



Directors present: Andy Hurly, Bill MacMillan, Chris Gallagher, Brad Sclossberger, Linda Cerney, Terrence Lazarus (left at 2:12pm), Wade Goin, Autumn Barnes (left at 2:57pm), Michael Wagner, Erik Cline, Allan Garbutt,

Staff present: Shannon Frank

Andy called the meeting to order at 1:05pm. Introductions were had, and a land acknowledgement was given.

Motion: Chris moved, seconded by Bill, to approve the agenda as amended. 9 in favour. Carried.

Motion: Brad moved, seconded by Erik, to approve the minutes from the September 19, 2024 meeting as amended. 10 in favour. Carried.

Executive Director report

- Finances
 - Received a few new grants since the budget was approved in May, so those revenues and expenses have been added to the updated budget sent out before the meeting.
 - Unrestricted revenue was discussed and allocated in May to hiring a Development Manager, initiating a State of the Watershed assessment, and to increase our Emergency Operating Reserve Fund.
 - Discussed allocating the remaining unrestricted budget to government relations as we have done in the past.
 - Any remaining funds at the end of the year will be deferred to next year.

Motion: Bill moved, seconded by Erik to approve the budget as presented, including \$20,000 for the Water Coalition Advisory Group. 8 in favour. 1 against. 1 abstain. Carried.

- Fund development
 - In the process of hiring a Development Manager. Their anticipated start date is November 15.
 - The first step will be to develop a new Fund Development Plan, likely with the help of a consultant. We have \$10,000 for this from a grant.
- Government relations
 - The coalition has drafted a terms of reference for the first phase of building the coalition.

- Alberta Ecotrust, who is leading the coalition, has sent a request for proposals to three government relations firms, with a due date of October 24th. After that we will interview and select a firm to work with.
- Alberta Ecotrust has applied to the Calgary Foundation to hire a coordinator to lead this work.
- The overall goal is to secure additional investments in protecting and restoring natural assets. The initial focus is seeking an increased provincial investment in the Watershed Resiliency and Restoration grant program. The long term goal is to establish a water security endowment fund similar to what's been done in Manitoba and BC.
- We have a meeting with the UCP North Caucus to seek their support. We will also be writing to Ministers and MLAs. MLA Nathan Neudorf has already provided a letter of support.
- Office space
 - Past discussions illuminated the high cost of office space for low return on investment. Very few people ever visited our office post covid.
 - The Board decided to save money by subleasing our last office space and staff are currently working from home. This arrangement is working well as it did for two years during covid.
 - Staff are frequently together for sampling days, restoration days, events, and we meet online once per week.
 - The University of Lethbridge is providing decontamination space for us and this is working well.
 - Shannon suggests not getting an office space until we need one. We may want one in April if we have new seasonal staff joining the team, so Sofie can train and supervise them in person. However, this only requires 1-2 rooms two days per week which we could rent for four months of the summer instead of committing to a 3 year lease. If we are able to keep our current seasonal staff then we won't need an office as they are trained and have proven they can work remotely.
 - Need to update our Occasional Remote Work Policy to reflect these changes. Shannon will work on these updates and bring a draft to the next meeting.
 - Suggest adding clarity for who is responsible if assets are damaged, lost or stolen.
 - Suggest adding that permission from your supervisor is needed to work remotely from elsewhere (not at home), with clarity on timelines, purpose, and regular performance management. The Executive Committee would approve requests from the Executive Director.
 - Let staff know a decision has not been made about what our next office looks like, staff will work from home until the Board makes a decision.
- Communications

- Focused on updating the Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils (WPACs) Achievement Summary brochure and creating a slideshow for the 20 year anniversary event coming up October 23 with the Alberta Water Council.
- Projects:
 - State of the Watershed
 - A committee is needed to explore options and make recommendations to the Board.
 - Andy, Linda and Cheryl are willing to volunteer.
 - External people will be invited, such as Cows and Fish.
 - The University of Lethbridge (Lars Hallstrom) is interested in working with us.
 - Supporting drought affected communities
 - Giving presentations to educate and advocate for natural infrastructure as a critical solution to drought.
 - Wrapping up ABwater.ca with last video and blog for the season.
 - Restoring natural infrastructure
 - Three more willow planting days are scheduled for this fall.
 - Agricultural literacy
 - Surveying consumers to understand their opinions, concerns and perspectives on agriculture in Alberta.
 - Five producer engagement events are being planned for this winter to get input on agricultural literacy opportunities, concerns and priorities.
 - Youth education
 - X-STREAM Science, Caring for our Watersheds and Project WET educational programs are being delivered as requested by youth groups and schools.
 - Monitoring (CABIN, pesticides, groundwater)
 - While doing 10 CABIN sampling sites we've seen lots of dry creeks.
 - Our groundwater partner, Living Lakes Canada, has secured an Alberta Innovates grant so we now have enough funding to monitor 9 wells, in clusters of 3 areas.
 - Received our pesticide monitoring grant from Health Canada, so sampling continues twice per week at two sites.

Ministerial Announcement

- Listened to Minister Schulz announce an upcoming water engagement starting in November.
- A survey will be conducted, and meetings with stakeholders and rights holders will be held.
- The government wants to hear all ideas, suggestions and concerns to improve the water management system.
- First in time, first in right is not being changed. Water Act may be amended, unknown at this stage.

Governance Committee (need volunteers)

- Nothing to report. Topics that we will work on next include:
 - Engaging Metis Nation Region 3
 - Indigenous cultural awareness training day, policy, protocol guide
 - Supporting external groups policy

External Committee Reports

- South Saskatchewan Regional Plan 10 Year Review - Shannon Frank, Linda Cerney
 - Please complete the survey:
 - <https://landuse.alberta.ca/RegionalPlans/SouthSaskatchewanRegion/10YearReview/Pages/default.aspx>
 - Shannon will draft feedback and share it with the Board for input.
 - We need to encourage more investments in plan implementation.
 - There is concern that cumulative effects are not being assessed as part of this review.
 - Focus is not on opening the plan, but reporting on progress.
 - Nature Strategy survey is also out, please complete it here:
 - <https://www.alberta.ca/nature-strategy-engagement>.

- SSRB Water Coordination Committee / Drought - Doug Kaupp, Shannon Frank, Chris Gallagher
 - Committee will meet this fall to receive updates on apportionment, meeting instream objectives, reservoir levels, etc.

- Irrigation Districts Update - Chris Gallagher
 - Most GoA reservoirs are within normal range as of October 8, 2024 and are being operated to maintain winter targets. For major storages, the Oldman is at 61% of full (normal range 62-79%), St. Mary at 48% (normal 38-69%), Milk River Ridge at 83% (normal 86-87%).
 - The Oldman and the Southern Tributaries Water Sharing MOUs have each been deactivated by consensus of the signatories. The rationale for deactivation included downgrading of provincial drought stages to 2 across the province, and agricultural and municipal irrigation systems are being shut down for the year.
 - The Addendum to water quality trends in irrigation water of southern Alberta has recently been published through the Alberta Open Government portal. This technical report summarizes temporal trends for select water quality parameters collected within the IDWQ program. The addendum adds five additional years of data (2019 to 2023) to the original dataset for a complete 15-year dataset. The results indicate that water quality at 74 sites within irrigation infrastructure is stable or improving. The report can be downloaded through the Alberta Open Government portal or through the IDWQ webportal www.idwq.ca.
 - The Assessing the source and fate of nutrients in Alberta's irrigation canals for

mitigating growth of aquatic vegetation technical report (also referred to as the Isotope Project) has recently been published through the Open Alberta Webportal. The project investigated the source and fate of nutrients in irrigation water. This was a novel research project which found that using isotopic analysis to identify the source and fate of nutrients in irrigation water was successful for nitrogen and carbon, but discovered phosphorus concentrations were below the levels needed for isotopic investigation. The project also found that generally, sources of nutrients in irrigation water matched dominant land uses in the districts (or specific area of the districts).

- The annual Alberta Irrigation Districts Association conference will be taking place February 3-5, 2025 at the Westin, Calgary Airport Hotel.

- Kainai Environmental Protection Association - Ninna Piiksii (Mike Bruised Head)
 - 11th Annual Summit will be June 11-13. Details to come.
 - Strategic Plan will be updated this fall.

- Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent - Ninna Piiksii (Mike Bruised Head)
 - Another conference will be held in 2025.

- International Joint Commission Public Advisory Group (PAG) - Cheryl Bradley
 - Nothing to report.

- Crowsnest Forest Products / West Fraser Public Advisory Group - Rick Cooke
 - Nothing to report.
 - Meeting this fall.
 - May be behind schedule.

- Alberta Water Council (AWC)
 - WPAC seat on the Board of Directors - Doug Kaupp
 - First meeting is October 24.
 - Water Availability Project Team - Doug Kaupp
 - Have not met yet.
 - Source Water Protection Planning Project Team - Michael Wagner
 - A workshop is being held to look at the new online tool.
 - Michael is no longer in this group as he has changed roles to Provincial Watercourse Crossing Coordinator. Working with municipalities, including the MD of Ranchlands.
 - Can ask Adam Norris, Mighty Peace Watershed Alliance, for updates as needed.

Meeting adjourned at 3:47pm.

Next meeting: November 21, 2024 from 1pm-4:30pm on zoom or at the Lethbridge Northern Irrigation District office

The foregoing minutes were approved by the Board of Directors on _____.

_____, Doug Kaupp, OWC Chair