

View from Mount Seven of the Columbia River

CBT, Connected to a History of a River and its Dams

Canada and the United States were facing two major challenges in the Columbia Basin after WWII. In addition to an increased population, the “untamed” Columbia River was causing periodic and sometimes devastating flooding. Simultaneously, an upswing in the economy increased the need for energy sources.

In order to meet these challenges the two countries ratified the Columbia River Treaty (CRT) in 1964. The purpose of which is to coordinate flood control and optimize electrical energy production in the Columbia River Basin on both sides of the border.

Under the CRT, Canada agreed to build three storage dams - Keenleyside, Duncan and Mica. A fourth dam - Libby - was built in the United States. In return for the storage of water, Canada is entitled to one half of the additional power generated at the American power plants on the Columbia River. The Province of BC owns this “Canadian Entitlement of Downstream Benefits”, of which they sold the first 30 years’ worth to a group of United States utilities for US\$254 million. This sales agreement began to expire in 1998 and the Province is now receiving the Canadian Entitlement for the remaining 30 years of the CRT.

The CRT has no official expiry date, but has a minimum length of 60 years, which is met in September 2024. It is possible that one or both countries may wish to renegotiate parts or all of the CRT or terminate the CRT. Either Canada or the United States may terminate the CRT any time on or after September 16, 2024, with a minimum 10 years written advance notice (2014). By mutual agreement both sides can amend certain terms of the CRT at any time.

Because the original process in which decisions were made to enact the CRT, by the provincial and federal governments, did not allow for adequate consultation with Basin residents and as a result of the impacts the CRT had on their lives and life in the Basin, CBT was created to benefit the areas most adversely affected by the CRT. CBT received \$276 million for power project investments, \$45 million for an endowment and \$2 million per year from 1996-2010 for operating costs. With these funds and its resulting benefits, CBT supports communities through its Delivery of Benefits programs.

CBT’s primary roles with respect to the CRT are to act as an information resource for Basin residents on the CRT, and to work with provincial and federal government agencies to provide advice on meaningful consultation processes with Basin residents on any process to amend, renew or terminate the CRT or any of its related sub-agreements.



Mica Dam

Frequently Asked Questions

What is CBT's role in the future of the CRT?

- Acting as a facilitator and convener on behalf of Basin residents;
- Building Basin residents' understanding and awareness around the CRT;
- Assisting Basin residents to organize themselves around providing input on CRT-related issues; and
- Helping to create processes and opportunities to engage Basin residents in a meaningful way.

What is CBT currently doing around the CRT?

- CBT is implementing its Water Initiatives Strategy, which addresses the CRT (www.cbt.org/water).
- CBT participates in the provincial government's Steering Committee that is exploring issues around the CRT.
- CBT is working with local governments, non-governmental organizations and residents to help build their understanding and awareness about the CRT.
- CBT, in cooperation with a variety of other agencies, has created educational tools to help residents build their understanding around the Basin and the CRT (www.cbt.org/crt).
- CBT is facilitating processes around local and regional water issues by building relationships, partnerships and networks to help achieve a greater understanding of residents' interests and values around water.

- CBT is building capacity amongst Basin residents around local and regional water management issues.
- CBT is facilitating a greater understanding between United States residents and Basin residents regarding one another's views and values around water.
- CBT is working with Canadian provincial, federal, local and First Nations governments to ensure there is a coordinated and collaborative approach to sharing information and researching major transboundary water issues in the Columbia Basin through the Canadian Columbia River Forum (www.cbt.org/ccrf).

Will CBT have a place at the CRT renegotiation table?

- There is no indication at this time that the CRT will be renegotiated.
- At this time, there is no reason to expect CBT or any other parties outside government would be directly negotiating the CRT.
- CBT's role is to ensure Basin residents are consulted in a meaningful way and their views are part of any decision-making process.
- Termination of the CRT is under federal government jurisdiction, but under a BC and Canada agreement the federal government in Canada must have the "concurrence" of the Province to terminate the CRT.

What can residents do now?

- Residents can learn more on the history of the CRT and build their understanding and awareness as to how they and their communities are affected by the CRT.
- Residents can prepare to engage in positive and productive dialogue on the future of the CRT.
- Residents can look up resources on the CRT, some of which is available online at www.cbt.org/crt.
- Residents can work with CBT to provide direction on how CBT can effectively fulfill its role with residents around the CRT.



Arrow Lakes Generating Station