



Hybrid Board of Directors Meeting Minutes January 16, 2025
Lethbridge Northern Irrigation District office and on zoom

Directors present: Doug Kaupp, Bill MacMillan, Chris Gallagher, Brad Sclossberger, Randall Wolf Tail, Mark Svenson, Errol Kutcher, Andy Hurly, Keshav Singh, Kristen Dykstra, Linda Cerney, Michael Wagner, Rick Cooke, Megan Andre, Autumn Barnes, Allan Garbutt, Mike Bruised Head (joined 2:17pm), Cheryl Dash (joined at 3pm)

Staff present: Shannon Frank

Doug called the meeting to order at 1:06pm. A land acknowledgement was given.

Motion: Bill moved, seconded by Brad, to approve the agenda as presented. 11 in favour. Carried.

Motion: Bill moved, seconded by Michael, to approve the minutes from the December 19, 2024 meeting as presented. 11 in favour. Carried.

Executive Director report

- Finances and fund development
 - Jana, our new Development Manager, has hit the ground running and has taken over some of the projects and activities Kallie and I used to do. Our donor relations have improved immensely and are already paying off.
 - Attended a celebration in Calgary with Kim Sturgess who gave us our [largest ever personal donation](#) (\$25,000) and we met her new partners from Hazen, a US consultancy based out of New York to learn about what they have to offer.
 - Applied for 5 new grants in December-January.
 - At the March meeting we will review the 2024-25 budget vs actuals in preparation for year end, and review the new budget for 2025-26.
- Policy updates (Gift Acceptance Policy)
 - A proposed amended policy was sent out prior to the meeting.

Motion: Andy moves, seconded by Bill, to approve the Gift Acceptance Policy as amended. 14 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 in the upcoming budget. Alberta Ecotrust has hired a Program Specialist to lead the coalition. They will start work near the end of the month. Calgary

Foundation has invested in this initiative so there is funding in place for the next 2 years.

- Jana has requested letters of support from 3 additional MLAs in our watershed, as well as Minister Sigurdson (Agriculture and Irrigation) for our coalition budget request.
 - Jana sent letters of congratulations to the newly elected MLA for Lethbridge West, and Kainai Nation Chief and Council. We hope to meet with them soon.
 - Nothing to report on the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan 10 Year Review or Nature Strategy since we submitted our insights. EPA is reviewing all the input and writing a summary report.
 - Water availability engagement is active, with a survey open until January 24. Details available here: <https://www.alberta.ca/water-availability-engagement>. Two engagements were held in our watershed that Jana and Shannon attended. At both events there were about 300 people in attendance. Top issues were irrigation and coal.
 - Draft input to the Water Availability Engagement was sent out before the meeting. Minister Schulz said not to expect a long report that will collect dust on a shelf, they are looking for quick wins that they can make soon, and want specific changes that can be made to reduce red tape. There was not enough time to consult with our stakeholders and rightsholders so Shannon has summarized insights that align with our mission and existing documents. Amendments were discussed. A section will be added to highlight the importance of robust public engagement and Shannon will send out the final version for approval via email.
- Communications
 - Renewed focus on coal as the AER hearings on proposed exploration at Grassy Mountain and announcement by Ministers Jean and Schulz have sparked renewed interest. We are receiving emails, phone calls and requests for information. Shannon will be drafting a blog to share the latest information and Jon will create a postcard for distribution at events so we have answers to questions readily available. A discussion was had about how to frame the message to make it clear that we are neutral, apolitical, and unbiased, and that we are sharing publicly available scientific information, much of it from the Government of Alberta.
 - A summary of our input to the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan 10 Year Review and Water Availability Engagement will be shared on our blog.
 - Projects:
 - State of the Watershed (Andy, Linda, Cheryl, Shannon)
 - Will meet again in late February / early March.
 - Restoring natural infrastructure
 - Debra is contacting partners and preparing for the 2025 field season where we expect a record breaking number of restoration sites to be rehabilitated.

- Monitoring (CABIN, pesticides, groundwater)
 - Our groundwater partner, Living Lakes Canada, is hiring a Program Coordinator in Southern Alberta to lead the monitoring project. Please share the [job posting](#).

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
 - 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 at the low end of the normal range, and ahead of last year. 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 Town Hall in Lethbridge on January 8, 2025. The Town Hall format worked much better for sharing information and was well attended (approx. 300), with over 60% being irrigators. OWC members, urban and rural municipalities, and others had strong representation as well. The efforts of the irrigation sector to improve Conservation, Efficiency and Productivity, the significant private and public investments irrigation infrastructure, the value of irrigation to our communities, the need to protect irrigation water quality (esp. considering potential upstream coal development), and the suggestions in the AIDA white paper to improve water availability were all promoted by many speakers from the floor and the panel. The fundamental question of what is motivating the Water Availability Engagement and why AEPA is opening up the Water Act for consideration of changes was not satisfactorily addressed. There appeared to be a lack of appreciation for the potential impacts this initiative is having on the perception of the security and quality of water for all water users and the irrigation sector in particular.

 - 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. 23, 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. Theme is Environment and Health. Planning to have two student panels.
 - Strategic Planning workshop was held November 22. Good discussion was had about short and long term goals. Kainai Nation election of two key KEPA members (Chief Travis Plaited Hair and Councillor Elliot Fox) is good news. Another workshop will be held January 24.

- Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent - Ninna Piiksii (Mike Bruised Head)
 - Nothing to report.

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

- Crowsnest Forest Products / West Fraser Public Advisory Group - Rick Cooke
 - Introduced Allan Garbutt to West Fraser and Allan is submitting a letter identifying that there is harvesting planned for the south region of the Porcupine Hills where most springs and ephemeral creeks have dried up. Allan is hoping to meet with them as a local resident.
 - West Fraser indicated that they felt the impacts would be minimal.

- Alberta Water Council (AWC)
 - WPAC seat on the Board of Directors - Doug Kaupp (alternate)
 - Next meeting is February 19-20, with a full day of strategic planning where new projects will be considered.
 - The Water Partners funded by EPA are planning to submit a Statement of Opportunity for a new project. The project would involve hiring a consultant to complete a comprehensive impact assessment with qualitative and quantitative information. This would be valuable to demonstrate our achievements to funders, including EPA.
 - Source Water Protection Planning Project Team
 - Nothing new to report.

Bill moved to adjourn the meeting at 3:42pm.

Next meeting: February 13, 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