

Nicola Lake Planning Process

Public Meeting – NVIT Campus - June 8, 2013

The meeting opened at 9:15 AM

1. **Welcome**

Mike Simpson and Tracy Thomas welcomed everyone to the meeting and NVIT Elder Society member Bernice Ball delivered a welcome prayer.

Mike also encouraged participants to ask questions and provide feedback throughout the meeting.

2. **Story – Bernice Ball & Matt Williams**

Bernice explained that there was plenty of Aboriginal culture in and around Nicola Lake including fishing, ice fishing, ranching and water. She said that Aboriginal people are still fishing, hunting and tanning hides; there are still basket weavers and beadwork. Elders try to encourage young people to do the things that they did when they were young, trying to pass these traditions on. When her daughters are home, they are scraping and tanning hides. A lot of First Nations people are still ranching and riding/herding cows for local ranches. Lots of elders are in Merritt and lots are working on ranches.

Unfortunately, Pat Roberts was unable to come to the meeting, so Matt Williams took his place and accompanied Bernice with some ranching tales of Nicola Valley.

Matt came from a ranching family in Montana and has been ranching his whole working life. He has worked at the Gang Ranch, Quilchena, Douglas Lake and Stump Lake, and currently manages Nicola Ranch. He gave a brief history of ranching in the Nicola Valley and explained some of the basic ranch operations. Matt also explained techniques that Nicola Ranch uses to operate as sustainably as possible.

3. **Introductions**

Mike Simpson led a round of introductions for all of the meeting participants, gave an overview of the Fraser Basin Council, and went over the context of the meeting. (see Fraser Basin Council presentation for details) He also reminded the meeting to remember that the Lake is important to people for different reasons.

4. **Nicola Lake Planning Process**

This planning process has been underway since the public meeting held on September 19, 2012 in Merritt. The end goal of that process was to develop a draft plan and bring it back to the public for feedback and endorsement in the spring of 2013, hence this meeting.

To date there have been several sources for funding; the largest proportion from the Thompson-Nicola Regional District (TNRD) and City of Merritt Gas Tax Funds. A complete list of funding is included in the Draft Nicola Lake Action Plan. The following are the sources of funding for the Nicola Lake planning process to date:

- Thompson-Nicola Regional District and City of Merritt Gas Tax Funds
- Living Rivers Trust Fund
- Provincial trust funds held by the Fraser Basin Council

- In-kind contribution from working group members, agency staff and the Nicola Lake Stewardship Society

Nicola Lake Working Group

The Nicola Lake Working Group had a representation from landowners around Nicola Lake, including those from residential areas, ranches, and First Nations. In addition, there were several agencies receiving updates on the process and providing information and insights back to the group. The agencies involved with the Working Group included Fisheries and Oceans Canada, BC Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, BC Ministry of Environment, FrontCounter BC, BC Parks, and the BC Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure.

The members of the working group met nine times from September to June. Each of the meetings was structured like a workshop; each one had a theme based on the draft Action Plan, and an expert speaker or speakers presented on relevant subjects. Once the group had a chance to discuss what they had learned, they made revisions to the draft Action Plan taking new information into account. There were several members of the Group that participated in every meeting and put in a huge amount of time and effort. Matt Williams, Vern Latremouille, and Michael McDonald spoke about their experiences with the working group, and all felt they learned a lot during the process.

Draft Nicola Lake Action Plan Overview

Mike gave a brief overview of the draft Action Plan in preparation for a full review on each of the sections.

5. Feedback on the Plan – Water

Goal 1: Control invasive species in Nicola Lake

Mike reviewed the goals, objectives, and action items in the Water section of the draft Action Plan. There was a discussion on the types of Eurasian watermilfoil (EWM) management that are included in the plan. It was clarified that the management techniques listed were options appropriate for Nicola Lake, though not all would be used in all of the areas identified for EWM management. The tools listed are the most practical, feasible and cost effective.

Requests were made for the following revisions and clarifications:

- Add dates to action items (eg. fall rototilling)

Goal 2: Improve or maintain water quality in Nicola Lake

It was noted that the Nicola Lake Stewardship Society is a lead and key group on water quality and water quality monitoring in Nicola Lake. There was a discussion around some of the terms used in the Plan, sources of sediment and some suggestions for revisions or additions. There were questions around the selection of Monck Park as a site for shoreline restoration work as there are other areas that are eroding. It was explained that Monck Park was chosen because there is a \$5000 funding pot available for work in BC Parks and the Park is well used by both locals and visitors; it was agreed that improvement to the Park's riparian areas would be greatly appreciated by the community. There were also questions and comments around the level of the water and the operation of the dam. Mike made it clear that neither the Working Group nor the Plan touched on the dam or its operation as those decisions are made by the Province.

Future action items, suggestions for revisions and clarifications are as follows:

- Continue water testing on the tributaries
- Add more details to the shoreline erosion control action items
- Add an action item #6 planting native aquatic plants
- Have a waterfront landowner champion foreshore health by restoring the foreshore on their property. Pay for any riparian plants and other costs and in exchange, make the property available for some public viewings. This could be a restoration project, Goal 5, in the recreation and development section.
- The Water section of the Draft Nicola Lake Action Plan was endorsed by meeting participants

6. Education & Outreach

Goal 3: Increase education and awareness of Nicola Lake residents and visitors on subjects relating to Nicola Lake

Everyone agreed with all of the education goals in the Education & Outreach section of the Plan. Participants asked that invasive fish be considered as part of the umbrella of “invasive species” in the education piece. There was also a suggestion of adding educational signage etc. in and around the gas stations and other locations as many visitors pass through that area. Clarification was made that education includes signage and hiring an education person to work at Monck Park and possibly other areas speaking to people and delivering materials. Non-motorized boats/kite-boards etc. need to be considered in education around invasive species as they could be transporting them. There was also a discussion around improving the virtual education piece, more links between existing sites, and the possible development of an app. It was raised that the actions in this piece need to be specific and measurable.

- The Education & Outreach section of the Draft Nicola Lake Action Plan was endorsed by the group

7. Story - Jeanette McMaster

Jeanette told the story of Chief Nkwala, the last hereditary Chief of the Syilx people in the Upper Nicola area. Nkwala travelled far and had many wives and was highly respected by native and non-native people alike. Nkwala fought battles near Nicola Lake, even defending miners and helping to guide them north. Jeanette added that the pictographs in the area were messages for travelling people and said that we need to take care of them and the Lake.

8. Recreation & Development

Goal 4 – Sustainably manage multiuse lake recreation

Mike and members of the Working Group explained that this was a difficult section when it came to creating actions items. Mike added that the scope of the Nicola Lake Action Plan is Nicola Lake, yet the Lake is part of a much bigger watershed. There is limited funding and time constraints. There is also an appetite for action on the ground, rather than a lengthy planning process. This was made clear at the September 19, 2012 public meeting and by the NLWG throughout the planning process.

Future action items, suggestions for revisions and clarifications are as follows:

- Sustainable design principles, whether for tourism or not, should be captured here and added to the development piece
- Some First Nations cultural information should be at Monck Park
- A nautical chart of Nicola Lake for tourists is needed
- The survey can be done with residents: to find out what locals think and collect information about what they want the area to look like in the future
- Should consider recreation types aside from boating in the recreation survey
- Need to develop a broader vision – intent, desire etc. incorporate sustainable design principles, needs to be in the vision so that all infrastructure that is developed
- **Action: The new Nicola Group will take recreation inventory/survey results and identify steps to go forward**
- In the Lakeshore Development Guidelines, Nicola Lake is classified as critical, need to have consistent messages going out

Goal 5: Sustainably manage lakefront & foreshore development

There are no identified action items for this piece in the plan. There are currently bylaws and regulations in place, such as those that restrict the type of development that can be done on waterfront property on Nicola Lake. There are also several developments on Nicola that are not tenured under the BC *Land Act*. The Working Group has been told that Compliance and Enforcement Officers from the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations will be out on Nicola Lake this year; they will target non-compliant developments and will work with property owners to bring those developments into voluntary compliance. It was clarified that the Working Group and the draft Plan have nothing to do with compliance and enforcement activities.

- **Action: Nicola Group to discuss the development of a pilot project on private waterfront property for restoration – 2014 action item**
- **Action: Add communication targets/methods etc. to the education section**
- **Action: Add more stuff to Nicola webpage, links etc.**
- The Recreation & Development section of the Draft Nicola Lake Action Plan was endorsed by the group

9. Preliminary Budget

Mike outlined the preliminary budget for 2013. There is currently \$140,000 of Gas Tax funds, along with the possibility of some funding from the Parks Enhancement Fund (\$5,000). There is also work being done to obtain some funding from Highland Valley Copper. In the preliminary budget, the funds have been generally divided up into the three sections of the plan. It was expressed that there should be a detailed budget going forward along with a more detailed explanation of funds.

- The preliminary budget of the Draft Nicola Lake Action Plan was endorsed by the group
- There was general endorsement and acceptance of the draft Nicola Lake Action Plan from all of those present at the meeting.

10. Governance

The work of the Nicola Lake Working Group ends today. The mandate of the group was to draft a plan for Nicola Lake and bring it to the public in the spring of 2013, which has now been accomplished. Mike reviewed the draft terms of reference for the “Nicola Lake Steering

Committee.” Meeting participants agreed with the draft terms of reference and felt than any further details could be worked out by the Steering Committee.

- **Action: Fine-tuning of the Nicola Lake Steering Committee will be done by the group at the first meeting**

Meeting adjourned at 2:20pm