

## **OKANAGAN-KOOTENAY STERILE INSECT RELEASE PROGRAM BOARD**

Minutes of a Regular Meeting of the OKANAGAN-KOOTENAY STERILE INSECT RELEASE (SIR) PROGRAM BOARD  
held virtually on Zoom on Friday, May 22, 2020

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### **Voting Members:**

Director Shirley Fowler, Chair	Regional District of North Okanagan
Grower Amarjit Lalli, Vice Chair	Grower Representative – Zone 2
Director James Baker	Regional District of Central Okanagan
Director George Bush	Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen
Director Chad Eliason	Columbia Shuswap Regional District
Director Brad Sieben	Regional District of Central Okanagan
Grower Dave Dobernigg	Grower Representative-Zone 3

### **Non-Voting Members:**

Jesse MacDonald	Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
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### **Guests/Delegates:**

Glen Lucas	BC Fruit Growers Association
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### **Regrets:**

Grower Walt Makepeace	Grower Representative-Zone 1
Taras Pojasok	Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
Dr. Susanna Achaempong	BC Ministry of Agriculture

### **Staff:**

Melissa Tesche	OKSIR General Manager
Carol Teschner	CORD Finance Manager
Michelle Cook	OKSIR Project Manager
Evan Esch	Program Entomologist
Loren Scott	Recording Secretary

### **1. CALL TO ORDER**

OKSIR's General Manager called the meeting of the OKSIR Board to order at 9:10 am, and a vote was held for Chair and Co-Chair positions for 2020. Director Shirley Fowler was unanimously voted Chair and Amarjit Lalli was elected once again as Co-Chair.

**Moved:** Director Eliason

**Seconded by:** Director Baker

**CARRIED**

### **2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

#### **2.1 Adoption of Agenda**

**Moved by:** Director Bush

**Seconded by:** Director Eliason

*"THAT the May 22, 2020 meeting agenda be adopted."*

**CARRIED**

### **3. MINUTES**

#### **3.1 Regular Board Meeting – January 31, 2020 – for adoption**

**Moved by:** Director Bush

**Seconded by:** Director Baker

*"THAT the SIR Regular Board Meeting Minutes of January 31, 2020 be adopted."*

**CARRIED**

#### **3.2 Business Arising from Minutes**

N/A

4. DELEGATION/PRESENTATION

4.1 Brennen Giroux, B.Acc, CPA, CA Senior Manager, BDO Canada LLP, Presentation of the 2019 Audit Results

- a. Audit letter dated May 18, 2020
- b. 2019 Audited Financial Statements

Mr. Brennen Giroux reviewed the audit results in detail, thanking the management and RDCO finance staff for making the audit process run smoothly. Chair Fowler echoed the appreciation for the finance officer and staff.

Moved by: Director Baker

Seconded by: Director Eliason

*“THAT the OKSIR Board accept the Audit Letter dated May 18, 2020 and accept and approve the 2019 Audited Financial Statements as presented.”*

CARRIED

*Before proceeding to item 4.2, the General Manager took a moment to introduce Jesse MacDonald, to the Board. Mr. MacDonald joined the meeting to represent Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (SRDC), as Taras Pajosak was unable to make the meeting.*

4.2 Molly Thurston, M.Sc., OKSIR DAS Coordinator, Update on BC DAS

The General Manager introduced Molly Thurston to the Board, the project manager for the BC Decision Aid System (BC DAS). While Ms. Thurston is a new member of OKSIR's staff, she has extensive experience working in the Okanagan agriculture industry as a horticulture consultant and has been a trusted advisor to Okanagan growers for the past fifteen years. The SIR Program is proud to have Ms. Thurston working on the BC DAS project this season.

Ms. Thurston provided the Board with a detailed update on the BC DAS program. She presented figures on grower use and explained the new models and updates to the program. Ms. Thurston explained to the Board that this is the final year of funding for the pilot project, and that while good progress has been made engaging growers in the program, she is continuing efforts to enroll more users and make needed adjustments and updates to the program that will increase the value to growers.

In data shared from a survey done by BC Tree Fruits with their own growers, 43% of growers at the meeting had used DAS in the last season. 45% of the growers, however, answered that they relied exclusively on the horticultural message as published by BCTF Field Service—which relies on BC DAS to generate their horticultural messaging. Ms. Thurston noted that the field service department of BCTF had recently been cut and although BCTF had contracted someone to continue publishing the horticultural message for 2020, there was not likely to be any such service in 2021, underscoring the need to continue support for the BC DAS system.

Following her presentation, Ms. Thurston answered questions from the Board.

The Board raised a question as to whether the information on DAS would be offered in different languages. Ms. Thurston informed the Board that the DAS program is currently only provided in English, however some of the training programs that are being created, such as YouTube tutorials, may potentially be offered in other languages in the future.

The Board further discussed opportunities for increasing grower enrollment in the program, and spoke to the benefits of the program, especially in the absence of field service personnel. Grower representatives on the Board offered feedback on improvements that would help provide growers with helpful information and direction on spray timing.

Ms. Thurston thanked the Board for their feedback. The Chair thanked Ms. Thurston for her presentation.

## 5. CORRESPONDENCE/ INFORMATION

### 5.1 Staff Report from Melissa Tesche, General Manager, dated May 19, 2020, re: Program Update

The General Manager reviewed the program update in detail.

Ms. Tesche informed the Board that the COVID-19 pandemic had led to supply chain issues at the facility, as there have been delays in the shipment of necessary materials from international sources. Despite these challenges, the facility has been able to source material from new vendors and make the adjustments needed to continue with production.

Every spring OKSIR sends out a grower mail out to all growers in the program area, containing results from the season and property maps. The General Manager explained that due to limitations imposed by COVID-19 restrictions, the mail out was sent out in electronic form to grower's email addresses. Paper copies are available and can be mailed by request, if grower a contacts the main office in Kelowna. If this new communication strategy is successful, the program may change to sending out the mail out electronically going forward.

This season, the program had planned to begin releasing moths using Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV). Due to challenges encountered by COVID-19 restrictions, the UAV launch was cancelled. In some good news, the program has been given an exemption by Transport Canada regarding the release of live insects by drone. The program is looking to resume UAV training this fall, but this will depend on the state of the pandemic and whether or not social distancing and US border restrictions are still in effect.

The General Manager attended the BCFGGA conference and reported to the Board that growers expressed their concerns over the current state of the apple industry. Grower Lalli, the SIR Board's grower representative for the Central Okanagan, provided the Board with background on the difficulties being faced by apple growers at this time. Grower Lalli explained that this is the third year in a row of poor returns, which has left some growers unable to afford the cost of rent and pesticides. The General Manager informed the Board, that although the mood at the BCFGGA meeting was somber, there was appreciation expressed for the support provided by local governments through the OKSIR Program. With growers facing difficult circumstances, the program is concerned that some may not have the financial means to properly maintain their orchards.

The General Manager updated the Board on the status of the a technical advisory committee for the program. The program still intends to move forward with putting this committee together, unfortunately COVID-19 restrictions has delayed these plans and alternative meeting arrangements may need to be made. A second external review is being explored for the fall/winter of 2020, as a follow up to the external review completed in 2014.

The General Manager reviewed for the Board the sales agreements that the program will continue with during the COVID-19 pandemic, and what sales requests the program will be denying during this time, in order to avoid challenges of international shipping and to ensure that production for local orchards is prioritized.

The Board raised a question regarding OKSIR's pesticide policy and whether or not growers were adhering to the protocol and contacting their supervisor to advise when they are spraying. The General Manager confirmed that program staff are continuing their efforts to educate growers on the procedure but there are still incidents of missed communications and field staff having to leave orchards because pesticides are being sprayed when field staff arrive.

The Board engaged in further discussion regarding the challenges faced by the Okanagan apple industry, particularly distinguishing between existing trade challenges with the United States and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Moved by:** Director Eliason

**Seconded by:** Director Lalli

*"THAT staff report from the General Manager be received."*

5.2 Memo from Loren Scott, Administrative Assistant, dated Feb 28, 2020, re: Preliminary Tax Roll Values

Staff presented the 2020 OKSIR parcel tax roll to the Board.

Moved by: Director Eliason

Seconded by: Grower Lalli

*"THAT the 2020 Preliminary Tax Roll be received."*

CARRIED

6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

6.1 Memo from Melissa Tesche, General Manager, dated March 19, 2020, re: Covid-19 Contingency Planning

The Chair confirmed that the Board unanimously approves OKSIR's COVID-19 contingency plans.

Moved by: Director Eliason

Seconded by: Director Baker

*"THAT the Board ratify the results of the March 19, 2020 email poll in which the following motions were approved:*

*'THAT the Board direct staff to continue to operate the facility and field programs with increased sanitation and implementation of social distancing procedures.'*

*'THAT the Board authorize an additional (unbudgeted) \$60K for the purchase of mating disruption to be used as a backup plan for the worst infested orchards in the event of severe or ongoing interruptions to moth release'*

*'THAT, for the 2020 season, OKSIR decline any international requests for live moth shipments to focus on core program functions during this state of emergency'"*

CARRIED

7. NEW BUSINESS

7.1 Interim Financials to April 30, 2020

The CORD Finance Manager reviewed the interim financials in detail.

Moved by: Director Baker

Seconded by: Director Eliason

*"That the interim financial statements be received."*

CARRIED

7.2 Memo from Melissa Tesche, General Manager, dated May 17, 2020, re: Revenue Anticipation Borrowing and OKSIR Cash Flow

The General Manager explained to the Board that as our tax requisitions come in on August 1<sup>st</sup> and our operational program spending begins in January, the program is facing a cash flow challenge that is common among local government organizations. She reviewed the options to address the current and potential future cash flow issues.

Moved by: Director Eliason

Seconded by: Director Baker

*"THAT the OKSIR Board obtain a line of credit to address, in anticipation of revenues from current year tax requisitions, short-term cash flow issues experienced by the OKSIR Program."*

CARRIED

*"THAT the OKSIR Board request a resolution of support from the Regional District partners to allow the OKSIR Board to authorize, by bylaw, a cashflow management program that mirrors the revenue anticipation borrowing*

authority granted to local governments under the Local Government Act s. 404, such that borrowed funds may only be used to cover current-year operating expenditures included in OKSIR's Five-Year Financial Plan, to a maximum of the amount owing to the OKSIR from the current-year tax requisitions."

CARRIED

8. ADJOURN TO IN-CAMERA

8.1 In-camera session to discuss matters related to personnel.

Moved by: Director Bush

Seconded by: Director Baker

"THAT pursuant to Section 90 of the Community Charter the SIR Board adjourns and convenes to an 'In-Camera' session to discuss legal and personnel issues."

CARRIED

9. OTHER BUSINESS

N/A

10. ADJOURNMENT

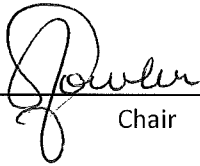
Moved by: Director Bush

11:00 AM

Seconded by: Grower Lalli

"THAT the SIR Board meeting be adjourned at ~~12:00pm~~ 11:00am."

CARRIED

  
Chair

  
Corporate Officer