

Lake Diefenbaker Operating Plan Engagement Meeting
Métis Nation of Saskatchewan
September 24, 2012 @ 10:00 a.m.
Travelodge Hotel, Saskatoon

Recorders: Heather Davies, Robin Tod
Facilitator: Dan McGill
Presenter: Terry Hanley

Participants:

Name	Local or Governance
Tyler Fetch	Métis Nation of Saskatchewan – Lands and Resources Department

Meeting Notes

The start of the meeting was delayed to 10:20 a.m. in order to ensure that all participants were in attendance.

Terry Hanley introduced the process regarding the engagement process. Lake Diefenbaker is an important economic driver for Saskatchewan. For example, the lake is the water supply for 85% of the province. Terry also noted that the plan must be a living document and adapt to the situation by being resilient and transparent. This phase of the engagement is soliciting interest from parties such as business, communities, First Nations and the Métis Nations – Saskatchewan.

Terry went over the schedule of the engagement process in the presentation. He introduced the rationale and background for the Lake Diefenbaker engagement process. He discussed the objectives for management and the factors that impact the operation of the reservoir. Terry highlighted the complexity involved in the decisions required for operation of the Lake Diefenbaker reservoir.

Question how much water the Province of Alberta is allowed to hold back? Terry referred to the master agreement on apportionment; such the province is required to pass through 50% of the flows to Saskatchewan.

Concerns/Challenges

1. Comments were made about the access to the resource for fishing and the problems with lake levels regarding access to the resource. The low water levels downstream from the dam effect the Métis communities of the St. Louis and Batoche in terms of the ferry operation. In addition, the low water levels impact the access to the fish resource. High water levels also impact the gathering activities such as harvesting of berries for Métis people.

2. Erosion of the river bank downstream of the Gardiner Dam causes problems with slumping along the river. The siltation causes decline in water quality. It was noted that Métis people are ranchers and farmers along the river.
3. Erosion of the riverbank at Round Prairie (Métis settlement) and Métis cemetery at the Batoche National Historic Site is endangering the archeological and historical legacy.
4. Water and the river are important to the Métis Nation such the river lots at St. Louis and the land that now form the Batoche National Historic Site. These Métis sites are located close to the South Saskatchewan River.
5. Water appears to have a strong spiritual connection to the water in terms of Métis culture and heritage. Comments that personal experience indicates an attachment to the river and water. Métis settlement is connected to the “highways” of Saskatchewan rivers and lakes where the current communities are situated. Some of the Métis are not Christian and they have a stronger connection to them spiritually. History of Métis is connected to the waterways which is a strong connection to the past.
6. Water levels effect hunting and trapping on the Saskatchewan River system. Habitat and traditional gathering along the river banks are influenced by these changes.
7. Erosion of certain areas such as the Métis graveyard at Batoche is critical. Comments indicated that water erosion is higher at certain times and lower erosion at other times. The graveyard at Batoche National Historic Site should be protected from the considerable erosion that is occurring along the South Saskatchewan River.

Heather Davies then discussed the issues matrix for the engagement process.

Comment that the participant was not familiar with the further western portions of Lake Diefenbaker. General comment made that water erosion is a problem for whole lake and the river system.

Participant was not sure about the seasonality about the flows and their impacts. Comments indicated that high water levels can cause shoreline erosion.

Participant asked about the impact of drawing down the reservoir in the winter. Terry indicated that the objective is to create a strong ice layer on the lake so that when the water level declines, ice may fracture along the edges.

In regards to competing values, participant indicated understanding of the other interests such as hydro power generation and recreational use.

Participant comments indicated that whatever the water flows are; the result will be erosion of the river bank. Other than changing the flow of the river, not much action would be available to protect the graveyard.

Terry Hanley indicated that normal flows do not cause extreme erosion. He discussed that erosion does not occur in all situations. Discussion about situations where there were extreme flows can cause drying out of the river bank.

General comment that the management plan should minimize the possible impacts on each interest. Respect of the individual is important and we should value the understanding of the communities and sectors. Important to balance all of the different interests and inform the sectors and communities of decisions.

Discussion continued on the engagement process with credit to the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority for sending out the letters and then following up with a telephone call. Métis Nation of Saskatchewan representatives are interested in being involved in the process and some concern was noted about the attendance at the engagement session.

A suggestion was made by Terry Hanley that completion of the questionnaire would be of assistance to the process and may be more beneficial than completing the matrices.

Participant noted the benefit of talking to both the political and non-political people in Métis Nation of Saskatchewan.

Heather noted that Saskatchewan Watershed Authority would be having an engagement with representatives of Cumberland House Métis local at Nipawin in the next month. A recommendation was made that Percy Daoust from the Nipawin local should be included in this session.

Conversation continued regarding the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan organizational and governance structure.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.