

Coquitlam-Buntzen Water Use Plan Order Review (WUPOR) And Application for Fisheries Act Authorization (AfA)

July 2026

The Coquitlam-Buntzen Water Use Plan Order Review is now underway. This update provides a brief overview of the process and a summary of progress to date.

Background

BC Hydro, working together with kʷikʷəłəm First Nation, has launched the Coquitlam-Buntzen Water Use Plan Order Review (WUPOR) and Application for Fisheries Act Authorization (AFA). The process aims to review BC Hydro's ordered operations to determine whether the proposed benefits to operational changes have been met, understand the results of the monitoring programs, and whether additional operational adjustments are needed. The review also includes an Application for Fisheries Act Authorization with Fisheries and Oceans Canada, which authorizes unavoidable operational impacts to fish and fish habitat and expires at the end of 2028. The WUPOR involves the establishment of an Order Review Advisory Committee (ORAC), which is reviewing operations and identifying potential consensus recommendations for improving them. The ORAC includes representatives from BC Hydro, kʷikʷəłəm First Nation, local governments, environmental organizations, and federal and provincial regulators. The committee has met four times so far, including a cultural tour of the watershed hosted by kʷikʷəłəm First Nation and a tour of BC Hydro's facilities, and is now working through a list of preliminary issues to address. The ORAC is working towards a set of consensus recommendations by mid-to-late 2027. These will be used to inform BC Hydro's applications to the Comptroller of Water Rights, and DFO, who then begin their own engagement process.

What is the scope and process for the ORAC?

The ORAC's work centres on two core questions:

- Were the intended benefits met? What are the recommendations to resolve key operational issues for a new Order (the focus of the WUPOR)?
- What actions should be taken to obtain a Fisheries Act Authorization (the focus of the AFA).

To get there, the group is working through the following steps:

- Reviewing what was ordered in 2005 and whether the intended outcomes were achieved.
- Identifying priority issues, including those that were not resolved under the original Water Use Plan and any new issues that have emerged since.
- Exploring and comparing options for adjusting operations.
- Building toward a consensus set of recommendations that the ORAC can support.

The review is focused on BC Hydro operations only. It does not cover changes to existing infrastructure, revenue sharing, or activities outside the influence of BC Hydro operations.

Update on Progress?

Engagement Series

Last fall, BC Hydro worked with kʷikʷəłəm (Kwkwetlem First Nation) to lead engagement for the Coquitlam-Buntzen Water Use Plan Order Review (WUPOR) and the application for Fisheries Act Authorization (FAA) Renewal. Information sessions were held on September 10 and November 6, 2025. These sessions provided an overview of the Review, shared the potential issues that will be discussed through the Review process, and outlined the next steps for engagement, including the Order Review Advisory Committee.

ORAC meetings

The ORAC has held four meetings since early 2026, an short synopsis is provided below.

ORAC 1: Getting started (March 2026)

The first meeting brought participants together to build a shared understanding of the process. The group reviewed the Terms of Reference and proposed workplan, and discussed how recommendations will be made. Participants also explored current operations and updates on the environmental monitoring programs that were established as part of the original Water Use Plan.

ORAC 2: Cultural orientation (May 2026)

kʷikʷəłəm First Nation hosted a cultural knowledge-sharing and land tour of the watershed for ORAC members. The event provided an opportunity to deepen participants' understanding of kʷikʷəłəm connections to the land and water. The Nation shared how kʷikʷəłəm culture has been affected by colonialism, including the construction of the Dam and ongoing operations at Coquitlam Lake.

ORAC 3: BC Hydro facility tour (May/June 2026)

BC Hydro and kʷikʷəłəm First Nation provided a tour of the Coquitlam-Buntzen facilities for ORAC members. This helped the group become familiar with current operations, physical infrastructure, and how the system is managed day-to-day.

ORAC 4: Priority issues (June 2026)

The fourth meeting focused on working through a preliminary list of issues to identify which are priorities for the ORAC to address. The issues list covered fish and aquatic ecosystems, water supply, flood control, hydroelectric generation, recreation and public safety, wildlife and environment, climate change, and economic concerns. The group made good progress sorting through the list, though some issues require additional detail or a defined way of measuring outcomes before they can be fully sorted. Additional issues will also be raised at the next meeting.

What comes next?

The ORAC will next meet in July to continue the priority issues discussion and identify the performance measures and initial alternatives to be tested in a preliminary modelling exercise. From there, the group will evaluate the preliminary options and make refinements where necessary, working toward a consensus recommendation by mid-to-late 2027.

Following the ORAC process, BC Hydro will develop its applications to the provincial Comptroller of Water Rights and to Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Both regulators will then conduct their own independent review and consultation before making any decisions.

Questions or feedback?

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