

Transboundary Columbia River Conference: One River, One Future
Kimberley, British Columbia, Canada; September 12-14, 2019
The Sense of the Meeting: Water Governance Session

The following paragraphs document the sense of the meeting of participants attending the Transboundary Columbia River Conference in Kimberley, British Columbia, Canada, on September 12-14, 2019, concerning a proposal on the future of water governance for the international Columbia River basin. The proposal is a draft “strawdog” intended to initiate conversation on river governance and outlines how governance and management of transboundary shared international waters can be strengthened throughout the transboundary international Columbia River Basin through the creation of an International River Basin Organization (IRBO) that operates in conjunction with a modernized Columbia River Treaty (CRT). The proposal recommends:

1. the inclusion of sovereign representation, including the full participation and leadership of indigenous nations, states, provinces, local government;
2. transparency in decision making;
3. long-term and sustainable resourcing (i.e. staff, funding, IRBO institutional structure);
4. a mechanism for prioritization of issues and joint decision-making;
5. a mechanism for oversight and audit of (active) adaptive management implemented under transboundary agreements;
6. a mechanism for compilation and sharing of information relevant to transboundary river issues;
7. meaningful public participation; and
8. a basin-wide educational outreach effort.

The proposal responds to the request from a wide range of citizens of the Columbia River Basin on both sides of the Canada / USA border for greater transparency and flexibility in river governance, and for regional and Indigenous voices in decision making, that is broader than a “modernized” CRT in both geographic scope and substantive issues that might be coordinated across the basin.

Participants indicated overwhelming support when asked: *Do we agree that our legacy to our children be to start the process of moving toward an International River Basin Organization?* Sixty-seven written comments were received on the proposal. The key themes include:

1. The need for Indigenous leadership in this process.
2. Attention must be paid to ensure consistency between a new Columbia River Treaty and an IRBO
3. Form needs to follow function in institutional architecture and design
4. The need to inform decisions with both western science and traditional ecological knowledge.
5. The need to incorporate input, build upon, and support existing transboundary collaboratives, networks and repositories.
6. The need for (active) adaptive management.
7. The need for transparency and a forum for citizen input as well as education.
8. Research on past and existing models for a water governance organization.
9. Fund and coordinate scientific research.
10. The need for ecosystem function as a part of the Columbia River Treaty and basin governance.
11. Time is of the essence/ the need to impact change now