



Hybrid Board of Directors Meeting Minutes December 19, 2024
The Nest and on zoom

Directors present: Doug Kaupp, Bill MacMillan, Chris Gallagher, Brad Sclossberger, Linda Cerney, Mark Svenson, Rick Cooke, Randall Wolf Tail, Erik Cline, Keshav Singh, Autumn Barnes, Mark Svenson, Allan Garbutt, Ninna Piiksii/Mike Bruised Head, Errol Kutcher, Michael Wagner

Staff present: Shannon Frank, Sofie Forsstrom, Kallie Desruisseaux, Jana MacKenzie, Debra Still, Maria Albuquerque

Doug called the meeting to order at 1:03pm. Introductions were had, and a land acknowledgement was given.

Motion: Linda moved, seconded by Chris, to approve the agenda as presented. 13 in favour. Carried.

Motion: Bill moved, seconded by Brad, to approve the minutes from the November 21, 2024 meeting as presented. 13 in favour. Carried.

Staff Updates

- Sofie, Education Program Manager
 - Sampled a record of 19 streams this year using the Canadian Aquatic Biomonitoring Network (CABIN) protocol. Usually we can only do 7-9 sites. 8 were potential reference sites, with 45 potential reference sites across the eastern slopes. Reference sites will be used to build a reference model to compare test sites to.
 - Trained 4 more people in CABIN sampling.
 - Public land education program has gone very well and we surpassed our community engagement targets. Continuing this winter to target winter recreationists.
 - Delivered 13 programs to 382 students so far this fiscal year. Also surveyed teachers and students to hear feedback, and a summary report is being written. Results are very positive with respondents indicating they learned new information, and found the program valuable.
 - Attending the teachers convention in February.
- Maria Albuquerque, Watershed Stewardship Assistant
 - Helping deliver school programs, had over 100 students at one event.
 - Field work wrap up blog available on our [website](#).
 - Assisting Sofie with the teacher and student survey summary report.

- Talk to winter recreationists at events about responsible use of public land.
- Created a new outreach kit about native bees for events.
- Good reach on Instagram and TikTok. One video about caddis flies got 60,000 views.
- Helped plant over 500 willows this fall.
- Writing a natural infrastructure blog series this winter.
- Kallie Desruisseaux, Office Manager and Accountant
 - Assists with field work when needed.
 - Leads bookkeeping and tracks the 21 grants we have.
 - Our bookkeeping is now fully digital.
 - Helped organize the Food Producer Consultation events.
 - Leads the pesticide water sampling project.
- Jana MacKenzie , Development Manager
 - Been with OWC for 3.5 weeks now.
 - Learning all the systems and processes.
 - Expanding donor relationships.
 - Helping with government relations.
 - Will be building a fund development plan over the next few months.
- Jon and Rachel are away on holidays. Debra is not able to join due to illness.

Executive Director report

- Finances and fund development
 - Received our [largest ever personal donation](#) from Kim Sturgess (\$25,000) who also contributed the same amount to 9 other watershed councils.
 - Sent our holiday donation request email. Will be sending these about once per month. Received about 10 donations so far.
 - Applied for 3 new grants in December, working on 3 more for January.
- Office space discussion
 - We will reassess in February as decided at a previous meeting.
- Policy updates (Honourarium Policy)
 - A proposed new policy was sent out prior to the meeting.
 - Changes were discussed, including possibly amalgamating the new text into the gift acceptance policy.
 - Shannon will write a paragraph to share with organizers when we are accepting a request for a presentation, indicating that all gifts must be given to OWC and not to individuals.
 - Shannon will explore integrating the new text into the Gift Acceptance Policy or keeping them separate but referencing each other, and bring it back to the next meeting.

Motion: Chris moves, seconded by Erik, that staff, Directors or volunteers who receive cash, cash equivalents, or large gifts adopt a practice that those gifts are treated as a donation to OWC and not a personal contribution. 11 in favour. Carried.

- Government relations
 - Water Coalition led by Alberta Ecotrust continues to advocate for increased provincial funding for the Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program grant program.
 - Alberta Ecotrust is interviewing candidates for a Program Specialist to lead the coalition.
 - OWC's feedback on the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan 10 Year Review was sent out before the meeting. Amendments were discussed and made. The Plan has not expired. A 10 year review report will be written and sent to the Minister. It may result in new direction to GoA staff to focus on something, but large scale amendments to the Plan itself are not expected.

Motion: Chris moves, seconded by Autumn, to approve the letter as presented. 12 in favour. 1 abstained. Carried.

- Water availability engagement is active, with a survey open until January 10. Shannon and Jana attended an open house in Fort Macleod on behalf of OWC. Details available here: <https://www.alberta.ca/water-availability-engagement>. An engagement was held November 20 in Edmonton that Doug and Shannon attended. Input was given verbally. Shannon will send out a draft letter to EPA for board input in January and we will review and approve it at the next meeting.
 - No news on the Nature Strategy.
 - [Private land conservation engagement](#) was also open but was targeted to specific stakeholders.
- Communications
 - Recent communications included our first donation request email in a long time, a blog celebrating our donors, a virtual holiday card because of the Canada Post strike, and a newsletter.
 - Projects:
 - State of the Watershed (Andy, Linda, Cheryl, Shannon)
 - Held our first meeting on December 11 to discuss what success looks like, begin the process of determining the right path.
 - Looking for information about the process used in the last report to set the good, fair, poor ratings.
 - Reviewing what the University of Lethbridge (Lars Hallstrom) has to offer as they are interested in partnering with us.
 - Discussed the possibility of partnering with the university to hire a graduate student to manage this. Lack of capacity to lead this.
 - Will need more partners and volunteers to assist with technical components.

- Looking at funding opportunities.
- Supporting drought affected communities
 - A survey will be released in February/March to better understand what needs are, what is going well, what needs improvement, etc.
- Restoring natural infrastructure
 - Two more willow planting days were held, one was postponed until spring due to cold weather.
- Agricultural literacy
 - Surveying consumers to understand their opinions, concerns and perspectives on agriculture in Alberta. Have nearly 1000 so far.
 - Will be holding 2 more producer engagement events to get input on agricultural literacy opportunities, concerns and priorities in January.
 - Two reports will be written, 1 based on urban consumer surveys, and 1 based on food producer and industry input.
- Monitoring (CABIN, pesticides, groundwater)
 - CABIN sampling completed for the season.
 - Our groundwater partner, Living Lakes Canada, has hired a consultant to complete a vulnerability assessment and gap analysis for the Oldman watershed, due at the end of January. In spring we are drilling a well on the Piikani Nation based on the groundwater mapping BGC Engineering did this summer to provide water for livestock. The Technical Team met November 29. Community engagement survey and events will be held January to April.
 - Pesticide sampling continues twice per week at two sites (Pavan Park and Popson Park). Results from last year showed trace amounts but nothing above guidelines. A blog will be written to share the results from the last two years.

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

- SSRB Interbasin Water Coordination Committee - Doug Kaupp, Shannon Frank, Chris Gallagher
 - Met December 3.
 - Reservoir levels are back to normal range.
 - 58% of natural flow went to Saskatchewan.
 - Instream objective was met 100% of the time, water conservation objective was met 38% of the time at the mouth of the Oldman River.

- Natural flow modelling exists up to 2015, which makes analysis difficult.
 - Digitized 5000 water licenses in the SSRB.
 - EPA drought team made contact with nearly all SSRB license holders over the past year.
 - Next meeting will be in the spring.
- Irrigation Districts Update - Chris Gallagher
 - Irrigation districts are monitoring snowpack accumulations provided by AEPA/AGI. Currently snow water equivalent is tracking within the normal range. The longer-term forecast is for continuing transition to a La Nina pattern and anticipating normal to above normal accumulation for the winter.
 - AEPA hosted the Water Availability Engagement Open House in Fort MacLeod on December 9, 2024. This venue was added following cancellation of the Lethbridge event after calling of the Lethbridge West election. The open house was well attended (approx. 300), with over 75% being irrigators, irrigation districts or others from the irrigation sector, including consulting firms, suppliers, grower associations and others. OWC members, urban and rural municipalities, and others attended as well. This response compares with only 20 that attended the Red Deer open house, several of whom travelled from the irrigated south. Irrigation districts continue to promote the suggestions included in the AIDA white paper to improve water availability, and for AEPA to carefully consider and be accountable for the impacts of any potential changes to the Water Act.
 - Reminder that the Irrigated Crop Production Update (ICPU) conference will be taking place at the Lethbridge Agri-Food Hub and Trade Centre from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 18, 2025. Check the Lethbridge Polytechnic website for more information: <https://lethpolytech.ca/news/lethbridge-college-teams-ag-Industry-host-irrigated-crop-production-update>
 - Registration is now open for the annual Alberta Irrigation Districts Association conference taking place February 3-5, 2025 at the Westin, Calgary Airport Hotel. See the AIDA website for more information: https://www.albertairrigation.ca/?page_id=1171
- Kainai Environmental Protection Association - Ninna Piiksii (Mike Bruised Head)
 - 11th Annual Summit will be June 11-13 with presentations, tours and cultural activities. Details to come. Collaborating with Patrick Wilson, University of Lethbridge, to share traditional knowledge with the Quijos Nation in Ecuador who will be attending the event (pending funding approval).

- Strategic Planning workshop was held November 22. Another workshop will be held in January.
- 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
 - December 2024 newsletter available [online](#).
 - Since the Lethbridge Study Board and public meetings that Cheryl attended over three days in early June 2024 there was a public meeting in Malta, Montana on October 2 to report on the process and get the views of members of that community.
 - Currently the Study Board appears to be focused on hydrologic modelling, including natural flow calculation procedures and climate change scenarios and on more clearly defining administrative and infrastructure options.
 - There are eleven modeling scenarios identified:
 - Canadian Milk River Storage (Forks Reservoir) with St. Mary Canal at 600 cfs, 850 cfs
 - Deficit trading with St. Mary Canal at 600 cfs, 850 cfs
 - Conveyance loss (total failure)
 - Conveyance loss (assume canal equilibrium capacity of 500 cfs)
 - 850 cfs + Canadian Milk River Coulee Storage
 - 600 cfs + Upper St. Mary Lake Storage
 - 850 cfs + Upper St. Mary Lake Storage
 - 600 cfs + Lower and Upper St. Mary Lake Storage
 - 850 cfs + Lower and Upper St. Mary Lake Storage
 - Lower St. Mary Lake Storage with 600 cfs canal and split-cap credit
 - Lower St. Mary Lake Storage with 600 cfs canal and cap credit
 - Visualization tools are being developed to communicate key indicators. Performance indicators (PIs) categories include
 - access to entitlements for both countries,
 - irrigation water availability for irrigators in all basins,
 - ecological and socioeconomic interests,
 - water availability that considers Indigenous interests.
 - Priority scenarios for further consideration were to be determined at a November meeting of the Study Board.
 - On January 22, 2025 the Study Board will host a virtual webinar with the Public Advisory Group (PAG), Indigenous Advisory Group and Government Forum to update on progress. Priority scenarios will likely be communicated at that meeting. Cheryl plans to attend.
 - The completion of construction of the St. Mary Siphon in Montana is anticipated for September 2025.

- The Study Board's draft report is anticipated to be completed by December 31, 2025, followed by public review and comment with the final report including recommendations to IJC by June 1, 2026.
- Crowsnest Forest Products / West Fraser Public Advisory Group - Rick Cooke
 - A meeting was held December 5.
 - Proposed VOITS and cut areas in 2025 to 2035 and 2035-2045 were shared and discussed at the meeting, and the documents will be sent out with the minutes. There will be a public process in summer 2025 for anyone interested in providing additional feedback.
 - Asked how the Forest Management Plan (FMP) aligns with SSRP, and was told SSRP is too high level to directly influence it because it is very site specific.
 - Asked how climate change impacts the FMP and was told it is an uncertainty but not specifically accounted for in the plan. In 10 years there may be significant challenges that will need to be addressed.
 - The FMP will be approved by the Government of Alberta in the spring.
 - Committee asked for clarity on the map of where past cut blocks are located.
 - Stakeholders have asked for a wide range of accommodations to reduce aspen encroachment, minimize impact on recreational areas or trapping lines, etc.
- Alberta Water Council (AWC)
 - WPAC seat on the Board of Directors - Doug Kaupp (alternate)
 - Next meeting is February for two days, with a full day of strategic planning where new projects will be considered.
 - Source Water Protection Planning Project Team
 - Nothing new to report.

Bill moved to adjourn the meeting at 3:44pm.

Next meeting: January 16, 2024 from 1pm-4:30pm on zoom or at the Lethbridge Northern Irrigation District office, 2821 - 18 Ave North, Lethbridge.

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

_____, Doug Kaupp, OWC Chair