quinten and Aman presented on dam safety. They spoke about:

- Kenney Dam geotechnical investigation
- Diversion tunnel concrete plug inspection
- Kenney Dam access and egress trails for dam inspections
- Dam Safety inspection in the Spring and Fall
- New weather station and debris boom at West Tahtsa
- Stop log repair project
- Updated inundation mapping to be added to the Dam Emergency Plan
- Updated signage on all Dams as per public safety plan
- Radio gate inspections at Skins Lake Spillway (SLS)
- Resurfacing Skins Lake 1 Dam
- Annual brushing and vegetation control at Skins Lake Spillway

There were some questions related to whether work around the dam was for the Water Release Facility (WRF). Quinten confirmed that it wasn't. There was some interest in whether a tour could be arranged to see what has been done. Quintin said he would work with Aman to try and arrange a tour for the WEI.

HYBRID PHASE

Rahul showed the image of the hybrid image presented, discussed, and supported at the last WEI Main Table meeting.

Andrew spoke about the intent moving forward. It will not be a sequential approach. That is, elements of Phase 2 will likely be addressed at the same time as Phase 3. Currently, the feasibility report for the WRF is being worked on and agreements with First Nations are being explored. The feasibility report will outline the options that are available for several elements (i.e. release facility, Cheslatta fan, Nechako canyon). During the next year, engineering and costs will be determined. In

early 2026, the WEI will look at the various options, and decisions could be made in the later part of 2026, followed by work in 2027 - 2029. Permitting could take a long time. In some cases, it looks like 5-7 years or longer, although efforts will be made to try and fast track the process by working closely with governments.

The WEI is moving forward, and participants need to stay involved. The WEI has come a long way and have made excellent progress. These are exciting times. We soon be looking at Phase 2 and 3 studies related to STMP, flow, temperature expectations, and so on. Working closely with regulators the whole time. Rio Tinto will prepare a scoping document which will be shared with the WEI.

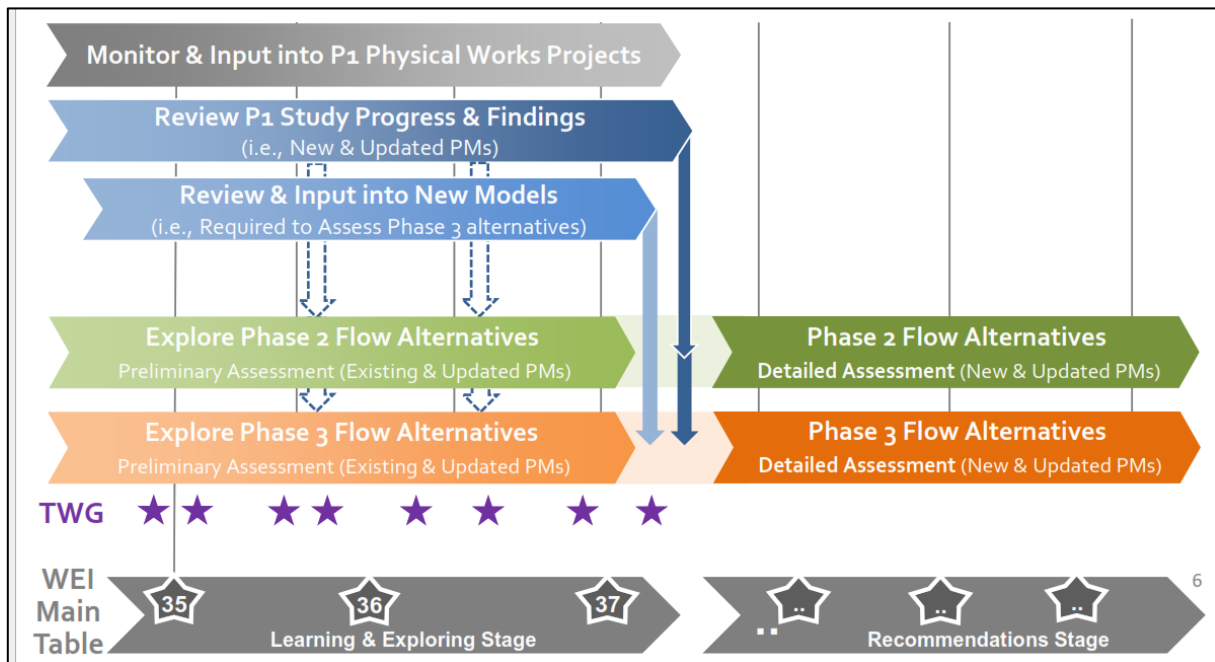
Donna asked how long it will take for Phase 2 and 3. Andrew replied that it is difficult to say. Phase 2 alterations will be worked on in parallel with Phase 3 Infrastructure, which is gaining good momentum.

Mike R mentioned that the Cheslatta are grateful that they are close to having an agreement in place with their partners, they are also eager to get going on the WRF, and are happy the ways things are progressing.

Denis mentioned that the WRF is key and lots of benefits will come from it. It was asked for in 1950's and in 1999 with NEEF. It's unacceptable the government should stand in the way. If we can put pressure on governments, we should be able to the 5-7 years down to 2 years. There has been some poor decisions made by government and they should be willing to fix past wrongs. He concluded by saying: "there were three culpable parties to the facility not being included during the building of the dam. These were the two governments; federal and provincial, as well as the Aluminum Company of Canada as it was known then."

Andrew mentioned it is challenging, and we need to have a project scoped before seeking approvals. Lots of things need to be addressed, such as the Nechako canyon, Cheslatta falls, Skins Lake, etc. However, things are finally aligned. Now is the time to act.

Gerd spoke about the need to know the costs of the water when it flows east and west in order to inform our decisions. In the end, it is taxpayers' money. Andrew said they are trying to get to that goal, but there are challenges. For instance, how do you put a price on sturgeon recovery if we don't yet know the solution – it's impossible to put metrics to a lot of problems. Andy mentioned that the TWG is working towards addressing those gaps, but it takes time.



GEOMOPHIC ASSESSMENT

Andre Zimmerman from Northwest Hydraulics spoke about the work his team has done.

They have created a geomorphology map book.

As a thank you, each WEI participant will get a copy.

NEXT STEPS

Rahul spoke about the Phase 1 process, stating that “anything worth doing is never easy.” He commended the Main Table for their extraordinary efforts. The work the table has done is the foundation to build on. It is not the end, as there is plenty of work to be done

He mentioned that through the survey, he has seen that there could be facilitator fatigue for some participants, which is understandable after 5 years

As the process moves on to the next phase, it is likely time for a new facilitator. As a result, Rahul will not be helping to support the process through facilitation

He will be available to support the next facilitator as they get ready to work with the Main Table get to where you need to go.

He said he has truly enjoyed working with the WEI participants. It has been an honour.

MEETING ADJOURNED

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 pm