



**Columbia River Treaty**  
**Learn about our past.**  
**Think about our future.**

# COLUMBIA RIVER TREATY SUMMARY OF SPRING 2012 INFORMATION SESSIONS

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*This report, compiled by Columbia Basin Trust (CBT), provides background information and summarizes key themes that emerged during spring 2012 Columbia River Treaty information sessions hosted by CBT in collaboration with the CRT Local Governments’ Committee (LG Committee). The purpose of the information sessions was to build understanding and awareness around the CRT. Consultation on the CRT is a provincial responsibility. CBT is not consulting or gathering a full range of views or values on the CRT; therefore, this document is not a consultation summary. The discussion themes summarized in this document originated with Basin residents attending the information sessions and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of CBT staff and management.*

## BACKGROUND

The 1964 Columbia River Treaty (CRT) is an international agreement between Canada and the U.S. to coordinate flood control and optimize hydroelectric energy production on both sides of the border.

The CRT has no official expiry date, but has a minimum length of 60 years, which is met in September 2024. Either Canada or the United States can terminate many of the provisions of the agreement effective any time after September 2024, provided written notice is filed at least 10 years in advance (2014).

While no decision has been made by either Canada or the U.S. on the future of the CRT, given the importance of the issues, and the approaching date of 2014, both countries are now conducting studies and exploring future options for the CRT.

In 1995, Columbia Basin Trust (CBT) was created to benefit the areas most adversely affected by the CRT. CBT's primary role in regard to the CRT is to act as an information resource for Basin residents and local governments. CBT is not a decision maker on the future of the CRT and CBT's role is not to consult with Basin residents on the future of the CRT—consultation is a provincial responsibility.



## THE PROCESS

In anticipation of a potential decision in 2014 regarding the future of the CRT, CBT, in collaboration with the CRT Local Governments’ Committee (LG Committee), is engaging with Basin residents to increase their awareness and understanding of the CRT.

In 2011, CBT set out to engage and educate Basin residents about the CRT—its basic framework and the implications of 2014 and 2024—and to prepare residents to effectively engage in any provincial consultation process related to the CRT.

In partnership with local governments and the LG Committee, CBT hosted a series of face-to-face information sessions, one school-based open house, 12 small-group presentations and three online information sessions, in addition to developing comprehensive CRT web pages and hosting a CRT conference for Basin youth in March 2012.

These efforts were designed to:

1. raise awareness and understanding of the CRT past, present and future; and
2. develop the capacity of residents to engage in discussions related to the CRT review.

Information session summaries are available at [www.cbt.org/crt](http://www.cbt.org/crt).

In spring 2012, the provincial government formally launched its consultation on the future of the CRT and hosted a series of workshops.

CBT, working closely with the LG Committee, agreed to undertake a second round of community information sessions on the CRT, delivered in conjunction with provincial consultation workshops in seven communities. In addition to these face-to-face sessions, one online information session was also hosted.

*CBT’s primary role is to act as an information resource for Basin residents and local governments. CBT is not a decision-maker in the CRT process and is not consulting on the future of the CRT.*

2011		2012	
Location	Date	Location	Date
Valemount	June 28	New Denver	Feb. 21
Jaffray	Oct. 4	Columbia Valley	Feb. 29
Cranbrook	Oct. 6	Jaffray	May 29
Castlegar	Oct. 19	Creston	May 30
Trail	Oct. 20	Nakusp	June 5
Revelstoke	Nov. 7	Castlegar	June 6
Golden	Nov. 8	Valemount	June 13
Nelson	Nov. 14	Golden	June 19
Nakusp	Nov. 15	Revelstoke	June 20
Meadow Creek	Nov. 29		
Kaslo	Nov. 30		
Creston	Nov. 28		

Prior to each provincial consultation workshop, the LG Committee and CBT jointly hosted an open house and discussion with experts designed to:

1. provide CRT background information to residents including answers to questions asked by residents in fall 2011 information sessions; and
2. help residents feel more comfortable talking about the CRT by giving them an opportunity to talk and work through subject areas prior to the consultation by the Provincial CRT Review Team.

In addition to these face-to-face open houses and discussions, CBT hosted an online information session and continued to add new resources to [www.cbt.org/crt](http://www.cbt.org/crt).

## SPRING 2012 DISCUSSION SUMMARY

This document provides an overview of the spring 2012 discussions that took place between Basin residents and resource people, including members of the Provincial CRT Review Team and CBT's Water Advisory Panel, immediately prior to the start of the provincial consultation workshops in seven communities.

In each community, residents received an overview of the CRT and then had the option to participate in two small-group discussions to learn more and get answers to their questions. Each information session ended with a short plenary and residents were encouraged to provide their final thoughts or questions to share with others on a poster with the discussion themes.



Small-group discussions focused on the following topics, which emerged as areas of the most interest for Basin residents during the fall 2011 information sessions:

1. Climate change and water;
2. Downstream power benefits;
3. Flood control;
4. Future of the CRT;
5. Impacts and compensation;
6. Libby Dam and Koocanusa Reservoir; and
7. Restoring salmon.

The following sections consolidate and summarize key themes and areas of common focus and discussion that emerged at the spring 2012 information sessions.

### Climate Change and Water

The climate change sessions started with residents sharing their personal observations of changes they have seen and then they discussed local impacts of climate change in more depth. Resource people explained that modelled climate change predictions for the Columbia Basin suggest greater variability of climate and increased frequency of extreme events, and suggest that while the Canadian portion of the Columbia Basin may face some significant changes as a result of climate change, the U.S. portion will likely face greater change.

Participants discussed the predicted changes in temperature and streamflow timing expected on the BC side of the Columbia Basin. They also discussed possible implications for U.S. residents as the Columbia Basin moves from a snow-dominant system to a rain-dominant system.

Potential flood impacts due to climate changes, the potential for future droughts in the U.S., and Canada's potential future role in providing water to the U.S. for agriculture, fish and power generation were all discussed.



Participants noted that the lack of information about melting glaciers in the region makes it difficult to predict the changes to annual runoff and what impacts there may be to stream flows in 50 to 100 years. This is especially important in the summer months as glaciers account for a significant portion of summer streamflow in many of the headwater areas of the Columbia Basin.

Recognizing that climate change is putting pressure on natural systems and human communities all over the world, discussions also focused on climate change adaptation. It was noted that dams and reservoirs can be important adaptation mechanisms to help mitigate extreme events and off-set greater climatic variability. Enhancing biodiversity was considered a key adaptation mechanism to increase resiliency of the region and there was discussion around establishing limits on future hydro development in consideration of promoting healthy and resilient ecosystems.

People felt that Canada and the U.S. could work together to optimize environmental values, which may also constitute adaptation strategies, by focusing on areas where there is potential for positive change in a tangible timeframe (e.g., wetlands).

**Participant Top-of-Mind Thoughts:**



## Downstream Power Benefits

Participants noted that residents would like to see more of the Canadian Entitlement (Canada's share of the downstream power benefits) returned to the Columbia Basin.

Additionally, participants discussed the value of downstream power benefits and the potential impact of U.S. wind generation and other power sources on the value of the Canadian Entitlement.

Many residents believe that regardless of any changes to the CRT, Canada deserves more compensation for the full range of downstream benefits the U.S. derives under the CRT. For example, they suggested the U.S. should pay for the additional incremental benefits the U.S. receives for irrigation, fish and recreation as a result of Canadian water storage and operations under the CRT.

Participants also discussed the role and timing of melting snowpack and how it influences the volume of water, the need for flood control, power generation and how that results in fluctuating water levels in the Canadian reservoirs and the adverse impacts to fish, recreation and other values in our region.

### **Participant Top-of-Mind Thoughts:**

More should be done for Canadian fish environment programs; however, U.S. should be obligated to return the salmon at no cost, so don't use CRT benefits to pay for this in Canada.

The amount of revenue from the entitlement and flood protection expected going forward may not be worth the impacts on the Canadian side of the border.

U.S. should continue to pay for flood control.

Is the U.S. working on the CRT on a state-by-state basis or federally?

Arrow Lakes Reservoir is key to flood control, but the area gets very few benefits.

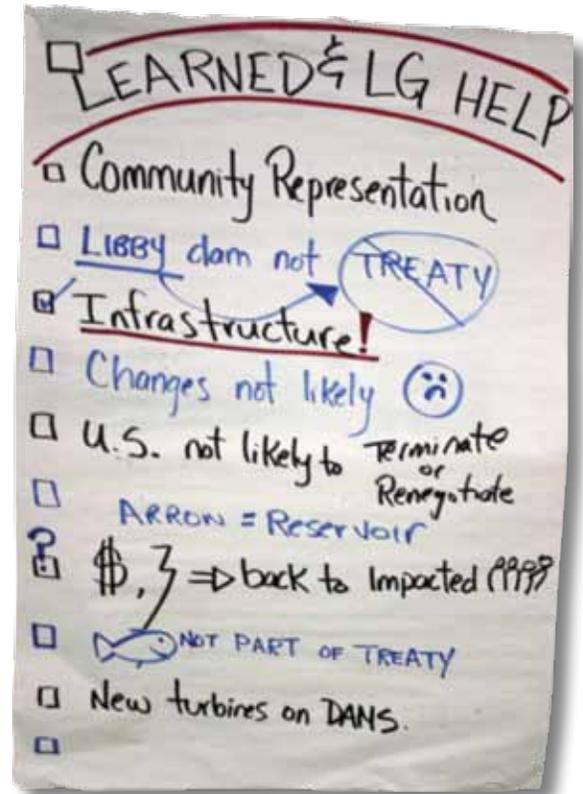
Look at the benefits to Canadians to renew the CRT and provide additional infrastructure to the impacted regions.

Let's not limit negotiations just to power and flood control.

## Flood Control

Flood control discussions centred on the Canadian and U.S. perspectives regarding *called upon* flood control, and when the U.S. could, post 2024, *call upon* BC to manage flows for additional U.S. flood control. Post 2024, the U.S. is expected to make “effective use” of water storage in its own reservoirs before asking (i.e., *calling upon*) BC to evacuate and then store water in its reservoirs for flood control.

Many residents feel that BC is in a good position to negotiate on flood control since a great deal of development has occurred in U.S. flood plains, heightening the need for flood control there. Experts explained that it may be in the interests of both nations to have a coordinated flood control agreement post 2024 rather than relying on *called upon* flood control, which has many unknowns associated with it.



## Future of the CRT

These discussions focused on potential future options for the CRT:

- 1a) Columbia River Treaty Continues: potential for coordinated flood risk management.
  - *Canada continues to receive payments for downstream power benefits. Flood control could be Coordinated Risk Management or Called Upon Flood Control as prescribed in the current CRT.*
- 1b) Columbia River Treaty Continues “Plus”: potential coordination for additional values.
  - *Potential to incorporate other values including ecosystems, recreation, etc.*
- 2) Columbia River Treaty is Terminated: the current CRT is terminated with no replacement agreement.
  - *Downstream power benefits payments to BC (\$150 - 300 million US/year) expire. Canada’s requirement to regulate flows for power interests in the U.S. ends. Canadian flood control obligations change to Called Upon Flood Control. There is increased uncertainty in the U.S. regarding Canadian operations. No coordination between Canada and the U.S.*

### 1a: Columbia River Treaty Continues

Under this option, which is essentially a status quo scenario, participants said the issues they currently experience will likely continue (e.g., significant changes in reservoir levels “within a year” and from “year-to-year”).

In both the East and West Kootenay, dialogue focused on low water levels in Kooconusa, Kinbasket and Arrow Lakes reservoirs, and the resulting negative impacts on recreation and businesses. In addition, participants noted that current operations at these reservoirs are not optimal for fish and wildlife.

It was noted that since completion of Arrow Lakes Generating Station at Hugh Keenleyside Dam, water levels on that reservoir have been kept higher for power generation. If assured annual flood control (which expires in 2024) is not renegotiated, Canada would have the right to operate reservoirs for different values or look to optimize power values.

Some suggested that the U.S. may need to look at building and upgrading dikes to avoid flooding if the flood control operations change to *called upon* after 2024. Some suggested that Water Use Planning (WUP) is a good tool to help in the management of reservoir and dam operations, and to include residents in those management decisions. It was noted that to-date, the WUP process has not considered the CRT, and had the CRT constraint on operations been taken off, the WUP process may have produced different outcomes.

### 1b: Columbia River Treaty Continues “Plus”

If this option is chosen, participants felt there needed to be a balance between water levels for fish and water levels for economics and business. Some were frustrated by what they perceived as fish management in the U.S. taking precedent over hydro generation. Others strongly believe the CRT needs to integrate operations that help restore the ecosystem.

Gordon MacNabb, a member of Canada’s CRT negotiating team and retired Canadian Chair of the CRT Permanent Engineering Board, attended the spring 2012 info session in Nakusp and shared his perspectives.



2: Columbia River Treaty is Terminated

It was noted that this option is not currently being considered as the primary option by the Provincial CRT Review Team.

If the CRT is terminated, it is likely that reservoir levels could be kept higher on the Arrow Lakes Reservoir and Canada could produce more power. However, the Canadian Entitlement would end and this potential for new, additional power may not be enough to make up for the loss of the Canadian Entitlement (i.e., Canada’s share of downstream power benefits, which is currently estimated at US\$150 – 300 million each year, which goes to the Province of BC). It is also likely that system operations could change to better reflect optimizing benefits in Canada. However, the extent of this change, as well as what it could mean for reservoir levels in Canada and impacts to the U.S., is not fully understood.

Provincial representatives explained they do not see a need to make substantial changes to the current CRT, but are looking for ways to improve it.

**Participant Top-of-Mind Thoughts:**

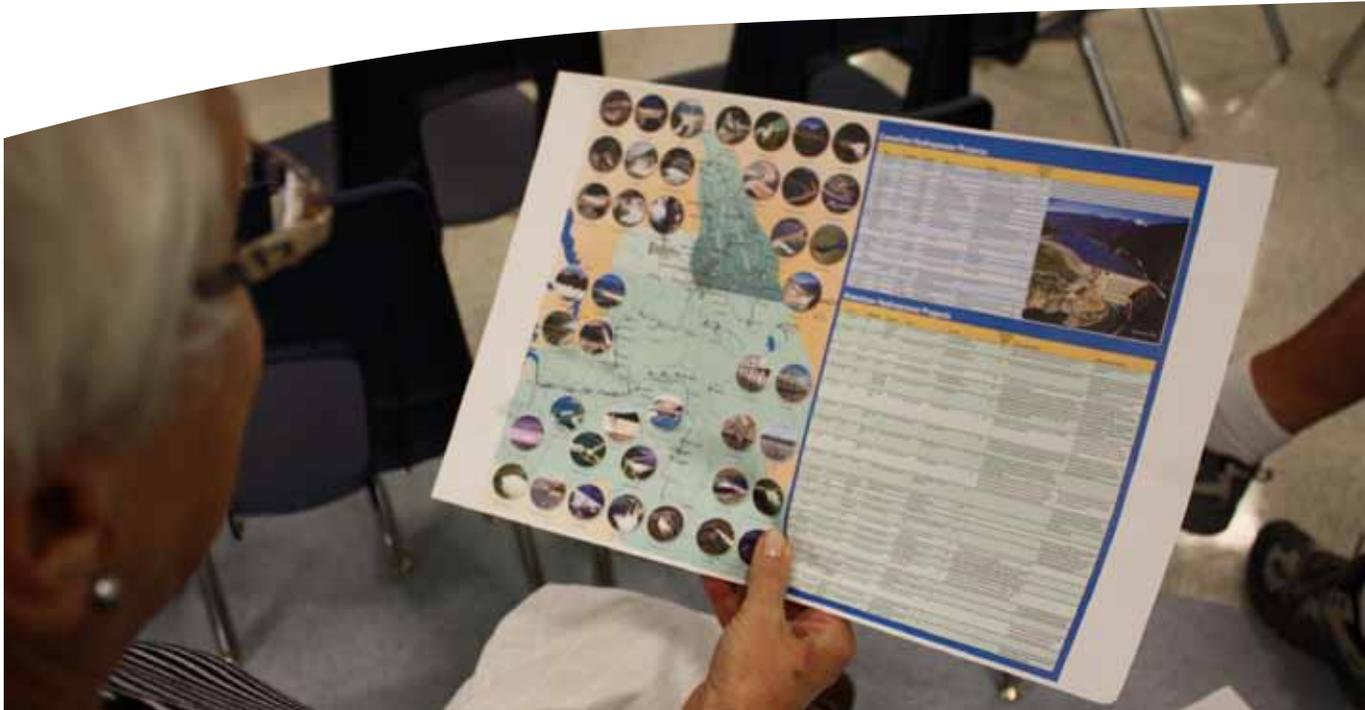


## Impacts and Compensation

Residents expressed concern about the range of both the historical impacts from dam construction and current operations, as well as the perceived lack of compensation to address local impacts. These concerns were prevalent at each of the sessions.

Discussions focused on economic impacts in the region resulting from the CRT and the lack of socio-economic impact information. Across the Basin, fluctuating reservoir levels negatively impact fish, businesses, and property values and contribute to erosion and, in some cases, create damaging dust storms. Some suggested that an annual process like Water Use Planning should be incorporated into the CRT to monitor and address these issues. This would facilitate increased involvement and education of residents in the operation of the hydroelectricity system.

In all regions, there were concerns about the impacts of the CRT on agriculture. For example, in the West Kootenay, agricultural lands from Arrow Park to Renata were flooded and there has been limited compensation to the agricultural sector. Residents want to understand the true cost of the lost agricultural land that was flooded in the East and West Kootenay; some would like research undertaken on this topic. For people in Creston, the issue of potential losses to agriculture and the failing dikes are major concerns. In Castlegar, the conversation focused on ecological and ethical uses of water, as well as the return of salmon. In addition, the promise to build bridges at Needles and Galena Bay as part of the compensation package in the 1960s has never been fulfilled.

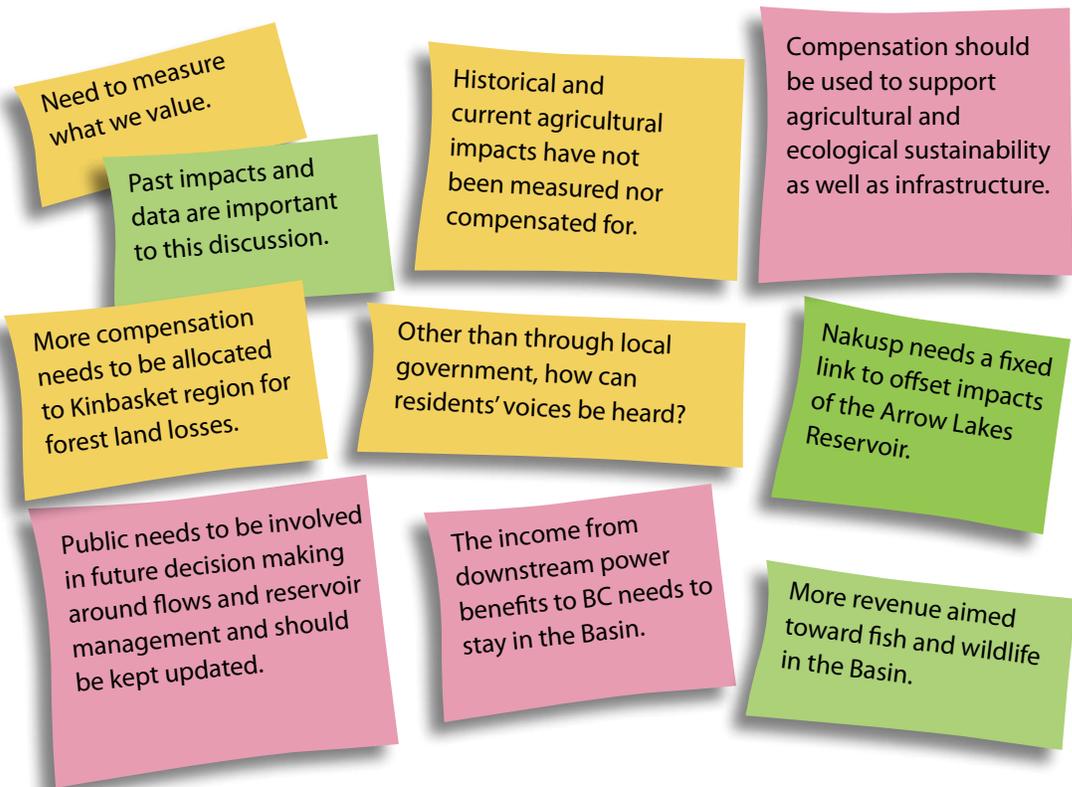


In the Kinbasket region (i.e., Golden, Valemount), the removal and condition of forestry roads, the only way to access the reservoir, have significantly impacted recreation and forestry in Golden and area. Many noted that a lack of information about the Kinbasket reservoir has resulted in inadequate and “unfair” compensation for this reservoir as compared to others, and some asked why this reservoir does not have the same investment from the Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program, as do other Canadian CRT reservoirs.

The issue of grants in lieu of taxes for the dams was brought up and questions arose as to how those funds are distributed and whether the impacted areas get their fair share. The issue of benefits sharing or taxation of water stored in the reservoir was brought up. Some suggested that the Columbia Shuswap Regional District should revisit these questions about taxation, fair share and compensation. Others suggested that rather than more research, there is a need to start remediating the losses and compensating people living on and near the reservoirs.

There was a lot of discussion regarding the need for data and the need for quantifiable impacts in order to better understand if residents are being adequately compensated, and to combat misinformation. It was suggested the LG Committee should commit to getting the necessary data to address community concerns.

**Participant Top-of-Mind Thoughts:**



### Libby Dam and Koochanusa Reservoir

Overall, many participants believe Koochanusa Reservoir requires more consideration and the question of future impacts and compensation in this area is important to them.

In the East Kootenay, participants focused their discussion on operations at Libby Dam in Montana and how those decisions impact Koochanusa Reservoir in BC. They noted that there is no process to ensure a range of Canadian interests are considered in operations at Libby Dam, nor related changes in water levels on the reservoir.

Since there is no fish and wildlife compensation program on Koochanusa Reservoir—unlike other CRT reservoirs that have a compensation program in place as a requirement of BC Hydro’s provincial water licence—there are no resources available for environmental stewardship, conservation or enhancement.

Provincial representatives acknowledged that Koochanusa Reservoir is the least studied of all CRT reservoirs and the full range of impacts, including agriculture and other impacts, is not fully understood. They also noted that operations at Libby Dam to meet fish flow requirements can be viewed as an environmental service that ensures compliance with U.S. federal legislation.

#### **Participant Top-of-Mind Thoughts:**

Koochanusa needs a fish and wildlife compensation program. Who is responsible for compensation programs?

There needs to be a mechanism created to include Canadian interests in deciding Libby Dam Operations.

### Restoring Salmon

The completion of Grand Coulee Dam in Washington State in 1941 blocked anadromous salmon (i.e., salmon that spawn inland but live in the ocean) and other species from getting to the upper Columbia River. Fish passage exists on dams downstream from Grand Coulee, with the exception of Chief Joseph Dam, which is now the first barrier for fish heading upstream from the Pacific Ocean.

Participants discussed the historical importance of salmon, as well as the desire among First Nations and non-First Nations alike to return salmon to the Columbia River in Canada. The feasibility of doing this was discussed, especially due to climate change, and the high cost and limited success of some of the existing salmon recovery programs in the U.S. Successful examples of salmon restoration in the U.S. and in Canada (e.g., Okanagan) were also mentioned, including the specifics of these examples (i.e., return rate, survival, changing temperatures, ability of salmon to move up and downstream, technologies, etc.).

Perspectives from U.S. tribes and Canadian First Nations were shared, and focused on making ecosystem functions and processes (e.g., fish and wildlife) the third component of the CRT in addition to power and flood control.

The group talked about studies currently underway and the need for more information about successful salmon recovery programs in other locations, success rates, requirements (i.e., availability of spawning habitats, need for hatcheries, etc.) and projected costs to do the same in this region. Participants were interested in getting more information to determine whether it would be a sound investment or whether funds should be put to other native fish species that currently exist in the system. For example, there is debate as to whether increasing water temperatures—as a result of climate change—can or cannot support certain fish species in the future.

The necessity to coordinate and collaborate with downstream hydro facilities and authorities in the U.S. was noted and participants wanted to know how they could support First Nations to work towards the goal of returning salmon. It was suggested that the CRT is the avenue to begin the conversation around salmon and an option is to create a side agreement under the CRT to address salmon recovery.

***Participant Top-of-Mind Thoughts:***

Support and collaborate to enhance fish and wildlife.

We must do everything at all costs to save sturgeon and salmon.

Include the Sinixt in these discussions.

Where are First Nations in the CRT review process and how much influence do they have?

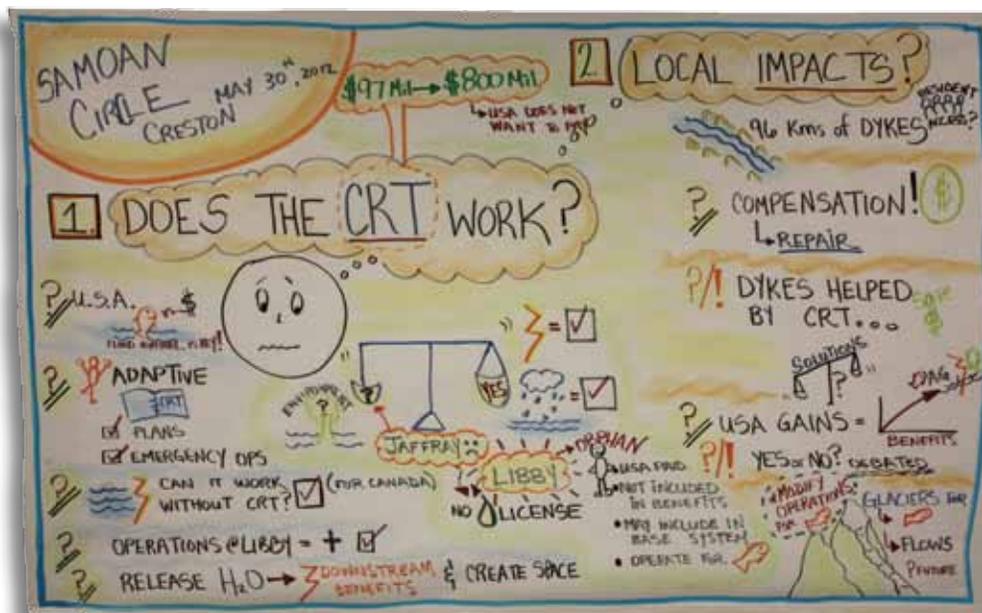
We want to understand sustainability of salmon populations and want salmon to return to the upper Columbia.

### Other Discussion Themes

Participants expressed their need for further education so residents can continue to learn about reservoirs, operations and future CRT options. They also asked the Provincial CRT Review Team to continue to communicate with people in the Basin through more meetings and other means.

In addition to the main discussion topics, residents across the Basin identified a number of other discussion themes and areas of interest including:

- a desire for CRT negotiations to include local values and involve residents;
- a desire for increased involvement of residents in system operations and planning;
- a desire for equitable sharing of downstream power benefits within the Basin;
- the need to ensure the CRT is mutually beneficial for both countries;
- the importance of adding environmental values to the management and operations of CRT dams;
- working together cooperatively across the border to manage the Columbia River;
- clarifying the role of the federal government; and
- understanding why water levels change.



Creston session was recorded graphically by CBT Consultant Michelle Laurie.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Answers to frequently asked questions, videos that capture CRT ideas and comments from Basin residents, pre- and post-dam images, fact sheets and other resources are available at [www.cbt.org/crt](http://www.cbt.org/crt). Subscribe online to CBT's email updates on the CRT. Contact CBT at 1.800.505.8998 if you would like information mailed to you.

The Province of BC and the U.S. CRT 2014/2024 websites include other resources to help inform your understanding.

Province of BC Columbia River Treaty Review [www.gov.bc.ca/columbiarivertreaty](http://www.gov.bc.ca/columbiarivertreaty)

U.S. Columbia River Treaty Review [www.crt2014-2024review.gov](http://www.crt2014-2024review.gov)