

OKANAGAN-KOOTENAY STERILE INSECT RELEASE PROGRAM BOARD

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the **OKANAGAN-KOOTENAY STERILE INSECT RELEASE (SIR) BOARD**
held at the RDCO Woodhaven Boardroom February 6th, 2026

Voting Members:

Director George Bush	Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen
Grower Steve Day	Grower Representative – Central
Director Shirley Fowler	Regional District of North Okanagan
Director Kevin Kraft	Regional District of Central Okanagan
Director Tim Lavery	Regional District Columbia Shuswap (virtual)
Grower Joginder Dhand	Grower Representative – North
Grower Walter Makepeace	Grower Representative – South, Organic
Director Rick Webber	Regional District of Central Okanagan

Non-Voting Members:

Andrea Kalischuk	AAFC Associate Director, Research, Development and Technology (virtual)
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Guests/Delegates:

Regrets:

Dr. Susanna Acheampong	Entomologist, BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food
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Staff:

Michelle Cook	OKSIR General Manager
Evan Esch	OKSIR Entomologist
Tanya Littley	OKSIR Office Manager
Shane Matheson	RDCO Financial Analyst
Cody Troutman	RDCO Financial Services Manager
Shelby Austen	CCLSP Project Director
Kellie Garcia	CCLSP Administration and Communications Manager

Election of the Chair

The meeting was called to order at 10:02 a.m. by General Manager Michelle Cook, who outlined the election process.

Director Fowler was nominated by Director Bush and was acclaimed as Chair after Director Webber declined a nomination.

Election of the Vice-Chair

Director Webber was nominated by Director Bush and was acclaimed as Vice-Chair.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Fowler called the meeting to order at 10:09 am.

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

2.1 Adoption of Agenda

The agenda for the February 6, 2026, meeting of the OKSIR Board was adopted as presented.

Moved By: Grower Makepeace

Seconded by: Director Bush

"THAT the February 6, 2026, meeting agenda be adopted as presented."

CARRIED

3. MINTUES

3.1 Regular Board Meeting – November 28, 2025 – For Adoption

The minutes of the November 28, 2025, regular meeting were adopted as presented.

Moved By: Grower Day

Seconded by: Director Webber

"THAT the OKSIR Regular Board Meeting Minutes from November 28, 2025, be adopted as presented."

CARRIED

3.2 Business Arising from Minutes

No business arose from the minutes.

4. DELEGATION/PRESENTATION

4.1 Staff Presentation from Kellie Garcia, Cross-Commodity Project 2025 Annual Review

Ms. Garcia provided an update on the CCLSP as it enters its final year. She reported that the remaining stabilization funding has been fully allocated to industry-driven projects addressing labour challenges, governance improvements, climate impacts, and pest management concerns. The continuation of the BC Decision Aid System beyond 2026 remains a priority.

The Board acknowledged the value of cross-commodity collaboration, including recent engagement efforts and farm tours that highlighted the importance of agricultural insight in local government decision making.

Moved By: Director Bush

Seconded by: Director Webber

"THAT the staff presentation from the Cross-Commodity Project Director be received."

CARRIED

5. CORRESPONDENCE/INFORMATION

5.1 Appointments to the OKSIR Board

- a. Columbia Shuswap RD – letter dated December 12, 2025, appointing Director Tim Lavery, with Director Kevin Flynn as alternate
- b. North Okanagan RD – letter dated December 17, 2025, appointing Director Shirley Fowler, with Director Victor Cumming as alternate
- c. Central Okanagan RD – email dated January 27, 2026, confirming no changes to appointments Director Kevin Kraft and Director Rick Webber, with Director Patrick Van Minsel and Director Stephen Johnston as alternate
- d. Okanagan-Similkameen RD – email January 27, 2026, confirming no change to the November 22, 2022, RDOS letter appointing Director George Bush, with Director Tim Roberts as alternate

Moved By: Director Webber

Seconded By: Director Bush

“THAT the appointment letters from the four partnering regional districts be received.”

CARRIED

5.2 Staff Report from Michelle Cook, General Manager, dated January 30, 2026, re: Program Update

Ms. Garica and Ms. Austen departed the meeting at 10:32 am.

Ms. Cook reported that winter remains a quiet operational period, with production ramp-up underway to reach two million insects per day by April. Safety inspections are complete, procurement for major diet ingredients has begun, and diapause rearing of the second colony is transitioning into the cold stage.

Two capital projects originally planned for December 2025 have been delayed: the tray-washing room floor replacement to fall 2026 and the installation of condenser units, proceeding this week.

Seasonal supervisors have returned to begin staffing and routing plans for the upcoming season. The program will transition from five to four field supervisors, supported by experienced returning staff.

Administrative work during the winter has included completing value tax requisitions, letters sent out in December, and parcel tax preparations, to be sent out in mid-February. Ms. Cook also reported on her successful presentation in France in December. Upcoming industry events include the Southern Interior Horticultural Show and the BCFGA AGM.

Sales updates confirmed M3's 2026 purchase volume at 1,375 cups weekly, with a price increase to USD \$38 per cup. U.S. engagement continues to be essential, though tariff instability remains a noted risk.

Moved By: Director Bush

Seconded By: Director Kraft

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

CARRIED

5.3 Audit planning communication to the OKSIR Board of Directors for the year ending December 31, 2025.

Financial staff reported that preparations for the 2025 year-end audit have begun and are progressing well. BDO will again conduct the audit, with results to be presented at the June 2026 meeting. The current three-year contract will be completed this audit cycle.

Moved By: Director Webber

“THAT the Audit planning communication from BDO be received.”

Seconded By: Grower Day

CARRIED

6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

No unfinished business was noted.

6.1 Memo from Evan Esch, Entomologist, dated January 29, 2026, re: Infested Apple Bins

Mr. Esch summarized the ongoing challenge of codling moth movement via wooden apple bins. While plastic bins eliminate infestation risk, their cost when compared to wooden bins, makes a full transition unlikely. A partial adoption targeting high-risk orchards may yield meaningful benefits

A varied approach to codling moth control was recommended: ongoing engagement with packers regarding plastic bin benefits, strengthening best management practices for high-risk orchards, ongoing efforts to suppress codling moth populations in orchards, and research into bin sanitizing and washing technology.

Grower practices, including inconsistent control measures and variable tolerances for fruit damage, were also discussed.

Moved By: Grower Makepeace

“THAT the Memo from the Program Entomologist be received.”

Seconded By: Director Kraft

CARRIED

7. NEW BUSINESS

7.1 2026 Staff Service Awards

Ms. Cook reported on SIR staff anticipated to complete significant years of service. Michelle Cook will be completing her 10th year with SIR, with Robert Bigras and Judy Warren set to complete their 10th and 20th years respectively upon their return for the 2026 field season.

Moved By: Grower Day

“That the Board express their appreciation to the staff recognized for service awards in 2026.”

Seconded by: Grower Makepeace

CARRIED

7.2 Board Directors and Members Years of Service

Ms. Cook highlighted the significant years of service contributed by long-standing Board members. Dr. Susanna Acheampong, the provincial entomologist appointed by the Ministry of Agriculture, has served on the Board for 18 years. Chair Shirley Fowler is currently in her 15th year as a director, including nine years as Chair. Director George Bush has served for 11 years, and grower representative Walt Makepeace has reached 9 years of service. Director Tim Lavery, now in his 6th year, was also acknowledged for his continued contributions.

The Board supported formally acknowledging these contributions and planning a recognition event later in the year.

Moved By: Director Webber

Seconded by: Director Kraft

"That the Board express their appreciation to the long-standing Board Directors and Members recognizing them for their years of service."

CARRIED

7.3 Annual Adoption of Safety Policy

The 2026 OKSIR Occupational Health and Safety Policy was adopted by the Board.

Moved By: Director Kraft

Seconded by: Grower Makepeace

"THAT the Board adopt 'OKSIR's 2026 Occupational Health and Safety Policy' as presented."

CARRIED

7.4 Interim Financials to December 31, 2025

Financial staff presented the interim statements. Revenue was approximately \$150,000 below budget due to lost egg sheet sales. Wage expenditures were lower than budgeted due to reduced hiring and capital expenditures were also lower as capital projects were deferred to 2026.

A \$250,000 transfer to the capital reserve was made in preparation for the 2028 cobalt source replacement. Year-end adjustments, including amortization, will reduce the current surplus, but a positive year-end position is projected.

The Board discussed the need for sustained government funding and confirmed the importance of continued advocacy.

Moved By: Grower Makepeace

Seconded by: Grower Dhand

"THAT the interim financial statements be received."

CARRIED

8. ADJOURN TO IN-CAMERA

The meeting was adjourned to in-camera at the conclusion of the regular meeting.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was presented.

10. ADJOURNMENT


The regular board meeting was adjourned at 11:21 am, prior to moving forward with the in-camera meeting.

Moved By: Director Webber

Seconded by: Director Kraft

"THAT the SIR Board meeting be adjourned at 11:21 am"

CARRIED



Chair



Corporate Officer