



Hybrid Board of Directors Meeting Minutes November 20, 2025
Lethbridge Northern Irrigation District office and on zoom

Directors present: Doug Kaupp, Mark Svenson, Chris Gallagher, Terrence Lazarus, Linda Cerney, Lori Goater, Andy Hurly, Rick Cooke, Bill MacMillan, Dale Paton, Errol Kutcher, Kristen Dykstra, Randall Wolf Tail, Henk De Vlieger, Megan Andre, Lori Harasem, Allan Garbutt

Staff present: Shannon Frank, Rachel Morris (left at 1:30pm), Chantel Youmans (left at 1:30pm)

Doug called the meeting to order at 1:04pm. A land acknowledgement was given.

Motion: Linda moved, seconded by Mark, to approve the agenda as presented. 14 in favour. Carried.

Motion: Rick moved, seconded by Henk, to approve the minutes from the October 16, 2025 meeting. 14 in favour. Carried.

Presentation: Nature-based Solutions and Natural Infrastructure by Rachel Morris and Chantel Youmans, OWC Watershed Stewardship Assistants. Slideshow attached.

Executive Director report

- WSP meeting request, on behalf of Northback, who wishes to mine for coal at Grassy Mountain
 - See attached letter from WSP requesting a meeting to inform a baseline study of resource uses near Grassy Mountain.
 - Discussed pros and cons of agreeing to meet.
 - Critical that we maintain neutrality and are perceived publicly and by funders to be remaining neutral.
 - Could ask them to sign something stating that OWC's name will not be used by WSP or Northback as anything other than a neutral participant sharing information.
 - They are going to provide a list of discussion points in advance, which we can review and potentially add to.
 - Several board members have experience with EIAs and suggest this is an opportunity to make sure the EIA is thorough and covers the gaps identified in the last EIA.
 - Question as to whether this meeting is with OWC alone or with other stakeholders as well.
 - Suggestion to share a public statement on our blog ahead of the meeting stating that we are sharing neutral information only and types of information we are sharing.

- Note that the Municipality of Crowsnest Pass has many newly elected Councillors and Mayor in the October election, and OWC should request the opportunity to present to them.
- Vital to encourage public engagement and an open, transparent process.
- We could answer the questions in written form only.
- We need to find out if we can also ask questions.
- Shannon will find out more information and then we can make a decision at the next meeting.
- Budget 2025-26
 - A summary of budget vs expenses was provided before the meeting.
 - Revenue is on track. Remaining revenues are expected by the end of the fiscal year.
 - Expenses are lower than budgeted but will be spent over the next 5 months and some will be deferred to next fiscal year (where we have multiyear grants that allow deferrals).
- Fund development
 - Secured a grant from the Kenneth Molson Foundation for \$25,000 for 1 year to support pollinator restoration and communications activities.
 - Doug, Erik and Shannon have completed 6/7 modules in the Thriving Nonprofits fundraising program. We have a final presentation coming up in December. Then we'll write a new Fund Development Plan. We will share our learnings and take home messages during the Strategic Planning process.
 - With our increased grants and new Fund Development Plan and Strategic Plan in development this year, we will need to make some changes to meet our new situation. We will hire a Development Manager as soon as possible. With the increase in restoration funding, we may need to reorganize the staff structure slightly to ensure we are meeting our deliverables. This will not impact all staff or projects (e.g. State of the Watershed will remain the same). We also need to discuss our long term vision for OWC as part of our Strategic Planning process.
- Government relations
 - Watershed Planning and Advisory Council and GoA Partnership Workshop was held in Edmonton October 28-29. There was a great deal of discussion about the partnership, what is working well and where there is room for improvement. One of the takeaways was that the context has changed significantly and we need to adapt.
 - Attended Alberta Municipalities and Rural Municipalities of Alberta conventions and spoke to many municipal officials and provincial officials. This was OWC's first time attending these conventions and was worth the effort. We also learned a lot about how we can make the most of the events next time.
 - Upcoming meeting with Associate Minister of Water, Grant Hunter, is an opportunity to share the value of nature-based solutions and how important the Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program (WRRP) has been to OWC. Chris Gallagher will

join me to share how WRRP benefits irrigation districts. Doug generally attends all meetings with elected officials.

- Other recent GoA engagements (Water Availability, SSRP 10 Year Review, Nature Strategy)
 - Water Act changes introduced in the legislature as Bill 7. EPA met with WPACs and other stakeholders to give us an overview of the bill.
 - Alberta Wilderness Association has shared the results of their Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act request which includes [summaries of feedback that EPA received](#) through recent engagement sessions.
 - RMA participated in Phase 2 of the provincial engagement, emphasizing:
 - Support for streamlined licensing processes to improve access, provided safeguards prevent adverse impacts on other users.
 - Conditional support for changes to points of use and diversion, with calls for clear definitions of “adverse effect.”
 - Opposition to reduced approval requirements for inter-basin transfers, even those deemed “low risk,” citing environmental and transparency concerns.
 - RMA also prioritized the need for transparent data, strong conservation measures, and meaningful consultation before any legislative changes proceed. [See full statement here.](#)
- SSRP 10 Year Review expected to be released publicly approximately January 2026, including potentially a ‘what we heard’ type document.
- Communications
 - [Natural infrastructure blog](#) series is available.
 - A blog about the value of ecosystem services provided by the WRRP over the past decade is coming soon (\$253 million per year).
 - 3 Authentic Watershed Experiences (AWE) events are complete, with about 60 people in attendance.
- Projects
 - State of the Watershed (Andy, Linda, Cheryl, Lori, Shannon)
 - Watershed Assessment Program Manager, Lauren Thompson, continues to refine a plan to develop a new assessment. Several key decisions have been made by the committee with a few more to be made at our next meeting in December.
 - Looking at costs of online platforms and GIS tools that will require an ongoing subscription.
 - Will be using the stop light summary report card we used in 2010, backed up by quantitative calculations for each indicator.
 - Will be replicable, quantitative, online, transparent, plain language.

- Working on grants to fund the project, in addition to the unrestricted funds we already allocated in our budget. Grant deadlines are mostly in January so we should have a good idea of our total budget by the end of March.
 - Depending on funding, we may need to take a phased approach but we will complete the project over the next 2-3 years.
 - Will be using HUC8 watershed boundaries as this is how the data is arranged by governments.
- Supporting drought affected communities
 - Drought survey data has been submitted to a consultant to write a report with the results, to be completed by the end of March.
- Restoring natural infrastructure
 - 3 more fall planting days were held as part of the Authentic Watershed Experience (AWE) events.
 - We will be able to assist other organizations with cultural / prescribed burns now that Debra Still, Restoration Manager, has been trained in these techniques and safety requirements.
 - Funds will be distributed this winter to partners leading restoration projects on their land or on public lands.
- Agricultural literacy
 - 2 draft reports were shared before the meeting.
 - Preliminary feedback was shared and Directors will send more detailed notes to Shannon so Jon can revise the reports.
 - An event to share the results will be held in the new year.
 - Three educational afternoons were held as part of the Authentic Watershed Experience (AWE) events where an Indigenous knowledge keeper and agricultural experts are sharing their wisdom and expertise with participants.
- Youth education
 - Nothing new to report.
- Monitoring (CABIN, groundwater)
 - Nothing new to report.
- Facilitating responsible recreation on public land
 - Nothing new to report.
- Ecosystem services calculator
 - The beta version will be live soon if anyone would like to test it and provide feedback. Shannon will send out the link once it is ready.

Governance Committee

- Terrence, Mark, Linda volunteered to assist with reviewing drafts.
- Topics that we will work on next include:
 - Updating Procurement of Contract Services Policy
 - Supporting external groups policy.

- Shannon and Lauren to develop an Indigenous Relations Policy.

External Committee Reports

- Water Supply Outlook / SSRB Interbasin Water Coordination Committee - Doug Kaupp, Shannon Frank, Chris Gallagher
 - A fall meeting is usually held in November. Shannon will ask EPA if this is being scheduled.
- Irrigation Districts Update - Chris Gallagher
 - The Oldman reservoir is at 54.4% of full volume, a gain of 0.2% since the October report. The Oldman/Kebo combined volume is 58%. The SMRID website states that as of October 31 2025 their headworks was at 45%, district at 80% and combined headworks and internal storage was at 59% of irrigation FSL.
 - Irrigation districts are now into construction season, completing maintenance and rehabilitation work to improve the reliability and efficiency of irrigation works.
 - There were no changes to initial water allocations set by districts. LNID remained at 14"/ac and SMRID remained at 12"/ac.
 - SMRID and LNID agreed to support OWC in promoting the value of the Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program with MLA Grant Hunter by showcasing projects constructed in the Taber area. The tour for 2025 has been postponed, however an in-person meeting is scheduled in December, 2025.
 - LNID is participating in the OWC Agricultural Literacy Project "Connecting People, Solutions and Innovations" in two short video clips on innovations. We will also be involved in subsequent small group discussion feature videos going more in depth on how agricultural innovation fosters growth and development in the sector.
 - The Canadian National Committee on Irrigation and Drainage (CANCID) webinar series continues with the December 10, 2025 speaker Sean Norman from Niagara Region presenting on:
 - a. The need for improved irrigation infrastructure across Niagara in response to climate-induced drought conditions
 - b. A feasibility, costing, and Preliminary Design Study for a new piped irrigation system in Lincoln/St. Catharines below the escarpment
 - c. The upgrades to the existing irrigation system in Niagara-on-the-Lake
 Sean speaks at 12:00pm MT. Register through cwra.org/events
 - The annual AIDA conference is set to take place in Lethbridge February 2-4, 2026. The program and registration will be coming out soon through
 - <https://www.albertairrigation.ca/>. Shannon was invited to present about the value of the Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program.
- Alberta Coalition for Watershed Security
 - Coalition sent a 2026-27 budget submission to GoA focused on renewing the Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program (WRRP) as it is set to expire this year.

- Kainai Environmental Protection Association - Ninna Piiksii (Mike Bruised Head)
 - 12th Annual Summit will be held June 3-5 with the theme Niitsitapi Cultural Keystone Species. There will be camping, field trips and presentations.



- Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent - Ninna Piiksii (Mike Bruised Head)
 - Nothing to report.
- International Joint Commission St. Mary Milk Rivers Study Board Public Advisory Group (PAG) - Cheryl Bradley
 - This initiative is delayed because of the government shutdown in the USA. The last meeting was postponed.
- Crowsnest Forest Products / West Fraser Public Advisory Group - Rick Cooke
 - Nothing to report.
- Alberta Water Council (AWC)
 - WPAC seat on the Board of Directors - Doug Kaupp
 - A board meeting was held October 23 in Edmonton.
 - Projects were approved including:
 - Updating the Drought Resiliency Guide for small municipalities and WPACs appointed a representative and an alternate to the project team.
 - Cross sector technology education and planning, how to leverage AI for water management, LNID will be on the team.
 - The aquatic ecosystem health project was postponed due to lack of capacity within AWC.
 - Environmental management framework reports were presented by EPA.
 - Freshwater Health Index was presented by North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance.
 - Next meeting will be in February and conflicts with the OWC board meeting.

Henk moved to adjourn the meeting at 3:41pm.

Next meeting: Thursday, December 18 from 1pm-4:30pm. Lunch will be provided at noon for those able to join in person. Location: The Nest at Honkers Pub.

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

_____, Doug Kaupp, OWC Chair