

OKANAGAN-KOOTENAY STERILE INSECT RELEASE PROGRAM BOARD

Minutes of a Regular Meeting of the **OKANAGAN-KOOTENAY STERILE INSECT RELEASE (SIR) PROGRAM BOARD**
held virtually via Zoom, on Friday, November 27, 2020

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
Grower Dave Dobernigg	Grower Representative – Zone 3
Director Chad Eliason	Regional District Columbia Shuswap
Director Brad Sieben	Regional District of Central Okanagan

Non-Voting Members:

Dr. Susanna Achaempong	BC Ministry of Agriculture
Taras Pojasok	Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

Guests/Delegates:

Glen Lucas	BC Fruit Growers Association
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Regrets:

Grower Walter Makepeace	Grower Representative – Zone 1, organic
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Staff:

Melissa Tesche	OKSIR General Manager
Carol Teschner	CORD Finance Manager
Stefanie Meyer	CORD Financial Analyst
Michelle Cook	OKSIR Project Manager
Evan Esch	OKSIR Entomologist
Paul Thiessen	OKSIR Operations Manager
Shelby Legebokoff	Recording Secretary

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting of the OKSIR Board to order at 9:02 am.

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

2.1 Adoption of Agenda

Moved by: Director Sieben

Seconded by: Director Bush

“THAT the November 27, 2020 meeting agenda be adopted.”

CARRIED

3. MINUTES

3.1 Regular Board Meeting – October 2, 2020 – for adoption

Moved by: Grower Lalli

Seconded by: Director Eliason

“THAT the SIR Regular Board Meeting Minutes of October 2, 2020 be adopted.”

CARRIED

3.2 Business Arising from Minutes

N/A

4. DELEGATION/PRESENTATION

N/A

5. CORRESPONDENCE/ INFORMATION

5.1 Staff Report from Melissa Tesche, General Manager, November 25, 2020 re: Program Update

The General Manager informed the Board that all seasonal staff have now left and the year-round employees are working to wrap up 2020, tracking orchard removals, and planning for the season ahead.

The General Manager updated the Board on the possibility of collaborating with potential partners, including the US Department of Agriculture and UC-Riverside, to trial the use of X-ray technology for sterilization. She noted the irradiator is the biggest financial, environmental, and health/safety liability in the program, and she highlighted the USA's federal program that provides financial aid for companies switching to non-nuclear alternatives. Before the program could make the switch, however, there would be much method development and testing required.

The Board raised asked about the ability of the facility to support and store both sterilizing technologies during the X-ray trial. The General Manager informed the Board that the X-ray system is portable and there is enough room for both systems. The Board agreed that if alternate technologies are proven, they should be pursued to eliminate the risks associated with the current irradiator. The Board discussed the possibility of requesting senior government support to help the program transition away from the current nuclear irradiator, if non-nuclear technologies could be used instead.

The Board was informed that staff are already securing supplies for the 2021 season. Seasonal procurement is not usually initiated until late December/early January, but shipping services have become unreliable during the pandemic.

The collection of larvae in 2020 to replenish the colony with new genetic material continues to look successful. The newly collected larvae are raised separately from the colony for a number of generations to be sure that the new additions are virus-free and in good health before they are able to be added to the general colony.

A new Director, Dr. David Crowder, will be taking over for Washington State University's Decision Aid System, as Dr. Vince Jones retires. The General Manager met virtually with both the incoming and outgoing Directors, and WSU is committed to continuing to provide access to the DAS system for SIR staff and BC Growers. The status of the weather network was discussed, and the General Manager noted the need to formally review both the technical and governance aspects of the weather network as it continues to be financially supported solely by BCTF. BCTF and SIR are preparing a joint grant application to fund a review.

The General Manager updated the Board on the status of the apportionment presentations. The requested set of resolutions has been passed at three of the four regional districts, with only the Columbia Shuswap Regional District left. The CSRSD will consider the resolutions at their meeting on December 10th, 2020.

The Chair invited the Program Entomologist, Mr. Evan Esch to share a few words regarding his ongoing research. Mr. Esch informed the Board that he continues to work with researchers in Washington and California to improve the monitoring of wild captures in relation to a large background population of sterile insects.

Moved by: Director Bush

Seconded by: Grower Lalli

“THAT the staff report from the General Manager be received.”

CARRIED

6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

6.1 Update on Value Tax Apportionment, Memo from Melissa Tesche, General Manger, November 24, 2020

The General Manager gave the update on value tax apportionment in detail. The only approval missing is from the Columbia Shuswap Regional District, who will consider the resolutions shortly. Once all regional districts are in agreement, the new formula can be used for 2021, and the program will seek legislation of the new approach from the provincial government.

Moved by: Director Eliason

Seconded by: Director Sieben

“THAT, with the unanimous support of the four partnering regional districts, the OKSIR Board phase in, over four years, a new hybrid formula for allocation of the SIR Program’s annual value tax burden, such that each Regional District’s burden is based on their proportion of the previous year’s converted assessment base (land and improvements) for the service area as a whole, weighted at 75%, and their proportion of the previous year’s total taxable acreage for the service area as a whole, weighted at 25%.”

CARRIED

The Board noted there was a potential split of Housing from Municipal Affairs. The General Manager expressed the importance of continuing to work with Mr. Allen Neilson to ensure all political steps are taken in the correct order. The Board made a friendly amendment to the recommended motion to remove the reference to the former Ministry in recognition of the provincial restructuring.

Moved by: Grower Lalli

Seconded by: Director Baker

“THAT, on behalf and with the unanimous support of the four partnering regional districts, the OKSIR Board approach the Provincial Government to seek an Order in Council to legislate the new apportionment approach and phase-in provision.”

CARRIED

7. NEW BUSINESS

7.1 Proposed Meeting Schedule for 2021, dated November 2, 2020

The Board reviewed and approved the 2021 Regular Board Meeting Schedule.

Moved by: Director Eliason

Seconded by: Director Baker

“THAT the 2021 meeting schedule be approved as proposed.”

CARRIED

7.2 Interim Financial Statements, dated October 31, 2020

The RDCO Financial Manager presented the OKSIR Program Interim Financial Statements in detail.

Ms. Teschner noted for the board that land tax is on budget, while parcel tax is down due to rebates. Although interest rates are low due to covid-19 and the resulting economy instability, all other income streams are doing well. Ms. Teschner then reviewed expenditures for the Board, noting again the early purchasing of supplies. The General Manager reminded the Board of the motion passed in April 2020, regarding the large, unbudgeted purchase of mating disruption technology, with a 7-year shelf life, as an alternative control measure in case of covid-related interruptions to moth supply.

Moved by: Director Bush

Seconded by: Director Eliason

“THAT the interim 2020 financial statements be received.”

CARRIED

7.3 Draft Financial Plans for preliminary budget discussion

- a. 2020-2024 Financial Plan for Discussion with 0% Increase
- b. 2020-2024 Financial Plan for Discussion with 2% Increase

The General Manager discussed two options for the 5-year financial plan in detail.

She reminded the Board that the OKSIR Program has not increased taxes in over a decade, noting that inflation since 2010 has been close to 17%, and minimum wage has nearly doubled from \$8 in 2010 to over \$15. With these figures in mind, the General Manager presented to the Board two options regarding taxation increase for the 2021 year. These options demonstrated a 0% increase, and a 2% increase.

The Board discussed both options in detail. Both the importance of sales revenue and the covid-related economic strain facing the RDs and municipalities were discussed. There was agreement that an increase will be required in the near future, and there were points made for implementing an increase this year and for delaying an increase for another year.

Moved by: Grower Lalli

Seconded by: Director Bush

“THAT the Board approve the 2021 requisition rate reflecting zero increase over the 2020 requisition for the Regional District Land Only Value Tax and zero increase to the parcel tax rate of \$139.26 per acre.”

CARRIED

6. ADJOURN TO IN-CAMERA

N/A

7. OTHER BUSINESS

N/A

8. ADJOURNMENT

Moved by: Grower Lalli

"THAT the SIR Board meeting be adjourned at 10:35am."

Seconded by: Director Baker

CARRIED



Chair

Corporate Officer