



Hybrid Board of Directors Meeting Minutes February 13, 2025
Lethbridge Northern Irrigation District office and on zoom

Directors present: Doug Kaupp, Chris Gallagher, Brad Sclossberger, Henk De Vlieger, Errol Kutcher, Cam Gardner, Linda Cerney, Rick Cooke, Kristen Dykstra, Mike Bruised Head, Andy Hurly, Bill MacMillan, Erik Cline

Staff present: Shannon Frank

Doug called the meeting to order at 1:15pm. Introductions and a land acknowledgement was given.

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

Motion: Bill moved, seconded by Rick, to approve the minutes from the January 16, 2025 meeting as presented. 13 in favour. Carried.

Executive Director report

- Finances and fund development
 - Receiving an Environmental Damages Fund (EDF) grant for \$510,000 over 5 years to develop the CABIN reference model, which includes sampling reference sites.
 - Nominated OWC for an Emerald Award.
 - Working on an Ecotrust grant application that is due March 10.
 - Have started sending monthly donation requests to newsletter subscribers and members.
 - Waiting to hear back from 4 grants we applied for from September-December.
 - At the March meeting we will review the bookkeeping up to February 28 and allocate any unrestricted funds.
 - Potential new expenditures include a State of the Watershed assessment, updating the website and new communications assets.
 - Saving additional funds in our Operational Reserve is also a good idea to prepare for looming fiscal challenges at government levels, which may impact our ability to secure grants.
- 2025-26 budget
 - A draft budget was sent out prior to the meeting. It will be amended as new funding is secured. We were notified today about the EDF grant so that is not included yet.
 - The budget includes the cost of 2 storage units that we currently have but no office.

Motion: Chris moves, seconded by Bill, to approve the 2025-26 budget as presented. 13 in favour.
Carried.

- Office discussion
 - A summary of options was sent out prior to the meeting.
 - Bill has offered use of the Lethbridge County office so staff will test it out for our next staff meeting.
 - Shannon will send Chris a letter requesting continued use of the LNID boardroom for board meetings.
 - Staff will divest of old furniture and files to reduce storage costs.
 - Reevaluate in June.
- 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 has hired Breanna Sayles as the Program Specialist. She previously worked for the University of Calgary and has experience working with a diversity of sectors.
 - We have a meeting coming up in early March with MLA Chelsae Petrovic to request her support for our coalition budget request. Minister Sigurdson (Agriculture and Irrigation) responded with a supportive email but no letter of support, and encouraged us to talk to Minister Schulz (Environment and Protected Areas) instead.
 - Jana and I attended two public events recently, one with Minister Neudorf and one with MLA Miyashiro, who are both supportive of OWC.
 - Nothing to report on the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan 10 Year Review, water availability engagement or Nature Strategy since we submitted our insights. EPA is reviewing all the input and writing a summary report.

Motion: Henk moves, seconded by Chris, to approve the OWC's letter of input to the water availability engagement as voted via email. 12 in favour. Carried. 1 abstained.

- Communications
 - A Frequently Asked Questions about Coal blog was published last week and received a lot of comments and shares on social media.
 - A summary of our input to the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan 10 Year Review and Water Availability Engagement will be shared on our blog next.
- Projects:
 - State of the Watershed (Andy, Linda, Cheryl, Shannon)
 - Watershed councils did not submit a Statement of Opportunity to the Alberta Water Council for a provincial State of the Watershed assessment so this initiative continues to be inactive. We will need to proceed on our own project.
 - Agricultural literacy

- 2 more industry engagement sessions will be held this month, similar to the ones held in November. Registration will open this week.
 - We had 652 responses to our survey, a record number. A report will be available at the end of March.
- Monitoring (CABIN, pesticides, groundwater)
 - Our groundwater partner, Living Lakes Canada, is organizing 2 town hall events and has a survey open. [Details here](#). Please attend and share.

Governance Committee (need volunteers)

- Nothing to report. Topics that we will work on next include:
 - Engaging Metis Nation Region 3 - Jana will work on this.
 - Indigenous cultural awareness training day, policy, protocol guide
 - Jana can lead this.
 - Linda has information about this to share with Jana.
 - 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 AEP/AGI. Currently snow water equivalent is tracking at the low end of the normal range, at or near last year as of February 10, 2025. The longer-term forecast is for continuing transition to a La Nina pattern and anticipating lower than normal temperatures and higher than normal precipitation throughout the Winter and early Spring. Reservoir storage is significantly better than this time last year (14m higher in Oldman Reservoir). Several districts are providing early updates of the water supply situation in their subbasins on their websites and social networks. LNID also released initial messaging on their insights and intended approach to managing water for 2025.
 - The Irrigated Crop Production Update (ICPU) conference was held at the Lethbridge Agri-Food Hub and Trade Centre from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 18, 2025. John Pomeroy presented the latest modeling indicating increased precipitation in the eastern Rocky Mountain slopes with less snow and more rain coming earlier in the season and hotter, drier summers. He succinctly noted that in the south either we will need to build additional storage to replace loss of natural snowpack and glacier storage with constructed storage, or face loss of irrigation acres and stranded investment. Dennis Matis, Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation, noted the water supply situation is better than last year, particularly in higher reservoir storage levels. He

noted NOAA and other forecasts that indicate higher than normal precipitation leading up to the irrigation season.

- The annual Alberta Irrigation Districts Association conference took place February 3-5, 2025 at the Westin, Calgary Airport Hotel. The event was well-attended and included presentations on the 25th anniversary of the Irrigation Districts Act, water forecasting and sharing, water quality, invasive species, and a wide range of irrigation infrastructure projects and technologies.

Additional information from Linda:

- There are 33 water shortage advisories across Alberta today, which you can view on <https://rivers.alberta.ca/>.
 - EPA is looking to move all water licenses to electronic form in the new Digital Regulatory Assurance System (DRAS). Pre-2021 licenses are not digitized. About 4000 licenses have been submitted to date, but there are about 20,000 more that need to be moved. Requires setting up an Alberta.ca account, shows licenses and applications.
 - Watershed councils are asked to keep sharing the information to encourage people to move their license.
- Kainai Environmental Protection Association - Ninna Piiksii (Mike Bruised Head)
 - Kainai Nation Chief and Council has announced they are against coal mining.
 - 11th Annual Summit will be June 11-13 with presentations, tours, a student panel and cultural activities. Details to come. Theme is Environment and Health.
 - 2 Strategic Planning workshops were held, and one more is scheduled.
 - Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent - Ninna Piiksii (Mike Bruised Head)
 - Nothing to report.
 - International Joint Commission Public Advisory Group (PAG) - Cheryl Bradley
 - Cheryl attended an online webinar of the International Saint Mary and Milk Rivers Study Board. The purpose of the meeting was for study managers to update members of the Public Advisory Group and Indigenous Advisory Group on progress. Two key takeaways:
 - Water management models used by Canada (EPA's Water Resources Management Model) and by the U.S. (Montana's Riverware Model) are consistent in simulating streamflows both historic and with predicted climate change and are now fully operational for evaluating different scenarios.
 - Administrative and structural options for sharing of water more effectively between Canada and the United States are now clearly defined.
 - A memo and a summary of scenarios and performance indicators is available.

- Crowsnest Forest Products / West Fraser Public Advisory Group - Rick Cooke
 - Nothing new to report.
- 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.
 - A Statement of Opportunity was submitted to update the drought planning guidebook for small municipalities that watershed councils have been using to host workshops.

Bill moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:49pm.

Next meeting: March 20, 2025 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