

COLUMBIA River Treaty



To: Columbia - Kootenay Basin government elected officials
and local government CAOs

Date: April 13, 2026

From: Linda Worley, Chair
Columbia River Treaty Local Governments Committee

Subject: Update on CRT Local Government Committee Activities

In March 2025 the province announced the pause in the international activities to modernize the Columbia River Treaty (CRT), in light of new developments from the U.S. Consequently, over the past year the Committee's activities have been focused on understanding and monitoring the implementation of the [interim agreements](#) for elements of the 2024 [Agreement-in-Principle](#) that resulted from the negotiations to date, and continuing to seek solutions to domestic issues. This memo provides highlights on our new and ongoing priorities.

Since my last update memo in March 2025, the Committee has held twelve virtual meetings including updates from the BC CRT Team and information sharing sessions with the CRT First Nations representatives.

New Priorities

Flood Risk Management

Flood risk management is one of the primary purposes of the CRT, along with power generation in B.C. and the U.S., and a priority interest of communities. In the fall of 2025 the Committee became aware that a new Flood Risk Operating Plan had been finalized between the Entities responsible for implementing the Treaty, including BC Hydro for Canada. This new plan results from the interim agreement for pre-planned flood risk management for U.S. flood risk management that limits storage and flow management to Arrow Lakes Reservoir only – in the past the treaty requirements included flood risk management storage in Kinbasket and Duncan reservoirs as well. The U.S. now pays \$36.7M to the province for each year that they request pre-planned flood risk management. This interim agreement ends in July 2027.

We have reviewed the new plan and have raised questions with the province and BC Hydro about some aspects of the plan and how domestic flood risk management will be managed now. In their 2025 annual operations updates BC Hydro indicated that there will not be 'material' difference in domestic flood risk management compared to past operations. We are seeking a better understanding of this description.

We are also monitoring for any activities regarding the future of CRT flood risk management arrangements beyond the end of the current interim agreement in July 2027.

Changes at the BC Ministry of Energy and Climate Solutions

Kathy Eichenberger, the Executive Director of the BC CRT Team, has announced her retirement at the end of June. The Committee deeply appreciates Kathy's capable leadership of the Team from its beginning based on her deep personal knowledge of the Columbia – Kootenay Basin and our communities as well as her commitment to advocating for CRT modernization to improve ecosystems, socio-economic conditions and Indigenous cultural values across the Basin. The Committee will be recognizing Kathy's contributions appropriately.

Les MacLaren, the Assistant Deputy Minister responsible for the BC CRT Team has also retired. Les also has a long affiliation with the region, including being involved during the creation of the CBT.

We are meeting with the new Executive Director and Assistant Deputy Minister this month and will encourage them to get to know the region as quickly as possible, including offering to tour them through the Basin – a challenge while the province has travel restrictions.

Maintaining Engagement in Regional Hydro Operations

During the past 15 years while the CRT Review was ongoing and during the negotiations phase, the Committee and the BC CRT Team collaboratively held over 30 community engagement activities and the BC CRT Team hosted several virtual info sessions. This developed a cadre of well-informed residents who have been keen to provide feedback and thoughts about regional hydro operations. The ongoing pause in negotiations, with its uncertain timeline, creates the risk of losing this resident expertise. The Committee is considering ways to continue to engage residents and local governments. Please share your ideas with Committee members (listed below).

Wildsight has organized another series of [Columbia River Conversations](#) field trips to Kinbasket Reservoir, Arrow Lakes Reservoir in Revelstoke and Nakusp and Duncan Reservoir. Join in to learn .

Ongoing Priorities

- ***BC Hydro community communications and engagement*** – The Committee continues to press BC Hydro for improved communications and engagement with our communities. We have seen some improvements and continue to advocate for further improvements to meet the needs of our communities, including meeting with and sending suggestions to the BC Hydro Board Chair and CEO. We are also meeting with the BC Water Comptroller to fully understand the governance of the water licenses for BC Hydro’s facilities. We will explore alternatives if these approaches are not successful.

In September Dudley Coulter was hired to fill the only regionally located community relations staff person for BC Hydro. Dudley is located in Castlegar and is responsible for the East Kootenays; Arrow Lakes and Duncan reservoirs; and the Columbia River below Hugh Keenleyside dam. You are encouraged to direct your questions and those from constituents in this area to Dudley at: dudley.coulter@bchydro.com (250) 608-3750. The attached contact list has been updated by BC Hydro as the resource for basin local governments and the public to use to have their questions addressed. We encourage you to share this list with your constituents outside of the areas listed above.

We appreciate that BC Hydro has committed to returning to open houses for their annual operations updates this year for communities that prefer in-person engagement. This is in addition to hosting virtual updates. These updates are scheduled in late May into June. Please watch for notification of these sessions and encourage your constituents to attend. For those who do attend, we hope they will provide feedback on whether these sessions provide the information they need.

BC Hydro is also working with the BC CRT Team on videos to describe regional hydro operations. We look forward to reviewing the storyboards and draft videos, along with CBRAC (see below). We appreciate the BC CRT Team taking leadership to develop these videos and we hope they will fill in the current gaps in information about regional operations.

You are encouraged to sign up for weekly updates on Arrow, Duncan and Kinbasket reservoirs, and Kootenay Lake, as well as notifications of river flow changes below Hugh Keenleyside dam by contacting Dudley at the contact information above.

- ***Integrating socio-economic interests in CRT scenarios*** – The Committee’s Socio-Economic Integration Team continues to work to ensure social and economic interests for the Kootenay and Columbia rivers are being included in the confidential river management scenario modelling for CRT modernization. Although there is a pause in treaty modernization, the province and the First Nations involved in the CRT negotiations continue to lead this work in preparation for when treaty modernization restarts.

Socio-economic interests that are impacted by reservoir levels and river flows, such as flood risk management, navigation, recreation, tourism, dust generation and others are very important to communities. Performance measures describing the required and preferred reservoir elevations and flow levels for these interests continue to be refined as new information becomes available. These measures are being used by the Team to evaluate alternative hydro operations scenarios to inform the selection of operations to implement the new Canadian flexibility when the treaty is modernized. Other groups are working on performance measures for ecosystem function (learn more [here](#)), which are also very important to Basin residents, Indigenous cultural values and power generation.

We are also involved in the development of an Adaptive Management Plan to monitor and respond to new information when the Canadian flexibility is implemented through a modernized treaty.

The Committee is very grateful to be included in this process as this signals the recognition of the value of local government contributions in CRT-related matters. The Committee is grateful for the funding from the Province for this initiative. For more detailed information see the [Committee's website](#).

- **Modernized domestic CRT governance** – The three First Nations involved in the CRT modernization – the Ktunaxa, Syilx Okanagan and Secwepemc Nations – and B.C. are developing a framework for modernized Canadian domestic CRT governance. This initiative recognizes both the role of First Nations in the context of UNDRIP and how Basin communities could have a voice in future decisions regarding aspects of Treaty operations planning.

The Committee has been prepared to engage in this critically important initiative for some time. The Committee will be reaching out to local governments across the Basin once more information is available. The BC CRT Team has committed to providing Basin communities and residents an opportunity for input on potential governance models before decisions are reached.

- **Columbia Basin Regional Advisory Committee (CBRAC)** – CBRAC includes public members who represent the geography and interests across the basin (selected based on their expressions of interest) and appointed members from local governments, First Nations and basin hydro operators. For a number of reasons there have been no CBRAC activities over the past year. In early April CBRAC participated in a webinar on the CRT Flood Risk Operating Plan, with updates from the Negotiating Team, the BC CRT Team and the Committee. Webinars are also being planned on BC Hydro's [Integrated Resource Plan](#) and their annual operations, as well on as Indigenous law. The CBRAC terms of reference, membership and meeting summaries as well as presentations and reports discussed at these meetings are available on the [CBRAC webpage](#).

I encourage you to stay informed about CRT modernization by visiting the [CRT engagement website](#) and signing up for the [CRT e-letter](#). This site will continue to be the source of accurate, updated information on CRT modernization. You can also learn more about the Committee at our [website](#).

Committee Members

RDKB - Linda Worley, LGC Chair, Rural Director, and Warfield Mayor Frank Marino

RDEK - Stan Doehle, LGC Vice Chair and Rural Director; and Thomas McDonald, Rural Director

RDCK – Aimee Watson, Rural Director and RDCK Board Chair; and Aidan MacLaren-Caux, Nakusp Councilor

CSRD – David Brooks-Hill, Rural Director and Golden Mayor Ron Oszust

Village of Valemount – Donnie MacLean, Councilor

AKBLG – Keith Page, Nelson Councilor and appointed by the AKBLG