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 August 14th, 2026

Voting Members:

Director George Bush	Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen
Director Shirley Fowler	Regional District of North Okanagan
Director Kevin Kraft	Regional District of Central Okanagan
Director Rick Webber	Regional District of Central Okanagan
Director Sylvia Lindgren	Regional District Columbia Shuswap (alternate) (virtual)
Grower Steve Day	Grower Representative – Central

Non-Voting Members:

Guests/Delegates:

Regrets:

Director Tim Lavery	Regional District Columbia Shuswap
Grower Joginder Dhand	Grower Representative – North
Grower Walter Makepeace	Grower Representative – South, Organic
Dr. Susanna Acheampong	BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food Entomologist
Andrea Kalischuk	AAFC Research, Development and Technology, Associate Director

Staff:

Michelle Cook	OKSIR General Manager
Tharshi Nagalingam	OKSIR Facility Manager-In-Training
Evan Esch	OKSIR Entomologist
Tanya Littley	OKSIR Office Manager
Cody Troutman	RDCO Finance Director

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Fowler called the meeting to order at 10:00 am.

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

2.1 Adoption of Agenda

The agenda for the August 14, 2026, meeting of the OKSIR Board was adopted as presented.

Moved By: Director Bush **Seconded By: Director Webber**
"THAT the August 14, 2026, meeting agenda be adopted as presented." **CARRIED**

3. MINUTES

3.1 Regular Board Meeting – June 12, 2026 – For Adoption

The minutes of the June 12, 2026, regular meeting were adopted as presented.

Moved By: Director Webber **Seconded By: Director Kraft**

"THAT the OKSIR Regular Board Meeting Minutes from June 12, 2026, 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 Michelle Cook, General Manager, dated Aug 7, 2026, re: SIR Governance.

Ms. Michelle Cook, OKSIR General Manager, presented a brief governance overview, to remind the Board and assist the new member in understanding the Sterile Insect Release (SIR) Program's structure and decision-making authority. She reviewed the program's mandate to control codling moth populations through services such as sterile insect production and release, population monitoring, enforcement, and education. She also reiterated the organization's mission to reduce pesticide use and support local fruit producers.

Ms. Cook explained that the program operates under the Municipal Enabling and Validating Act and is unique in that the Board has the authority to make its own financial and operational decisions without requiring approval from participating regional districts. She reminded directors that most decisions are made by a simple majority vote, while financial matters require a minimum of three of five regional district representatives to be in favour for the motion to pass.

Moved By: Grower Day **Seconded By: Director Kraft**

"THAT the staff presentations from the General Manager be received." **CARRIED**

4.2 Staff Presentation from Michelle Cook, General Manager, dated Aug 7, 2026, re: Context Setting for the 2027 Budget

Ms. Cook provided an overview of key considerations for the upcoming 2027 budget, including operational, staffing, capital, and strategic priorities. She advised that succession planning is underway at the insect rearing facility in preparation for Scott Arthur, Facility Manager's upcoming retirement in 2027. Increased 2026 production costs resulting from colony performance issues and the aging irradiator source material were also discussed.

Ms. Cook highlighted the need to replace the irradiator's fuel source in 2027, a year ahead of the planned 2028 replacement previously discussed with the Board, at an estimated cost of $1.15 million. She emphasised the replacement is required to maintain current production capacity. Additional facility investments include software upgrades, asset management planning, staff training, and promotions were also identified as priorities at the facility.

Field operations are expected to remain largely unchanged in 2027, with stable staffing levels.

Business development efforts will continue to focus on maintaining U.S. moth sales and exploring opportunities in other Canadian markets. Ms. Cook also noted the completion of the facility asset inventory, the upcoming conclusion of the Cross Commodity Leadership Support Project (CCLSP), and the need to undertake a new strategic planning process following the local government elections.

During discussion, directors asked questions regarding the timing of the irradiator replacement and the potential operational impacts if the project is delayed. Staff confirmed that a recommendation will be brought forward as part of the 2027 budget process.

Directors also discussed the organization's process of setting tax rates prior to approving the annual budget. Staff explained that the current approach establishes a tax-rate framework first and then develops the budget within those parameters. Bringing the tax rate increase in advance of the budget and 5-year financial plan was also at the request of the Regional Districts a few years ago so it was complete in advance of their budgeting timelines.

Moved By: Director Bush **Seconded By: Director Kraft**

"THAT the staff presentations from the General Manager be received." **CARRIED**

4.3 Staff Presentation from Michelle Cook, General Manager, dated Aug 7, 2026, re: Proposed 2027 Tax Increases Memo

Ms. Cook presented the proposed 2027 tax increases and recommended a 10% increase to both the value and parcel taxes. She advised that the increases would generate approximately $340,000 in additional annual revenue, with an estimated impact of $1.09 per year for the average homeowner and an increase $18.61 per acre for growers.

Ms. Cook reviewed recent provincial studies that affirmed the value of the SIR Program and highlighted its importance to the sustainability of the tree fruit industry. She also provided an update on U.S. moth sales, noting that demand remained strong and that sales continue to provide a significant source of revenue for the program.

In response to Chair Fowler's question, Mr. Troutman, RDCO Finance Director, presented an analysis of moth sales and advised that 2025 U.S. sales generated a substantial net financial benefit to the program. The Board discussed how these revenues support program operations while reducing reliance on taxation.

Directors discussed future capital requirements, including the planned irradiator source replacement and the importance of maintaining reserves for future capital projects. Board members also emphasized the need to pursue additional provincial and federal funding opportunities and to continue advocating for external financial support for the program.

The presentation concluded with discussion on maintaining a balanced approach between taxation, sales revenue, grants, and other funding sources to support the long-term sustainability of the program.

Moved By: Director Kraft **Seconded By: Grower Day**

"THAT the staff presentation from the General Manager be received." **CARRIED**

4.4 Presentation from Cody Troutman, RDCO Finance Director, dated Aug 14, 2026, re: Strategic Reserve Planning and Financial Outlook

Mr. Troutman presented an overview of SIR's financial outlook, reserve position, and long-term sustainability considerations. He advised that operating expenditures continue to exceed taxation revenues, with the difference offset through moth sales and some provincial funding. He noted that no government funding has yet been confirmed for 2027 and that planning assumptions reflect this.
Mr. Troutman explained that funding the irradiator replacement would significantly reduce reserve balances and emphasized rebuilding reserves through future revenues.

He reviewed the benefits and risks associated with program funding through both moth sales and taxation revenues. While U.S. moth sales continue to provide significant revenue, they remain dependent on a single customer and are subject to market, currency, trade-related, and operational cost risks. Tax revenues were identified as a more stable and predictable source of funding that supports long-term financial planning and reserve growth without impacting operating costs.

Board members discussed the value of the SIR Program to growers, the costs growers would face without area-wide codling moth control, the potential for future operational efficiencies, and opportunities to pursue additional government funding. Directors generally acknowledged both the financial pressures facing growers and the importance of maintaining the program's long-term viability.

Following discussion, the Board received the financial presentation for information. The Board then considered the recommendation to increase the value tax and parcel tax requisitions by 10% for 2027. After discussion, the motions were approved unanimously.

Moved By: Director Kraft **Seconded By: Grower Day**
"THAT the staff presentation from RDCO Finance be received." **CARRIED**

Moved By: Director Webber **Seconded By: Director Kraft**
"THAT OKSIR increase the total amount requisitioned from the value tax by 10%, for a total requisition of $2,421,582, in 2027. An increase of $220,144." **CARRIED**

Moved By: Director Kraft **Seconded By: Grower Day**
"That OKSIR increase the parcel tax rate for 2027 by 10%, from $186.10 per acre to $204.71 per acre." **CARRIED**

4.5 Staff Presentation from Tharshi Nagalingam, Ph.D. Facility Manager-in-Training, dated Aug 14, 2026, re: Supporting OKSIR's Mission Through Research and Operational Excellence

This presentation was delayed until after the Board addressed items 5.1 and 5.2.

Ms. Tharshi Nagalingam, OKSIR Facility Manager-In-Training introduced herself to the Board and provided an overview of her professional background in entomology, integrated pest management, insect mass rearing, and manufacturing operations. She highlighted her experience working in both academic and industrial settings and noted her expertise in improving biological production systems and operational efficiency.

Ms. Nagalingam advised that although the facility is operating successfully, opportunities exist to further improve production efficiency, quality assurance, sanitation practices, and long-term sustainability. She outlined several research and development initiatives aimed at reducing operating costs, improving insect

quality, strengthening sanitation and disease prevention programs, and enhancing moth performance in the field.

As part of these efforts, Ms. Nagalingam proposed a research partnership with Carleton University focused on diet optimization, alternative sanitation methods, and production improvements. The project would be supported through an NSERC Alliance grant, with SIR contributing approximately $30,000 annually for two years if funding is approved. She explained that the research could lead to operational cost savings, improved moth quality, staff development opportunities, and access to additional scientific expertise.

Board members welcomed Ms. Nagalingam to the organization and expressed support for her efforts to identify operational improvements. Discussion focused on the proposed research funding, timing considerations associated with grant applications, and how future research initiatives should be incorporated into the budget process. While several directors noted the importance of reviewing such initiatives through future budget discussions, they recognized that this grant application timeline required an earlier decision.

Moved By: Director Bush **Seconded By: Director Kraft**
"THAT the staff presentation from the Facility Manager-in-Training be received." **CARRIED**

Moved By: Director Webber **Seconded By: Director Kraft**
"THAT the Board support the Facility's request to apply for an NSERC Funding Project in which SIR would contribute a third of the cost of the project - $30,000 in both 2027 and 2028." **CARRIED**

5. CORRESPONDENCE/INFORMATION

5.1 Alternate Director Appointment Update - Columbia Shuswap Regional District (CSRD) Letter dated July 28, 2026, appointing Director Tim Lavery, with Director Sylvia Lindgren as alternate

Director Webber was absent from the meeting for the duration of this item.

The Board received correspondence from the Columbia Shuswap Regional District regarding the appointment of Director Tim Lavery to the SIR Board and the appointment of Director Sylvia Lindgren as Alternate Director.

Moved By: Director Bush **Seconded By: Director Kraft**
"THAT the appointment letter be received. **CARRIED**

5.2 Funding Request to Support Continued Operation of the BC Decision Aid System. August 5, 2026. From Kellie Garcia, CCLSP Project Director and current BC DAS Program Manager, on behalf of the BC DAS Steering Committee

The Board considered a funding request from the BC Decision Aid System (BC DAS) Steering Committee for a $20,000 contribution from SIR to support continued operation of the DAS Program in 2027.

Ms. Cook explained that BC DAS has historically been funded through provincial grants and, more recently, through stabilization funding administered under the Cross Commodity Leadership Support Project. She noted that SIR was involved in the original establishment of the program and had previously contributed funding in partnership with the province. While provincial funding for portions of the program will continue in 2027, additional support is being requested from industry partners to cover project management and administration costs.

Ms. Cook advised that SIR may be able to provide in-kind support rather than a direct financial contribution by hosting and helping administer the program in 2027. She also noted that CCLSP representatives would be attending the next board meeting and could provide further details on the proposal on October 2, 2026.

Director Webber rejoined the meeting.

Following discussion, the Board agreed that additional information would be beneficial before making a funding decision.

Moved By: Director Kraft **Seconded By: Director Bush**

To postpone the motion "THAT the Board support the continued operation of the BC Decision Aid System at the BC DAS Steering Committee's request by contributing $20,000 to BC DAS Operations" until October 2, 2026.

CARRIED

5.3 Staff Report from Michelle Cook, General Manager, dated Aug 7, 2026, re: Program Update

Ms. Cook presented the program update providing an overview of current activities and operational matters across various aspects of the program.

Ms. Cook reported that moth production levels, which had been below target earlier in the season, have recovered following adjustments to production practices. Discussion was held regarding the causes of the colony performance issues. Staff explained that the production colony had exceeded its intended renewal cycle due to difficulties collecting sufficient wild moths for colony replacement. A new colony is currently being established using moths collected in 2025 from the region and from outside the program area, and is on track to replace the current production colony as expected.

Ms. Cook provided an update on the planned irradiator source replacement, noting that discussions with the supplier indicate the project remains feasible within the required timeline, despite the extensive regulatory requirements associated with importing radioactive materials.

The Board was advised that the facility asset inventory has now been completed and will be incorporated into the 2028 budget and five-year financial plan. Planned capital projects at the facility, including installation of a new floor in the tray washing area, remain on schedule.

Field operations continue to focus on late-season codling moth management. Staff reported that third-generation moth emergence has been observed in the South Okanagan and that monitoring and coordination with growers is ongoing. Attention has been directed to infestations associated with stored apple bins in the Keremeos area. Staff explained that containment efforts, including targeted monitoring and spray recommendations, have been effective in limiting the spread of the infestation.

Ms. Cook noted that staff continue to manage operational challenges associated with extreme heat, wildfire smoke, and evacuation orders. Moth releases were temporarily suspended in evacuation order zones near Summerland, although staff reported that overall codling moth risk in the area remains low.

The Board also received updates on industry outreach and collaboration activities, including visits from international sterile insect technique organizations, ongoing industry partnerships, and opportunities to promote the SIR Program to growers and stakeholders in other regions of Canada.

Moved By: Grower Day **Seconded By: Director Lindgren**
"THAT the staff report from the General Manager be received." **CARRIED**

5.4 SIR in the News
a) Fruit and Vegetable Magazine. Managing codling moth in Okanagan orchards. June 1, 2026 By Jillian Filmer. Interview with Evan Esch, Entomologist. (page 37)
b) Orchard and Vine Magazine. Innovation Issue 2026. Codling Moth Control. Sterile Insect release sees successes. By SIR General Manager, Michelle Cook. (page 42)

Ms. Cook referred the Board to recent media coverage included in the agenda package and noted that staff participated in and wrote the articles highlighting the SIR Program.

5.5 CCLSP (Cross Commodity Leadership Support Project) June 30, 2026 Advisory Council Highlights

Ms. Cook referred the Board to the CCLSP Advisory Council Highlights report included in the agenda package and provided a brief update on SIR's presentation by the Program Entomologist at the July meeting.

5.6 Best Management Practices for Limiting the Spread of Codling Moth in Apple Bins. Evan Esch, Aug 7, 2026. Distributed industry-wide through the BCFGA, packers, and SIR's email list.

Ms. Cook introduced a Best Management Practices document regarding the prevention of codling moth spread through infested apple bins. She advised that the information had been prepared by Mr. Esch and would be distributed through the BC Fruit Growers' Association Friday Files Newsletter. The document was provided to the Board for information, as management of codling moth risks associated with apple bins has been an ongoing topic of discussion.

During discussion, Board members noted the challenges posed by older wooden apple bins, which can shelter codling moths and contribute to the spread of infestations. The potential benefits of transitioning to plastic bins were discussed, although it was acknowledged that replacement costs could present a significant financial challenge for the industry.

6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

No unfinished business was noted.

7. NEW BUSINESS

7.1 Memo from Tanya Littley, Office Manager, dated June 24, 2026, re: 2026 OKSIR Parcel Tax – Taxable Acreage - Taxable $ Values – Final

Ms. Cook presented the 2026 Final Parcel Tax Acreage memo, explaining that taxable acreage figures are provided to the regional districts at the beginning of each year for taxation purposes. She informed the Board that growers who remove acreage before the 15th of April may apply for adjustments, and parcel taxes are subsequently refunded on the removed acreage.

The Board was advised that total serviced acreage decreased from 6,747 acres in June 2025 to 6,575 acres in June 2026, representing a 2.5% decline over the 12-month period. Ms. Cook noted that acreage fluctuations occur annually as orchards are removed, replanted, or redeveloped. The report also provided a breakdown of

acreage changes by municipality and rural area within the service region.

During discussion, Board members noted that potential acreage losses resulting from natural disasters would be reflected through this same reporting process as acreage adjustments are received and verified.

Moved By: Director Kraft **Seconded By: Director Bush**
"THAT the 2026 Parcel Tax Memo be received." **CARRIED**

7.2 Interim Financials to June 30, 2026

Mr. Troutman presented the interim financial statements for the period ending June 30, 2026. He advised that financial results were generally in line with expectations for this point in the year, with increased expenditures reflecting seasonal staffing, production activities, and normal operational requirements.

Mr. Troutman highlighted that moth sales revenue had begun to be received as shipments increased during the season and noted that additional sales revenue would be reflected in future financial reports. Upcoming financial statements will also reflect the receipt of annual tax requisitions from the Regional Districts. He also reported that diet ingredient costs were trending over budget due to the increased production requirements needed to maintain moth output levels, consistent with earlier discussions regarding colony performance challenges. Diet ingredient expenditures are expected to finish approximately $30,000 over budget for the year.

Moved By: Grower Day **Seconded By: Director Webber**
"That the interim financial statements be received." **CARRIED**

8. ADJOURN TO IN CAMERA

9. OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was presented.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Moved By: Director Bush **Seconded By: Director Kraft**
"THAT the SIR Board meeting be adjourned at 1:33 pm." **CARRIED**

Chair

Corporate Officer