



To: WEI Main Table Meeting Participants

From: Rahul Ray and Jason Collier

Date: November 24, 2020

Re: Rio Tinto WEI Table Meeting 14 (Videoconference) Summary, November 10, 2020

A videoconference for the Rio Tinto Water Engagement Initiative (WEI) was held on November 10, 2020, from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm. The videoconference was held instead of an in-person Main Table meeting to promote social distancing in response to COVID-19, while making progress on aspects of the WEI. There was no meeting held in October.

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

The facilitators were Rahul Ray (RR) and Jason Collier (JC) from EDI. They prepared this meeting summary. Jayson Kurtz (JK) from Ecofish Research participated as the Technical Working Group (TWG) coordinator.

Justus Benckhuysen, Rio Tinto Nechako Operations Coordinator, participated in the videoconference. Andrew Czornohalan (AC), Rio Tinto Operations Director - Power and Services, Kitimat and Kemano participated as a WEI Table member.

A draft agenda was included in the invitation:

- Technical Working Group Update
- Review and discuss conceptual WEI schedule
- Update on Water Release Facility
- Update on Tahtsa Narrows information compilation efforts
- Update on Southside information gathering and working group

Table 1 lists the participants that were involved in the videoconference and the organizations they represent.

Table 1. November 10, 2020 - WEI Videoconference Participants

Individual	Organization
John Alderliesten	Public participant
Lyla Brophy	Nechako Regional Cattlemen's Association
David Creighton	Northern Health
Andrew Czornohalan	Rio Tinto
Kevin Dobbin	Rio Tinto
Stephen Dery	UNBC
Curtis Helgesen	Regional District of Bulkley Nechako
Jennifer Howell	District of Fort St. James
James Jacklin	FLNRORD
Henry Klassen	Public participant
Donna Klingspohn	Public participant
Ray Klingspohn	Public participant
Phillip Krauskopf	FLNRORD
Clint Lambert	Regional District of Bulkley Nechako
Jason Llewellyn	Regional District of Bulkley Nechako
Kim Menounos	Fraser Basin Council
Kevin Moutray	District of Vanderhoof
Mark Parker	Regional District of Bulkley Nechako
Jerry Petersen	Regional District of Bulkley Nechako
Ray Pillipow	FLNRORD
Tim Plesko	Public participant/Southside representative
Charlie Rensby	Village of Burns Lake
Wayne Salewski	Public participant / NEWSS
Paula Tait	Northern Health
Gerry Thiessen	District of Vanderhoof
Dennis Wood	Public participant
June Wood	Public participant

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

- Rahul opened the call by welcoming participants and reviewing the draft agenda. A discussion on current Reservoir levels was requested and added at the end of the meeting.
- Rahul reviewed the Action Items from the previous meeting. Henry provided some context on the Action Item focused on compiling his comments and presentations to discuss at the Main Table. Henry is interested in identifying the main things we need to look at and address. The Nechako Watershed Council reports (a selection of which are available on the Get Involved Nechako website <https://www.getinvolvednechako.ca/7037/widgets/27362/documents/17369>) focus on the major issues to be addressed, such as sturgeon, habitat, water volumes, water temperature, and hydrograph. Henry went on to say that we need to acknowledge that the issues affect society, as well. We do not want to forget about the big issues, such as ensuring sturgeon self-sustainability, and need to answer the questions related to power generation and economics (e.g. through a cost/benefit analysis). Rahul commented that the WEI is taking a values-based approach, with a focus on understanding the various interests and developing a flow scenario to address as many of these as possible.
- **ACTION ITEM: Rahul to post the '87 and '97 Agreements on the Get Involved Nechako Website.**
- A participant wanted to know if there is a comprehensive list of interests / values that have been identified through the WEI. Rahul replied that a list was sent out for Meeting 12 (the list is available on the Get Involved Nechako website. <https://www.getinvolvednechako.ca/7037/widgets/27362/documents/36842>
- A participant wanted to know if Water Quality (from the Spillway to Prince George) has been identified and would be addressed. Rahul confirmed that it would.
- Jayson provided a summary of the efforts undertaken by the Technical Working Group. The TWG focus has been refined, with a renewed focus on technical work. Bi-weekly meetings have been focused on reviewing Main Table interests, and developing objectives and Performance Measures. Rahul confirmed that the TWG efforts are being conducted to support the Main Table.
- Reference was made to an article CBC posted an article on November 7 related to sturgeon and predation by otters: The article is available here: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/sturgeon-endangered-otters-latrines-nechako-1.5787285>
- Jayson confirmed that bull trout research is being compiled. He confirmed that bull trout are overwintering in the lower Nechako.
- A participant wanted to know if the “Eaton” flows (presented in the Saik’uz and Stelat’en versus Rio Tinto court case) will be analyzed by the TWG. Jayson stated that they could be, as there will be a wide range of flows that will be modelled and analyzed depending on input from the Main Table.

- Rahul provided an overview of the WEI conceptual schedule that tracked previous efforts and outlined the potential road ahead. The schedule was sent to the participants as part of the pre-read package. Key elements include a summary of the Main Table activities, meeting presentations, TWG meetings, and WEI Plan development. Rahul provided potential timelines for key elements
- There was general agreement that the conceptual schedule was well developed. A request was made to present the schedule in a more reader-friendly format, perhaps by breaking out certain groups of elements.
- **ACTION ITEM: Rahul to adjust the way the conceptual schedule is presented to make it more reader-friendly.**
- Mike Robertson was scheduled to provide an update on the Water Release Facility. Unfortunately, Mike had to respond to an emerging issue and was not present. The update will be provided at a future meeting.
- Jason Collier provided an update on the efforts underway to address Southside non-flow related recommendations (<https://www.getinvolvednechako.ca/7037/widgets/27362/documents/43724>). Information gathering/inventory was conducted in October and November. A draft summary was provided to the Southside Working Group for review at the beginning of November. A workshop will be held in late November to confirm the information and identify the best approaches to address each interest. The report will then be updated and distributed to the Main Table.
- Andrew provided an update on the information gathering efforts being done by Rio Tinto regarding the dredging of Tahtsa Narrows <https://www.getinvolvednechako.ca/7037/widgets/27362/documents/43723>. The comprehensive compilation of information is not yet complete. There is a substantial amount of technical information available, with less information on potential impacts and costs. Andrew commented that some information exists regarding a potential option of dredging only one or two feet (compared to potential larger dredges. Andrew stated that there would need to be a full impact study completed before any work is done, and that Rio Tinto does not have any plans or focus to pursue a dredge at this time.
- **ACTION ITEM: Andrew to provide another update on a potential Tahtsa Narrows dredge when information gathering efforts are complete.**
- Discussion followed on the importance of maintaining safe navigation in the Reservoir. Buoys were once installed (10-15 years ago) to help navigation. Andrew commented that he has had discussions with Gary on this interest, as well as maintaining access for fish to tributaries.
- Lyla commented that communications have been rather good regarding flows from the Spillway, but a request was made if water release information could be provided at least 3-4 days prior to changes being made at the Spillway. For example, information is if flows will be increased 50 m3/sec, but may be 100 m3/sec shortly after. Is there a way to provide information further ahead of time?

- Rahul will work with Lyla Brophy to develop more communication recommendations. Results will be presented to the Main Table.
- **ACTION ITEM: Rahul to work with Lyla to develop water flow change communication recommendations.**
- Discussion centered around the next meeting dates. A tentative date was set for Wednesday December 9, 2020. There was agreement that updates while the TWG conducts their work are useful, but that Rahul can determine whether meeting should be held or not, depending on the amount of progress made and what needs to be reported on.
- End of the regular agenda at 11:25 am.
- The topic of Reservoir Levels, which was added to the agenda, was discussed. Andrew provided an overview on the status of the Reservoir (<https://www.getinvolvednechako.ca/7037/widgets/27362/documents/43723>). Andrew discussed the cumulative 7-day precipitation, Reservoir projections, current snowpack, as well as a comparison of November Reservoir level to flooding occurrences showing the lack of correlation between high reservoir levels and flooding occurrences.
- Rahul has heard some concerns from participants and wanted to know if Andrew's presentation helped. Andrew commented that he is wanting to get an understanding of the interests through the WEI in order to alleviate some of the apparent frustration. A participant commented that they are concerned with the environmental impacts caused by the large fluctuations at the Spillway. Andrew hears these concerns and commented that Rio Tinto often needs to respond in short notice due to changing situations.
- Jayson commented that the TWG will be developing Performance Measures for each interest and will model different flow scenarios to quantify how they perform, so that we can get to a point where we can make decisions on how to manage flows. Andrew commented that these are good discussions, and he is looking forward to unpacking all the interests and getting to a point where they can balance flows with flooding, ice jams, environmental interests, and other interests.
- A comment was made on how there has been talk on how the Summer Temperature Management Program (STMP) is counter-productive for salmon, as it comes into effect when the river is at its most productive biological phase (e.g. when fry enter the system). The speaker stated that the balance is upset. They also said that fry released from local hatcheries can outcompete river fry. Side streams are recognized as leading factors for fry health. Jayson confirmed that the TWG will be looking at all the information and incorporating it appropriately into the flow analysis.
- A comment was made that there has been 70 years of changes to the system, and why are we surprised to find that things are the way they are. The WEI offers hope, and the participant was pleased that the tools are being developed to help us make decisions to make the river healthier.

- The meeting ended at 12:00 pm.

ACTION ITEMS

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- **ACTION ITEM:** Andrew to provide another update on a potential Tahtsa Narrows dredge when information gathering efforts are complete.
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