



To: Water Engagement Initiative Main Table Meeting Participants

From: Aman Parhar, Rio Tinto

Date: June 25, 2025

Re: Summary of Main Table meeting held Wednesday, June 25, 2025, 1:00 pm to 4:00pm PST

MEETING AGENDA:

1. Introductions
2. Cultural Share
3. Hydrology Report
4. WEI 2024 Annual Report & Effectiveness Monitoring Report
5. Phase 1 Implementation
6. TWG Update
7. Nechako Infrastructure Update
8. Research & Monitoring Report
9. Q & A

ATTENDEES:

BOLD = Present UNBOLD = Invited

- **Andrew Czornohalan (Rio Tinto)**
- **Aman Parhar (Rio Tinto)**
- **Andy Lecuyer (Rio Tinto)**
- Alec Mercier (Rio Tinto)
- Courtney McGinn (Rio Tinto)
- **Ben Hewitt (MWLRS)**
- Tom Bulmer (District of Vanderhoof)
- Chantelle Grafton (MWLRS)
- Clint Lambert (Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako)
- Cody Reid (Cheslatta Carrier Nation)
- Charlie Rensby (Village of Burns Lake)
- Curtis Helgesen (Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako)
- **Dan Sneep (DFO)**
- David Creighton (NH)
- **Doug Casimel (Stellat'en First Nation)**
- Duncan McColl (Ministry of Forests)
- Dustin Snyder (SCWA)
- **David Van Dollah (District of Vanderhoof)**
- Gina Liston
- **Gerd Erasmus (Public participant)**
- **Henry Klassen (Public participant)**
- Dennis Wood (Public participant)
- **Donna Klingspohn (Public participant)**
- Elisabeth (Nechako Lodge)
- James Jacklin (MLWRS)
- Jennifer Pollard (MLWRS)
- June Wood (Public participant)
- **Henry Wiebe (Burns Lake)**
- **Kirstin Jorgensen (DFO)**
- **Kim Menounos (Fraser Basin Council)**
- **Kevin Moutray (District of Vanderhoof)**
- **Lyla Brophy (Public participant)**
- Linda Sjodin (Public participant)
- Luc Turcotte (MWLRS)
- Maria Sotiropoulos (DFO)

- **Mark Parker (Regional District Bulkley-Nechako)**
- **Mike Henry (DFO)**
- **Mike Robertson (Cheslatta Carrier Nation)**
- **Phillip Krauskopf (MWLRS)**
- **Quinten Beach (Rio Tinto)**
- Ray Pillipow (BC)
- **Ray Kingspohn (Public participant)**
- **Wayne Salewski (NEWSS)**
- Shirely Moon (Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako)
- Stephen Dery (UNBC)
- **Steve Gordon (MWLRS)**
- **Stewart Pearce (DFO)**
- **Tim Plesko (Public participant)**
- **Tina Pederson (Cheslatta Carrier Nation)**
- Gary Blackwell (Public Participant)
- Julie Blackwell (Public Participant)
- **Jayson Kurtz (Ecofish)**
- **Kirsten Lyle (Ecofish)**

MEETING SUMMARY:

1. Introductions

- Quick round of introductions for all present.

2. Cultural Share

- Presentation from Mike Robertson
- Welcome to Tina Pederson as a new member of Cheslatta Lands and Resources Department
- Cheslatta, in collaboration with Rio Tinto successfully implemented a slope stabilization project to protect burial sites at the Cheslatta burial ground. Mike provided a brief history of how erosion from flow fluctuations in the Nechako river has caused erosion and impacted upwards of 60 graves. This resulted in large concentrations of human remains being washed into the adjacent watercourse. The completion of the slope stabilization project will prevent further damage to this archaeological site.
- A release facility at Kenney Dam would permanently remove the risk of future flooding and erosion of the gravesites.
- Appreciation to Andrew, Quinten and Aman for their support in making this project happen.

3. Hydrology Report

- Presentation from Andrew Czornohalan
 - Drought conditions continue.
 - 2024 was a new record low for water moving into the system; the current situation is slightly better than this time last year, but 2025 is on track to be similar to 2024. This represents significant challenges for Rio Tinto.
 - To mitigate against further reductions in reservoir elevations and flows in the Nechako River, Rio Tinto curtailed smelter operations and implemented energy in 2024. Additional energy imports continued through the winter of 2025.
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- Rio Tinto is preparing to implement Summer Temperature Management Program (STMP) flows – observed water temperatures are starting to rise, as is expected this time of year.
- Reservoir projection for 2026 show that there is a potential for T2 and Kemano shutdowns, even with curtailment of operations and energy imports. This is further complicated with global market conditions and targeted tariffs from the US on aluminium.
- Environmental flows (e.g. ,minimum flows, STMP, and ramping rates) are protected in the water licences and other legal agreements.
- Andrew confirms that getting NFCP together to evaluate STMP moving forward is a key discussion point soon.

4. WEI 2024 Annual Report & Effectiveness Monitoring Report

- Presentation from Jayson Kurtz
- The 2024 Effectiveness Monitoring Report includes the performance measure results for the flow regime implemented in 2024. As a reminder, the Phase 1 preferred flow (Alt 6A) was not implemented in 2024 (its first implementation was May of 2025), the 2024 flow regime was a “status quo” water-year.
- The results of the 2024 Report showed that 6 of 19 PMs were outside of the predicted range. This was a result of more extreme conditions than usual (drought and high temperatures).
- A copy of 2024 Effectiveness Monitoring Report will be shared with the Main Table members following this meeting.
- The 2024 WEI Annual report provides a summary of all the work completed by the WEI. It is more of a high-level narrative, similar to the Phase 1 Summary report prepare for the previous five years of WEI.
- A copy of the 2024 WEI Annual Report will be shared with the Main Table members following this meeting.

5. Phase 1 Implementation

- Presentation from Andy Lecuyer
- Phase 1 flow was implemented in May 2025 (flow Alternative 6A). This resulted in a “pulse flow” in May to coincide with spring freshet.
- The ramp-down event at the Skins Lake Spillway (at the end of the “pulse flow”) was monitored in the field to see how the ramping rates performed from a fish protection perspective.
- A crew of six were on site for three days. One day before the event, and both days during the ramp-down event to observe/document and salvage any stranded fish. Review of stage data collected, and reporting is underway.
- Wayne and Henry expressed desire to increase the level of effort for fish stranding monitoring further downstream as well. Andy suggests this be discussed in more detail with the Technical Working Group. This will be added to a future TWG meeting agenda.

6. TWG Update

- Presentation from Jayson Kurtz
 - The TWG has held one meeting (May 21, 2025) since the last Main Table Meeting.
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- Technical work is ongoing to support Phase 1 implementation, including non-flow components (physical works, understanding data gaps and how to fill them, updating technical memo).
- Review of an example of a “Project on a Page” for one Physical Work and one Data gap study example to show what information is available for planning for implementation (what is the approach, where does the work need to be done (physical location), high-level cost estimate, schedule/timing etc.).
- Update on two Physical Works projects – Osprey Nesting relocation, and Large Woody Debris removal on the Nechako Reservoir to benefit Caribou.
- More detailed Study Plans have been developed for some of the data gap studies (e.g. Fish Overwintering Habitat); these study plans are intended to support procurement (development of Requests for Proposals for prospective contractors) and informs implementation of work.
- A review of recently published research looking at how warm water temperatures effect salmon was completed to inform next steps for data collection specific to the Nechako River.
- The intent is to start to implement study plans this summer. Work will be done in collaboration with Infrastructure development.
- Per Henry’s request, Jayson provided an overview of who the Technical Working Group is (members from Rio Tinto, DFO, Province of BC, Ecofish, First Nations and UNBC), and when they meet (as-needed right now).
- Questions regarding potential for opportunities for volunteers/youth engagement/capacity building to support future studies in the watershed. Support for this idea from Andy and Aman.

7. Southside Working Group

- Presentation from Quinten Beach
- Update on buoy program. Work continues in 2025. Some adjustments to installs, purchase of new buoys, maintenance is ongoing.
- One SSWG meeting was held this year, another meeting is planned for Q3 (date TBD).

8. Nechako Infrastructure Update

- Presentation from Andrew Czornohalan
- An agreement was signed in January 2025 to progress the prefeasibility study for Infrastructure projects.
- A project shaping workshop was held in March 2025.
- Andrew provided a brief overview of the Major Projects Process (how Rio Tinto intends to move from “concept” to “execution”).
- Introduction to Jasmine Thomas, Saik’uz First Nation
- Support and excitement from Cheslatta and Saik’uz for this project, and the collaboration between the different communities working collaboratively to improve the health of the watershed.

9. Research & Monitoring Report

- Presentation from Jayson Kurtz
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- Overview of all of the research and monitoring programs that are currently underway in the Nechako watershed to give the Main Table members a sense of what is currently underway. This is a snapshot of the work, not a fully comprehensive list.
- UNBC, UVic, École de technologie supérieure (ÉTS), UBC, Province of BC, DFO, First Nations and various consultants are all completing environmental studies in the watershed.
- Kevin Moutray was wondering about any monitoring related to the spring pulse flow (specifically regarding water temperatures). Jayson confirms that there is general research ongoing, but additional analysis/review will be required to confirm if there are any unintended consequences for downstream fish.

10. Q & A

- Discussion of the importance of having an in-person tour in the coming months for the Main Table membership. Support from Andrew and Mike Robertson.
- Reminder that if folks have questions outside of this meeting, Aman can be a point of contact for Main Table members as needed.
- Henry is curious about how wildfires are impacting streams/rivers in the Nechako watershed. Mike Robertson has information on the work being completed by UNBC, he will share with Henry, Andy and Jayson. Jayson can add it to the list of ongoing studies (if not already listed).
- Tim Plesko adds that with the lower river flows recently, he has observed a noticeable decline in erosion.

ACTION ITEMS & KEY DECISIONS:

1. Distribute the 2024 WEI Annual Report and 2024 Effectiveness Reports to the Main Table members – Ecofish to distribute.
2. Fish stranding monitoring during ramp-down events in the Nechako Watershed to be discussed in more detail at the next TWG meeting – Ecofish to add to next TWG agenda.
3. Progress discussion around potential for a reservoir tour in 2025 – Quinten and Aman to progress this idea.

NEXT MEETING(S):

Tentatively scheduled for the fall of 2025. Date/format to be confirmed.
