



Minutes

MRWCC Board Meeting

November 24, 2016 – 1:30 PM

Town of Milk River Office

Present: Will Lindeman, Dennis Spackman, John Ross, Roy Audet, Lloyd Closson, William King, Warren Cunningham, Frank Larney, Suzanne Liebelt, Ken Miller, Ed Sloboda, Brian Hills, Ron McNeil, Ross Ford, Lorraine Nicol, Tim Romanow, Kathryn Romanchuk and Mary Lupwayi

Absent: Kristen Dykstra, Ryan Hall, Darcy Wills, and Joan Hughson

Guests: Kim Lalonde, Director, Regional Planning, Alberta Environment and Parks
Scott McGarty, Pipeline and Facilities Construction, Granite Oil Corp

Conference Call: Sarah Depoe, Cumulative Effects Assessment Specialist, Land-Use Policy, Planning Branch, Alberta Environment and Parks

1. Welcome and introductions

- John Ross welcomed everyone to the meeting and brought the meeting to order at 1:37pm
- Introductions were conducted
- Scott McGarty advised that he works with Granite Oil Corp in Pipeline and Facilities Construction
- He further stated that going forward he will be representing Granite Oil Corp on the MRWCC Board, taking Ryan Hall's position as Ryan is no longer with Granite Oil Corp
- John welcomed Scott to the Board and thanked Kim Lalonde for taking the time to update the Board on the status of the Biodiversity Management Framework and address some concerns that the Board had

2. Minutes from September 22, 2016 meeting

- September 22 Board meeting minutes were reviewed

Motion: William King moved to accept the minutes as presented. Ross Ford seconded.

Carried.

3. Development of the SSRP Biodiversity Management Framework (BMF) by Kim Lalonde, Director, Regional Planning, Alberta Environment and Parks

- Kim stated that her role with Alberta Environment and Parks is Director of Regional Planning and introduced Sarah Depoe as the Cumulative Effects Assessment Specialist, dealing with Land-Use Policy with Environment and Parks and further stated that Sarah would assist with addressing some of the Land-Use Policy concerns because of her background on the BMF

- She thanked the MRWCC for their feedback on the BMF and stated that it has been a challenging process for everyone involved
- Gone through 3 phases of the framework
- The 3rd phase draft was released last fall
- Wrap up was done in early 2016
- Going through conversations with GoA about implications and how it will be implemented
- Timeline was extended into fall of 2016
- Met with Counties and Municipal Districts working through revisions to address concerns from local authorities
- Have sent out summary of all feedback
- Still need to finish up discussions with local governments
- Need to get back to the group with the final version of the framework
- Recognizes that WPACs and other organizations are key to the process
- Making necessary changes to the framework
- Want to check in with WPACs to see where they are in terms of awareness level and how future input can be incorporated
- There were comments of how the framework and its use need to be clear
- There is need to recognize the contributions of WPACs and local governments
- The last piece is implementation and the key piece will be the role of WPACs in this process going forward

Discussion:

John:

- There was some concern for the future of WPACs with regard to SSRP
- There was fear that the intent of the Plan was to get rid of WPACs

Kim:

- Looking at issues and priorities of what WPACs are doing such as input for other strategies like the Source Water Protection and IWMP
- A key issue of the Management Framework is the crossing of triggers and management response. Realizing that it's not only the government that is involved but other stakeholders and disciplines; and areas such as BMPs, education, and stewardship

John:

- Happy to hear that
- All 11 WPACs are unique and should have unique approaches to dealing with common concerns across the province

Ken:

- Asked that MRWCC be kept in the loop. A synopsis of the framework would be ideal

Dennis:

- Meeting threshold concerns should be neutral. Local landowners should not be penalized for trying to run small businesses by trying to meet those ecological commitments

Kim:

- There are commitments to:
 - meet the deadline of the drafts, and
 - see how it applies to public land and private landowners
- Frameworks create ability to put tools in place and make different pieces work together

Lorraine:

- WPACs use government resources to complete their projects and duplicating work between organizations is a waste of resources. There is no need to reinvent the wheel

Ross:

- What is the status of water quality management framework?
- It is critical in determining what needs to be done

Sarah:

- Monitoring is to be undertaken by ABMI (Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute)
- Reporting is scheduled to be formally done every 2 years
- Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute (ABMI) 2010 data will be used to set a baseline and move towards reporting and implementing in 2017
- High level regional indicators to look at largescale changes in the overall state of Biodiversity in the region
- Tier 3 indicators more specific. No formal triggers

Brian:

- The intent for the water quality framework is to monitor and manage long-term, cumulative changes in water quality within the main stem rivers in the region
- It should be noted that there is a lot of variability year to year so we don't want to create false expectations

Kim:

- It is important to come up with indicators that contribute to the effect and figure out what needs to be done and what the impact is on the environmental, economic and social indicators

Tim:

Areas of concern:

- ABMI:
 - Monitoring aspect for the region
 - Questions about the effectiveness of the data with regard to major gaps
 - There is no effort to capture other programs and data that is already available i.e.) Cows and Fish, MULTISAR, ACA, WPAC's, research projects
 - SOW reports and other reporting can capture data that is not currently being captured by ABMI
 - The scale of ABMI data is insufficient to make prescriptive actions you have indicated in the draft framework. Potential for wasted resources, and misguided management actions
- Effort has been made to incorporate first nations 'traditional' knowledge and no effort has been made to engage the ranching community that has been on the landscape for 5 plus generations, there is a missed opportunity to hear what trends landowners and leaseholders have seen over time regarding biodiversity
- There is no indication that there is going to be another round of review
 - First draft (2015) had a lot of concerns to the technical reviewers
- Implementation - a lot of energy has gone into this and the MRWCC would be interested in partnering with some of the proactive voluntary stewardship actions

Dennis:

- Alberta Parks gets copies of all the University research on SAR

Sarah:

- Appreciate comments and all work done by other organizations
- Need to start looking at incorporating the data
- Cultural and social indicators e.g. First Nations should be included in the framework
- There is a wealth of information that can be tapped into

Ken:

- AER borrowed a number of AEP technical monitoring staff, and wondered if the staffing deficiency has been addressed

Kim:

- We will make a commitment to allow for another review of the amended draft framework before seeking ministerial approval
- Unsure of the timeline for that work

John:

- Thanked Kim and Sarah for their time and input

4. Minister's response letter Re: BMF

- Reviewed the letter from the Minister

5. Financial update

- Financial statements update
 - September Financial Statements
 - September closing balance was \$262,927.13
 - October Financial Statements
 - October closing balance was \$256,843.16

Motion: Will Lindeman moved to accept the financial statements as presented. Ed Sloboda seconded. **Carried.**

6. Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program update

- WRRP Producer Project meeting – October 25, 2016 report
 - Productive meeting
 - Picked up 3 more project applications at the meeting which will increase spending to an additional \$20,000
 - With the new projects, total expenditure will be just under \$120,000
- Projects update
 - \$70,000 funding from AEP
 - \$130,000 funding allocated from AF under the Growing Forward
 - \$40,000 has been spent on fencing and tree planting
 - A total of 11 potable watering systems and 2 spring developments
 - The project also promotes riparian fencing. Over 30km of riparian area will be protected so far reducing impact of approximately 1,000 herd
 - Has had positive community impact
 - A project summary can be circulated if needed

7. HSP grant – Milk River Over-Wintering Habitat Stewardship Project update

- Have signed an agreement with DFO for the HSP overwintering project
- Palliser Environmental declined to proceed with the project
- There is a contractor who has shown interest
- Deadline to submit proposals is November 30, 2016

- Contractors are not willing to take on the project due to budget constraints
- The budgeted amount was based on Palliser Environmental Ltd.'s initial proposal
- Will need help from volunteers if we are to complete the project with the available funds, likely will be conducting fieldwork near the end of January if the weather cooperates
- Proposing 4 sites per reach

8. County of Warner Appointed Representatives to the MRWCC

- The County of Warner at their organizational meeting appointed Ross Ford as the County representative to the MRWCC and David Cody as the alternate

9. WPAC Summit – October 26 to 28th, 2016 report

- The Summit was intended to be shorter and focus on achievements of the 11 WPACs and future focus on the roles of WPACs in partnership with the Government of Alberta
- Good turnout and location
- Good opportunity to exchange ideas with other WPACs
- Mr. Hui noted he will not have his final report completed regarding the future role of WPACs for the Minister before he retires this winter and Cam Lane and Wayne Crosby of the Innovation and Intergovernmental Services Branch will take on this role
- Ron:
 - The graphs depicting WPACs funding sources and level of participation from volunteers showed a good summary
 - Government is getting good value out of WPACs
- John:
 - There is a wealth of expertise with the quality of membership that are volunteering to WPACs across the province
 - The Government would have spent millions on the work volunteers are doing for free
- Kathryn:
 - Great to see broad representation
- Warren
 - Good site
 - A book published by one of the WPACs called “Living in the Shed” was a good read
- Will
 - It was a good conference

- Good chance to interact with other WPACs
- Tim:
 - Thanked all Board members who attended
 - Due to Jim Prentice funeral, the Minister of Environment and Parks was not able to participate at the forum
 - Judy Stewart with Bow River Basin Council, legislation and policy committee had an interesting presentation regarding environmental governance and her perspective on where WPACs can continue to support GOA efforts

10. 2017 Proposed Board meeting dates

- The following are dates that the Board approved for 2017 Board meetings:
 - January 26
 - March 23
 - April 27
 - September 21
 - October 26 (Strategic Business Planning)
 - November 23
- Board meetings are scheduled on the 4th Thursday of each proposed month

11. 2017 AGM dates and proposed changes for future meetings

- March 9 - Community Appreciation Forum
- May 25 – AGM business meeting

12. WSCT Meeting and discussion with AEP and DFO on Milk River Species at Risk work – John Ross and Tim Romanow

- John and Tim attended the West Slope Cutthroat Trout meeting on October 2, 2016 with some DOF staff
- Got clarity on some SAR issues
 - Critical Habitat Orders include prohibitions and stiff penalty for destruction of habitat. There are legislated tools to avoid sterilization due to Critical Habitat Orders
 - Section 32 – as a habitat prohibition... kill, harm, harass, could also imply protection
 - Section 73 – there are opportunities to do projects that are permitted to mitigate harm from projects such as on stream storage, where offsets can be used
 - Part 4 – no changes to the document
- DOF will meet with MRWCC after the Overwintering Project

13. Species at Risk Act document review and team member application – Ross Ford

- Counties and MDs are forming an advisory committee for SAR and are looking for non-government groups participation
- Ross Ford has applied and is looking for the MRWCC support
- Deadline was November 10, 2016

Motion: Suzanne Liebelt moved that the MRWCC support Ross Ford for the application. Ron McNeil seconded. **Carried.**

- The Government of Canada is looking for input on seven draft policies which support the predictable, clear and consistent implementation of the Species at Risk Act
- The federal Species at Risk Act (SARA) aims to prevent wildlife species from becoming extinct and secure the necessary actions for their recovery
- In order to allow additional time for engagement and consultation on the draft SARA policies, the Government of Canada has extended the comment period until March 31, 2017
- The new federal government wants the plan of development for the list of species to be quicker
- The critical habitat zones are of concern
- Will need group response

Action: Tim to get feedback from the Board and that should be brought back at the January meeting

14. HSP call for proposals – partnership application with Nature Alberta

- There was a request for support for a Nature Alberta HSP application for SAR funding to conduct bird surveys on private and public land within the watershed
- Nature AB was asking for MRWCC to partner with Lethbridge College and facilitate access agreements, logistics, and some of the outreach activities
- Nature AB has since declined to submit the application

15. Youth Engagement Program Annual Report

- Kathryn presented the annual overview of the Education Outreach program
 - 7th Annual School Poster Contest
 - Information sent out to schools in Milk River, Warner, Foremost, and 3 Hutterite colonies
 - 74 entries received from students at Milk River Elementary and Erle Rivers High School
 - Prizes awarded to 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners in each grade at AGM
 - 2016 Caring For Our Watersheds Contest

- Gave presentation about contest to grade 8 and 11 classes at Erle Rivers High School
- The teacher made it mandatory for students to participate
- Two grade 11 students from Erle Rivers High School, Robin Stelten and Brooke Johnston, were chosen as finalists and invited to compete in the final competition held in Calgary at Ralph Klein Park on April 30, 2016
- Robin and Brooke's proposal won them 4th place and a \$700 cash prize, with a matching amount going to their school
- There were a total of 177 entries in southern Alberta, so winning fourth place was quite an accomplishment for Robin and Brooke
- Planning to implement their project "Nesting sites for hawks" this winter
- Equus is planning to donate the utility poles for project implementation
- School - in class and field presentations
 - Field trip with grade 4 and 5 classes to tour our local sewage and water treatment facilities
 - Weather Watch program for grade 5 and 6 kids from Lomond
 - Freshwater Systems for grade 7 and 8 from a Montessori School in Calgary
 - Milk River Centennial Days Kid's Activities at the Interpretive Center
- 9th Annual Southern Alberta Youth Range Days
 - July 5-7, 2016 near Elkwater, AB in the Cypress Hills
 - A very successful event
 - Youths worked on plant identification, riparian health, Species at Risk, and soils and geomorphology
 - Great feedback
- Other activities
 - Attended a Spring Hike Tour on April 22, 2016
 - Weed Pull Day at WOSPP
 - WPAC Forum
 - X-Stream Science field day
 - Devil's Coulee Museum and hike
 - Tree and shrub planting
 - AGM
 - Xeriscape Workshop and Tour

- Transboundary Water, Weeds, and Stewardship Tour
- Tour of the Kennedy Coulee Ecological Reserve
- Groundwater well sampling with William King and Kristen Dykstra
- 2016 WPAC Summit
- Kathryn announced that she was not going to seek renewal of her contract due to family obligations
- She thanked everyone for the great opportunity to work with the MRWCC

16. Team Updates

- Community Awareness and Involvement Team (CAIT)
 - Youth Range Days update
 - Erin Anderson request and thank you
 - Reviewed Erin's letter and request
 - Erin is a past YRDs graduate, a city youth who became interested in farming and credits it partly to her involvement in YRDs
 - She was a top hand winner in 2012
 - Now studying Agronomy at the University of Saskatchewan
 - Erin is asking for sponsorship for the University of Saskatchewan range team to take part in the Society for Range Management Conference in Utah and also compete in the undergraduate Range Management exam

The Board reached consensus to sponsor \$275 to Erin and the University of Saskatchewan Range team to take part in the Society for Range Management Conference held in Utah

- Scott McGarty stated that Granite Oil Corp will match the donation making the total donation \$550
- Hike Tour report
 - Ed thanked Dennis on behalf of the Board for providing transportation for the tour
- Winter Meander Newsletter (January)
 - Production increase (1,000 to 1,500 copies)
 - Currently the cost of producing 1,000 copies is \$1,080.00 based on 8 pages
 - The cost of 1500 copies will be \$1380.00

The Board made a consensus decision to increase copies of the Meander Newsletter from 1,000 to 1,500 at \$1380.00

- Call for articles
 - Deadline to receive articles is December 21

- The newsletter will be out January 18
- Research and Monitoring Team (R&M Team)
 - Surface water monitoring report
 - Ground water monitoring project update
 - Thanks to Kristen for helping with work done on the project
 - 40 wells were completed
 - AHS have sent initial letters of analysis to landowners
 - The Board thanks all landowners for their cooperation
 - Thanks to William, Ed, Warren and Will for their assistance in securing new wells
 - Invasive weed mapping cooperative project update
 - Interest from Municipalities and Alberta Parks to map Russian olive trees and other invasive plants
- Water Supply and Management Team (WSM Team)
 - Quagga Mussel update and Montana infestation quarantine
 - Mussels have been found but not live villagers
 - There are four sites now that have suspect hits
 - Areas of concern are: Tiber, Missouri below Toston, Milk below Fresno and Canyon Ferry
 - They are developing an incident command system which will turn into communication, control, and other efforts
 - All aquatic traffic on Blackfeet Reserve and Glacier National Park closed
 - The Province has a program that monitors once a week on the Milk River
 - There will be a provincial meeting coming up
- Transboundary Watershed Team
 - Transboundary Grassland workshop - hosted by SODCAP and SASK PCAP
 - Working on the draft agenda to identify challenges, communication, and a better transboundary dialogue
 - Will need more representation from the Board
 - Past funding was through PCF
 - Request for sponsorship
 - Requesting that MRWCC help with funding, AB PCF is contributing \$1,500
 - The Saskatchewan partners are contributing \$3,000, and the Montana partners are contributing approximately \$2500 (after exchange)

- The transboundary dialogue is being supported by the MRWA in Montana
- Discussion:
- There is need to come up with a policy on giving out donations

Motion: Lorraine Nicol moved that the MRWCC contribute \$1,500 for the Transboundary Grassland workshop, and going forward, the MRWCC should come up with a policy on giving out donations. Frank Larney Seconded. **Carried**

17. Upcoming event

- MRWCC Volunteer Appreciation/Christmas Dinner - December 2, 2016, Mr. Mikes Restaurant, Lethbridge
 - The Board and Spouse Appreciation/Christmas dinner was approved
 - Dinner will start at 5:30pm at Mr. Mikes Steak House Casual in Lethbridge
 - Interested Board members were listed

Action: Mary to circulate the invitation to the rest of the Board members

- MRCBA 32nd Annual Christmas Party - December 10, 2016, Milk River Civic Center
- Transboundary Grassland Workshop - January 11 to 13, 2017, Swift Current Saskatchewan
- Native Prairie Restoration and Reclamation Workshop - February 8 to 9, 2017, Regina Saskatchewan

18. Round table discussions

- William:
 - Kennedy Coulee Ecological Reserve Management Committee first meeting is on Monday
 - Toured the KCER grasslands with Kathryn and four others
 - It is shown that in the Natural area where cattle have grazed, there is good control of Downy and Japanese brome and other invasive species
 - The leopard frog population is doing well with the presence of cattle
- Ron:
 - PCF is planning their AGM in Lethbridge on January 19, 2017
 - Those interested in attending the AGM but are not available have an opportunity to attend the PCF workshops
 - PCF is looking for new members from other organizations, particularly municipalities and the ranching community.

Action: Tim to circulate the PCF agenda to Board members

- Lorraine

- The 2017 Canadian Water Resources Association Conference is being held June 5 to 7 at the Lethbridge Lodge
- This will commemorate the CWRA's 70th Anniversary
- It would be valuable to give a presentation on behalf of WPACs as this will be a huge exposure for WPACs

Action: Lorraine to forward the conference details to Tim – will compile a presentation abstract on the MRWCC programs and projects.

19. Other items

20. Meeting Adjournment

Motion: Ed Sloboda moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:05pm. Suzanne Liebelt seconded.

Carried.

21. Next Meeting Date

- January 26, 2017 in Milk River at 1:30pm

Signatures:

Chairman: _____

Secretary: _____