



BCWWA
British Columbia Water
& Waste Association



Convening for Action in the South Okanagan

Report on a Mini-Summit dealing with Water Stewardship & Sustainability in the South Okanagan

A Communiqué on Water for Life and Livelihoods
Arising from a Conference Session on May 2, 2006
Organized By

**Water Sustainability Committee of the
British Columbia Water & Waste Association**

In Collaboration With The

**Province of British Columbia
Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia
Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen**

First Release: May 2006

FOREWORD

DROUGHT, FOREST FIRES AND FLOODS in 2003 combined to create a ‘teachable moment’ for change in British Columbia, and especially in the Okanagan. Under the umbrella of the *Water Sustainability Action Plan for British Columbia*, the Water Sustainability Committee is informing governments and others by engaging with ‘communities-of-interest and place’ on the topic of water stewardship and sustainability.

CONVENING FOR ACTION IN THE SOUTH OKANAGAN is a provincial pilot for planning with a view to water. An overarching goal is to establish a precedent at the sub-basin (or sub-regional) scale for implementation of a ‘water-centric’ approach to community planning. At the core of the approach is a water balance way of thinking and acting. This is very much a bottom-up approach that seeks to understand through active listening.

WE BUILD CAPACITY through a 3-step process. First, we challenge practitioners and others to step back from their existing paradigms. Then we inform our audiences regarding alternatives. Finally, we provide the tools and experience to do things differently. The desired outcome is to turn ideas into action on-the-ground. Over time, we will achieve this through consistent messaging and the combination of partnership-building, outreach presentations, regional events, and product development.

A ‘MINI-SUMMIT’ WAS ORGANIZED as part of the 2006 Annual Conference of the BC Water & Waste Association that was held at Whistler. This precedent-setting approach to audience participation accomplished several objectives. First, the fact that the conference was a provincial forum raised the profile of the South Okanagan as a provincial pilot for water-centric planning. Secondly, it provided the Convening for Action team with a focus group opportunity to test an approach to engaging an audience in a dialogue. Over 100 people attended the half-day mini-summit, of which approximately 40 participated in the interactive portion.

Water Stewardship & Sustainability in the South Okanagan BCWWA Mini-Summit on Water for Life and Livelihoods

OUTLINE

This report on the *May 2006 BCWWA Mini-Summit* is organized in five parts as listed below:

- A. Mini-Summit Approach
- B. Water Stewardship and Sustainability
- C. Water Balance and Water-Centric Decision-Making
- D. Communiqué
- E. Lessons Carried Forward

A copy of the program is included for reference purposes as Attachment A.

A. MINI-SUMMIT APPROACH

A summit typically involves heads of organizations who convene to discuss, agree on and make commitments to address issues. A summit takes from one to several days. Presentations are made to describe issues, break-out sessions are held to focus on responses and a closing plenary is used to ratify a communiqué that briefly summarizes the issues, discussion and commitments to follow-up actions by participating organizations. Normally, this communiqué would be drafted in advance, modified through discussion and reported at the closure of the event.

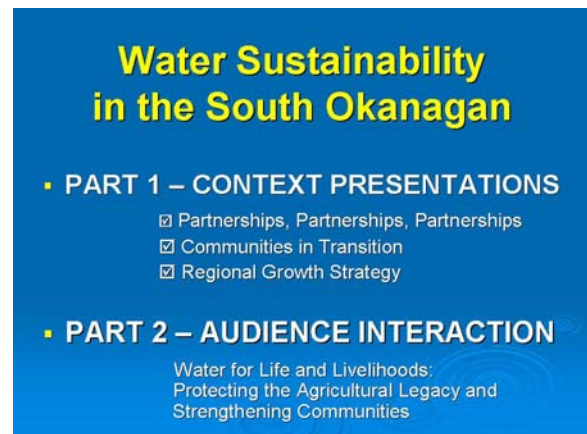
This approach was adapted for use at the BCWWA Annual Conference, with significant differences: it did not involve heads of organizations, it took place during a morning, it did not focus on a pre-written draft communiqué. Despite these points of departure from a typical summit, the summit model was used because it focused on issues and responses and has resulted in an outline for action that follows from presentations on key water management themes in the South Okanagan and dialogue between presenters, panelists and participants.

This adapted or mini-summit approach took place on May 2, 2006 and was structured in two parts:

- Part 1 – Context Presentations
- Part 2 – Audience Interaction

The presentations are posted on the WaterBucket Website:

<http://www.waterbucket.ca/cfa/>



**Water Sustainability
in the South Okanagan**

- **PART 1 – CONTEXT PRESENTATIONS**
 - ☑ Partnerships, Partnerships, Partnerships
 - ☑ Communities in Transition
 - ☑ Regional Growth Strategy
- **PART 2 – AUDIENCE INTERACTION**

Water for Life and Livelihoods:
Protecting the Agricultural Legacy and
Strengthening Communities

Water Stewardship & Sustainability in the South Okanagan

BCWWA Mini-Summit on Water for Life and Livelihoods

In Part 1, representatives of organizations involved in water stewardship and sustainability who work provincially and in the South Okanagan delivered a set of cascading presentations. These presenters included members of:

- the Water Sustainability Committee of the BCWWA (WSC),
- the Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia (REFBC),
- the BC Ministry of Community Services (MCS), and
- the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS).

In Part 2, a panel was formed to engage in a dialogue with the workshop participants (i.e. the audience). The panel included the presenters from Part 1, plus a representative of the BC Ministry of Environment (MoE), a second representative from MCS, and one from Environment Canada (EC).

Goals for the Mini-Summit

- Take stock
- Look ahead
- Chart a course
- Take action

When 'convening for action', we build capacity through a 3-step process:

1. Challenge practitioners and others to step back from existing paradigms
2. Inform them regarding alternatives
3. Provide tools & experience to do things differently

To start the dialogue, two panel members were asked to make statements on water stewardship and sustainability perspectives and practices of their organizations; then participants were invited to respond to their statements. After several responses, another two panel members were asked to make statements, this time building on the topics covered in participants' responses to the first round of panelist statements.

This process of going back and forth between panelists and participants was a departure from typical panel/participant interaction where all panelists would make statements, with time at the end for questions and responses from the audience. In the mini-summit, the panel and the workshop attendees shared the time to exchange information and views on water stewardship and sustainability approaches of direct interest to them.

B. WATER STEWARDSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY

Context and Overview: The Water Sustainability Committee is partnering with the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen, the Real Estate Foundation and the Province to advance a water-centric approach to planning in the Okanagan. The process is a demonstration of “convening effectively” from the bottom-up in order to reach interested parties, and in so doing trigger a chain of events that will ultimately lead to the adoption and implementation of well-grounded water sustainability principles, policies, programs and practices.



The purpose in *Convening for Action in the South Okanagan* is to inform governments and others by engaging with “communities of interest and place” on the topic of water stewardship and sustainability. The ‘agricultural legacy’ defines the Okanagan sense of place. So, if a beneficial balance is to be maintained, then it would seem essential that other land uses not impact unduly on the agricultural legacy. The key to protecting water is the integration of ‘made in the Okanagan’ principles, policies and programs.

Presentation #1 was organized as three topics. First, the partnership framework for the Water Sustainability Action Plan was introduced. Then the process of Convening for Action was explained. Finally, the three primary partnerships that are advancing change on-the-ground were described, namely:

- Water Bucket Website Partnership
- Water Balance Model Partnership
- Green Infrastructure Partnership

All three are developing pragmatic tools, and all are active in the Okanagan basin.

Presentation #2 then provided context for settlement, economic growth and water supply pressures in the South Okanagan. The emphasis was on the *Communities in Transition* partnership initiative that the REFBC is spearheading to support values-based planning processes that are aimed at a balanced approach to achieving social, environmental, economic well-being - with inclusive and accountable governance - in non-metropolitan areas of British Columbia.

Presentation #3 drilled down and described the program that is a work-in-progress to develop a Regional Growth Strategy for the South Okanagan. The presentation was in two parts - with the first half being an explanation of provincial goals and the provincial role; and the second half addressing lessons learned to date, emerging strategies, and challenges facing the process.

C. WATER BALANCE AND WATER-CENTRIC DECISION-MAKING

Mini-Summit Core Message: A water-centric approach puts water stewardship and sustainability front and centre on the agenda of comprehensive land use, development, or resource planning initiatives. Water-centric planning considers the amount of water available, the amount of water needed, innovative efficiency strategies, the quality of water leaving an area, how rain and snow water are managed, and the impact on the natural environment.



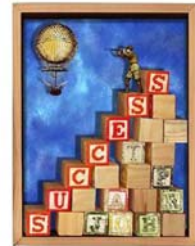
Water-centric planning means planning with a view to water – whether for a single site or the entire province. At the core of the approach is a water balance way-of-thinking and acting.

Implementation of water-centric strategies and solutions ultimately requires integration of missions, mandates and accountabilities of participating agencies.

Building Blocks to Get There:

Convening for Action in the South Okanagan is being cross-fertilized by other processes and is also informing those processes. A desired outcome in building on case study experience is that a chain of events will be triggered that will ultimately result in implementation of well-grounded sustainability policies and practices that can be adapted province-wide. Building blocks comprise:

- Water-Centric Planning: A Guidebook for British Columbia
- South Okanagan Regional Growth Strategy
- Convening for Action in the South Okanagan
- Town of Oliver: Smart Growth on the Ground



The intent is that the Town of Oliver experience will provide a 'water-centric template' for other communities in the South Okanagan, in particular those seeking provincial funding for infrastructure projects. In terms of the building block process:

- Convening for Action in the South Okanagan is being informed by Oliver.
- Convening for Action will in turn inform the RDOS Regional Growth Strategy.
- Convening for Action will also inform the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB).

Water Stewardship & Sustainability in the South Okanagan

BCWWA Mini-Summit on Water for Life and Livelihoods

Water Stewardship and Action:

The Mini-Summit challenged participants to think about what the ACTION in Convening for Action means. The audience was provided with this mind map for the three cascading presentations:

- **Ways** – thinking, planning and acting together as stewards of water, committed to sustainability.
- **Means** – landscape/watershed-based assessments, strategic plans and results-focused partnered delivery.
- **Results** – available, affordable, clean water.

In addition, the potential for creating change on-the-ground via a transformational guidance document and supporting outreach program revolves around the three essential ingredients listed below.

Decision focused

- **Applies a unifying philosophy**
Basin, watershed/landscape-based water management practices.
- **Uses a pragmatic approach**
Compares source, consumption and run-off volumes based on different management strategies.
- **Decision support tools**
Water Balance Model, Water Conservation Calculator, and Water/energy Nexus Calculator

The precedent for a water balance decision-making process was established by the Province in 2002 with publication of *Stormwater Planning: A Guidebook for British Columbia*. The Internet-accessible Water Balance Model was then developed by an inter-governmental partnership as an extension of the Guidebook.

A regional growth strategy is the most effective way to integrate the full range of government and non-government interests in a region. It focuses on the 14 goals and objectives as identified in Section 849 of the *Local Government Act*. The preparation of a regional growth strategy involves all orders of government and the public in defining vision, goal and objective statements that respond to current and anticipated land use and development issues to meet the needs of current and future residents.



The Implementation Agreements that flow from the South Okanagan Regional Growth Strategy will hold the key to long-term success in achieving water sustainability. The Implementation Agreements will define what local government will actually do on-the-ground to change policies, programs and practices that influence how land is developed and water is used.

Thus, the experience of the Town of Oliver in piloting a 'water-centric' approach is of strategic value to the region. Specifically, the Regional Growth Strategy will be informed by guiding principles that are uploaded from the 'Oliver process'.

Water Stewardship & Sustainability in the South Okanagan

BCWWA Mini-Summit on Water for Life and Livelihoods

Water for Life and Livelihoods:

The BCWWA Mini-Summit commenced the branding process within British Columbia for use of the phrase ‘*water for life and livelihoods*’ to focus on what is at stake over both the short and long terms.

This term is “borrowed” from work done in the United Kingdom, where basin plans are being prepared in accordance with the European Community’s ‘water policy directive’. This directive calls on all member countries to prepare water management plans at the river basin scale to guide area and sector-based water management strategies.

The phrase *water for life and livelihoods* conveys the fundamental principles of sustainability of natural systems in their own right and in relation to the health and well-being of people who benefit from the use of water for basic life needs and economic activity.

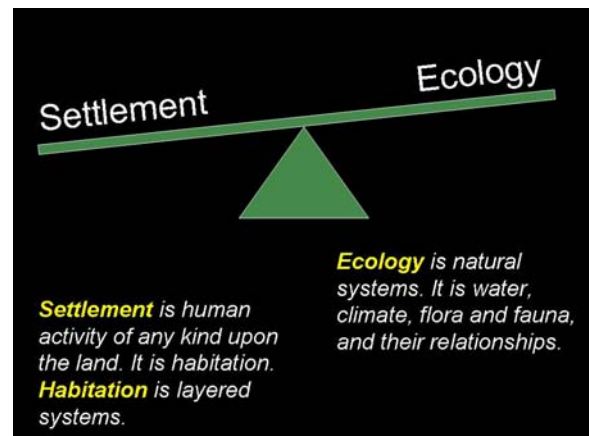
The application of a *water for life and livelihoods* approach is being pursued in the South Okanagan by using the planning systems and programs we have in British Columbia.

In accordance with the water for life and livelihood theme, the mini-summit introduced the “*settlement in balance with ecology*” principle in order to focus attention on these fundamental questions:

- How does the community weigh the benefits and liabilities of change driven by demand for land use?
- What will determine long-term wellbeing for a community or region?

Wellbeing is about sustainability of what communities allow or prevent happening on the land. Wellbeing is about balancing settlement activity and ecology.

Healthy systems thrive. Compromised systems, without elimination of threats and restoration, decay.



The principle of balancing settlement and ecology helps clarify the relationships that exist among the players, politicians, regional and local planners, First Nations communities, agriculturalists, resorts, water districts, businesses and residential property owners. For a full explanation, refer to the paper by Tim Pringle (REFBC Executive Director) that is posted on the WaterBucket Website: <http://www.waterbucket.ca/cfa/>

Water Stewardship & Sustainability in the South Okanagan

BCWWA Mini-Summit on Water for Life and Livelihoods

D. COMMUNIQUÉ

As noted earlier in this document, a communiqué is a statement regarding what was discussed, what was concluded and what steps will be taken by participants at a summit.

At the BCWWA Mini-Summit, presenters reported on a range of inter-related land use and water management issues and responses that are needed to address the increasingly complex challenge of meeting water needs in the Okanagan Basin. A shift has begun, moving away from traditional supply management approaches to providing water... to the use of demand management and soft path approaches.

Shifts like this occur:

- When leaders perceive a need for change.
- When they are able to form a coalition involving organizations which have accountabilities, responsibilities and resources to begin a transition from problem causing approaches to problem solving approaches.
- When they are able to clearly explain and demonstrate to a broader audience that the new approaches are effective.

Water-Centric Planning means that we will integrate:

- Missions
- Mandates
- Accountabilities



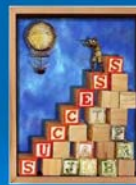
Creating
the
Future
Together

Presenters, panelists and participants at the mini-summit demonstrated how this shift is occurring in the South Okanagan. At the federal and provincial levels, agencies have come together to support the development of water-centric goals, objectives and ultimately policies and programs at:

- the sub-basin level (the RDOS Regional Growth Strategy); and
- the community level (the Town of Oliver).

As these and related initiatives produce results, a water framework that addresses the full range of ‘services’ provided by water resources in the South Okanagan will emerge from the partnerships being formed to focus on water sustainability in this sub-basin.

So, how can we facilitate a plan of action for the Okanagan?



- Water-centric planning in Oliver can lead to.....
- Water-centric planning in the Okanagan can lead to...
- Water-Centric Planning Guidebook for British Columbia

The dialogue between the panelists and the participants demonstrated the value of communicating about prospects for future generations of Okanagan residents to sustain the current level of social, economic and environmental well-being.

Water Stewardship & Sustainability in the South Okanagan

BCWWA Mini-Summit on Water for Life and Livelihoods

Provocative questions were raised about:

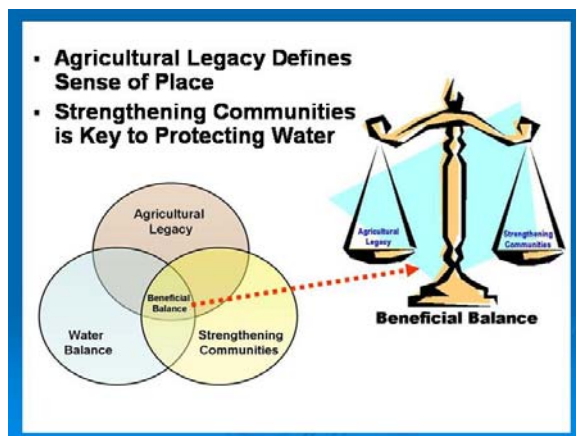
- The impacts of continued residential development on the economically significant working resource lands and environmentally sensitive landscapes and aquatic ecosystems of the region.
- The impacts of this growth on already constrained water supplies coupled with ongoing wasteful water consumption and water management practices.
- The impacts of emerging but as yet not fully understood or accepted concerns about the impacts of climate variations and changes, or the impacts and uncertainties about rising energy costs.

Clearly there is a challenge between those who see unfettered opportunities for growth in residential, tourism and agricultural development based on the features of the Okanagan that have attracted and sustained this growth in the past, and those who are concerned about a future when these features receive so much pressure that their capacity to attract and support growth is diminished.

Panelists and participants alike expressed concern and a sense of urgency, but as people who are highly knowledgeable in the water management field, they also spoke about practical ways of achieving a water balance through stewardship of sub-basin water resources.

They also indicated through their very active participation in the dialogue session the importance of hearing information about problems, having time to reflect on this, and then being given an opportunity to share in finding solutions.

The BCWWA Mini-Summit did not reach conclusions for lack of time, but it did demonstrate that information on tough problems and ways of dealing with these can be communicated in a short time. It also demonstrated that with this information, people will actively focus on actions needed now to solve current problems, knowing that as time passes these will grow in complexity and ultimately result in unmanageable consequences for future generations.



The concept of a Beneficial Balance was introduced as a way to visualize how to address challenging priorities for land and water. The three circles represent core concepts emerging from the discussion of settlement, economic growth and water supply pressures. The intersection of these circles is defined as the *beneficial balance*.

E. LESSONS CARRIED FORWARD

The mini-summit approach paralleled a full summit, but differed in its participants, duration and format:

- **Participants:** The mini-summit involved presenters and panelists representative of organizations, but not in a formal sense, representing them.
- **Duration:** It took place over three hours not two or three days.
- **Format:** It also took place within a conference that divided the morning into five distinct time frames that were designed by conference organizers to enable participants to take part in other workshops during the time the mini-summit was underway.

Although some participants stayed for the entire session, others left and new ones joined the session throughout the morning. This affected continuity and required the session moderator to re-introduce the process each time the session restarted.

Having less time and having participants come and go were significant logistical challenges which reduced the effectiveness of the session as a way of conveying information to a group of people, discussing this and then reporting out on what was said. However the balanced approach to panel and participant interaction in the interactive part of the session appeared to be well received by the participants who had an unprecedented opportunity to participate in what might normally be a panel focused session.

Having to close this interactive session while participants were still fully engaged was a “measure” of the success from their perspective. More time would have enabled participants and panelists to move from dialogue about what is important to them to strategies about what steps to take to bring about broadly based and supported water conservation strategies.

Water Stewardship & Sustainability in the South Okanagan
BCWWA Mini-Summit on Water for Life and Livelihoods

ATTACHMENT A

BCWWA MINI-SUMMIT PROGRAM

2006 ANNUAL BCWWA CONFERENCE AT WHISTLER
PROGRAM FOR HALF-DAY SESSION ON MAY 2nd ORGANIZED BY THE WATER SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

SESSION THEME:	Water Sustainability in the South Okanagan
ABSTRACT:	<p>The Water Sustainability Committee (WSC) is partnering with the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen, the Real Estate Foundation and the Province to advance a water-centric approach to planning in the Okanagan. The process is a demonstration of “convening effectively” from the bottom-up in order to reach interested parties, and in so doing trigger a chain of events that will ultimately lead to the adoption and implementation of well-grounded water sustainability principles, policies, programs and practices.</p> <p>The purpose in <i>Convening for Action in the South Okanagan</i> is to inform governments and others by engaging with “communities of interest and place” on the topic of water stewardship and sustainability. The ‘agricultural legacy’ defines the Okanagan sense of place. So, if a beneficial balance is to be maintained, then it would seem essential that other land uses not impact unduly on the agricultural legacy. The key to protecting water is the integration of ‘made in the Okanagan’ principles, policies and programs.</p>
MODERATOR:	Kim Stephens, Program Coordinator, Water Sustainability Action Plan for British Columbia

SLOT	PROPOSED SPEAKERS	ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATION	PRESENTATION TITLE	SYNOPSIS OF WHAT WILL BE PRESENTED
1	Erik Karlsen & Raymond Fung	Water Sustainability Committee	The ACTION in Convening for Action: Partners in Water Stewardship and Sustainability in the South Okanagan	For over a decade at the Annual Conference, the WSC has reported back to the BCWWA membership on its activities and accomplishments. Since 2003, the WSC focus has been on developing and implementing the <i>Water Sustainability Action Plan</i> through a partnership with the Province. This presentation provides context for the <i>Convening for Action in the South Okanagan</i> initiative, the foundation that it will provide for Water Balance Management: A Guidebook for British Columbia , and the set of cascading presentations that weave a storyline leading into a Panel Discussion.
2	Tim Pringle	Real Estate Foundation of BC	Communities in Transition: Balancing Settlement with Ecology	The REFBC has established the <i>Communities in Transition</i> partnership initiative to support values-based planning processes that are aimed at a balanced approach to achieving social, environmental, economic well-being --- with inclusive and accountable governance --- in non-metropolitan areas of BC. The REFBC and the Province are jointly funding CFA activities in the South Okanagan to generate practical inputs about water sustainability.
3	David Arsenaault & Meggin Messenger	Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen Ministry of Community Services	Regional Growth Strategy for the South Okanagan: Context for Water Stewardship & Sustainability	The number one concern of local South Okanagan residents is the availability and quality of water supply. To better understand the water issue, the Regional Growth Strategy and Water Sustainability Committee have agreed to work together. Through outreach and education, the goal is to inform and influence practitioners and others to learn more about practices that will lead to water sustainability.
4	“Mini-Summit” moderated by Erik Karlsen		Water for Life and Livelihoods: Protecting the Okanagan Agricultural Legacy and Strengthening Communities	The first part will reflect on the <i>continuum of perspectives</i> about growth issues related to settlement. Whether residents prefer limited, moderate or unlimited growth, the attendant issues will have to be put into perspective. Communities will have to find a way to rationalize their vision about the priorities for land and water. This session will be built around a panel of distinguished presenters, and will be conducted in the style of a “summit” to engage the audience in a dialogue.
5	“Mini-Summit” moderated by Erik Karlsen		Water for Life and Livelihoods: Protecting the Okanagan Agricultural Legacy and Strengthening Communities - Now What?	While the preceding part describes the issues and what needs to be done to sustain water for agriculture and urban communities, this second part will focus on the “Now What?” question in order to provide a framework to guide further conversation, brainstorming and dialogue regarding how tangible water sustainability outcomes may be achieved through <i>Convening for Action in the South Okanagan</i> . The intent is to plant the seeds for a future Okanagan Water Summit, possibly to be held in late 2006. This will be achieved in part by drafting a communiqué.