



Minutes

MRWCC Board Meeting

Sept 28, 2017 – 1:30 PM

Town of Milk River Office

Present: William King, Warren Cunningham, Ed Sloboda, Ron McNeil, Lorraine Nicol, Ross Ford, Will Lindeman, Joan Hughson, Darcy Wills, Ben Ellert, John Ross, Ken Miller, Scott McGarty, Lloyd Closson, Brian Hills, Dennis Spackman Suzanne Liebelt, Kristen Dykstra, Aaron Domes, Kandra Forbes, Tim Romanow, and Mary Lupwayi

Absent: Roy Audet

Guest: Brad Tucker, Senior Park Planner, AEP

1. Welcome and introductions

- John Ross welcomed everyone to the meeting and brought the meeting to order at 1:41pm
- Introductions were conducted

2. Minutes from May 25, 2017 meeting

- Past minutes were reviewed

Motion: Will Lindeman moved to accept the minutes as presented. Ron McNeil seconded.

Carried.

3. Financial update

- Financial statements update
 - i. May - August Financial Statements
 - May closing balance was \$195,619.12
 - June closing balance was \$304,856.08
 - July closing balance was \$248,483.56
 - August closing balance was \$221,513.08

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

- AEP Grant status update
 - i. \$175,000 has been deposited and will be reflected in September accounts

4. WOSPP Business Management Plan update – Brad Tucker, AEP

- Brad Tucker introduced himself as the Senior Park Planner with AEP
- Brad and Aaron Domes presented the WOSPP Business Management Plan and the World Heritage Site Nominations
- Aaron gave an update on the World Heritage Site Program

- He stated that the Government of Canada is inviting communities to nominate exceptional places with exceptional heritage value for World Heritage Sites to celebrate Canada's heritage
- Alberta Environment and Parks, in partnership with the Mookaakin Cultural & Heritage Society and with support of the Blackfoot Confederacy, is preparing a nomination for Writing-on-Stone to be inscribed onto the World Heritage List
- Pursuing World Heritage Site designation for Writing-on-Stone was identified as an objective in the 1997 Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park Management Plan
- The proposed nominated property and buffer zone of Writing-on-Stone is fully contained within the boundaries of Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park. No private land or public lease lands will be included (unlike earlier proposal - 2011)
- WHS – require a commitment to the 'highest standard' of land and resource management.
- Nominations deadline is February 2018
- For more information contact Aaron
- Brad presented the WOSPP Business Management Plan update
- He stated that Park operations fall into the Management plan, which sets direction for Park operation
- The plan has not been updated for 20 years and needs to be updated to accommodate existing changes
- The final draft will be reviewed next fall followed by public consultation
- He stated that the purpose of his presentation was to involve all stakeholders to give input in the plan and that the MRWCC being one of the key stakeholders should have input in the plan in areas that affect management of the watershed
- Some topics of concern:
 - i. Agricultural practices
 - ii. New lands acquisition and management
 - iii. Climate Change Adaptation
 - iv. Water quality
 - v. Recreation e.g. river use, signage etc.
 - vi. Water quantity
 - vii. Invasive species
 - viii. Educational activities

Discussion:

- Warren: Are we doing enough to protect what we currently have?
 - Brad: Will continue to look for strategies to protect the park

- William/Joan: stressed concern on the erosion happening on the river banks
 - Tim: There are proposed bioengineering projects on some identifies areas
- Darcy: Concern on the impact on adjacent landowners
- Warren: The trend in visitation has always been up and down
- Ross: Do visitors want to stay due to the time it takes to get to the Park and if so, are there plans to increase camping sites?
 - Brad: There are no plans to increase camping sites but need to look at other accommodation options
- Aaron/Kandra: Partnership with education outreach has been a great opportunity to help with scientific part of the story and has increased school involvement – the Park has done a good job telling the cultural aspect of the story
- School tours are going well although limited staff at the Park has made it difficult to promote education outreach program
- Darcy: We should not expect the Park to tell the watershed story
- Public notices on Ecoli messaging needs to be improved
- The notices affect the number of visitors coming to the Park
 - Kristen: Need to investigate better indicators for actual fecal contamination. There is a gap between science and legislation
 - Tim: AHS will be invited to present at the MRWCC Science Forum in winter
- MRWCC, AHS, and WOSPP need to work together to improve messaging
- Who monitors river use for effective use?
- Currently, there is river signage placed on all major access points
- Access through private land is more secure than before
- Visitation data needs to be improved
- Ross: In August, the Minister and Deputy Minister met with adjacent landowners
 - September 11, followed up with AEP, Transboundary Secretariat, Tourism, Transportation and public to discuss grazing leases
 - It's been a good process and would like to see the process continue
- A MRWCC subcommittee has been put together to come up with input and feedback for the Plan. The subcommittee comprise of:
 - Tim, Joan, Ross, Darcy, Suzanne, and Kandra
- Input should be sent to Brad by end October or Mid November at the latest to be included in the draft plan
- WOSPP will present the feedback heard in a draft plan near the end of December or early January.

5. Milk River Water Situation – Graham Statt, ADM discussion

- John, Tim, Ken and Ross met with the ADM to discuss correspondence that was included in the letter of intent regarding community concerns on the closure of irrigation this summer and operations of the Milk River and St. Mary Diversion
- Questions as to why AEP did to use Alberta apportionment of St. Mary River water as was the case reported in 2001 were raised
- The ADM has agreed to meet with MRWCC representatives again
- Will need to add water sharing and Transboundary discussions for the November meeting
- Will need to work with Brian to develop an agenda for the meeting
- MLA Hunter's visit to Montana was discussed
- Ken proposed having the meeting sooner – within two weeks with irrigators.
- This is of great interest to irrigators and would like to have the MRWCC facilitate the meeting

Action: Brian to take back a request to AEP to have the meeting sooner than November and advise the Board in a few weeks.

Brian also advised that the email that was sent to meeting participants after the public meeting July 20th was found threatening to the Ministry and the AEP executives took issue with it.

6. Community Based Watershed Monitoring Meeting report

- Tim and John had an open discussion on what the future of community based monitoring is, and concerns of community based monitoring vs citizen science were discussed
- Tim presented what we are doing with investigative monitoring and responsive programming to address WQ, municipal, and community concerns
- There is concern that any new programming or funding will not be available for up to two years as the department builds a new program
- Also concerned over the department focus on monitoring to publish scientific journal articles vs. supporting on going ambient monitoring in areas found locally important
- Positive discussion and hoping to see more work done
- Planning a meeting with AEP to assess how the monitoring partnership went this season

7. Approved Water Management Plan - status update

- Waiting for Cabinet approval, a briefing was prepared for pre and post implementation but has been held up due to the Letter of Intent concerns

8. Fall MRWCC Strategic Business Planning Session – Cypress Hills Resort, Sk

- Scheduled for October 25 and 26, 2017 at Cypress Hills Resort in Saskatchewan
- Planning SODCAP Tour October 25 – review performance based \$ incentives for landowners providing habitat for species at risk in the watershed
- Strategic Business plan meeting October 26
- Will leave for Saskatchewan afternoon of October 24 and head back the afternoon of October 26 after the meeting
- Those attending were asked to register

9. DFO response to the recovery of Western Silvery Minnow and Rocky Mountain Sculpin Action Plan for Milk River and St. Mary River Drainage Basins

- DFO is requesting a meeting to discuss the draft Action Plan in winter. No additional details have been provided.

Action: Tim to circulate the email to the Board

10. Team update

- Due to time limitation at the meeting, it was advised that Team updates will be emailed as a report to the Board on a later date
- Community Awareness and Involvement Team (CAIT)
 - i. Education Outreach report
 - ii. Youth Range Days update
 - iii. Fall Hike Tour update
 - iv. Eastern Watershed Tour
 - v. 2018 Fall/Winter Meander Newsletter
 - Deadline to submit articles is October 31, 2017
- Research and Monitoring Team (R&M Team)
 - i. Surface Water Monitoring
 - ii. DFO – Overwintering Habitat Stewardship Project Update
 - iii. WRRP – projects update
 - Received 4 application for phase 2 program
 - The subcommittee was asked to review the application after the meeting
- Water Supply and Management Team (WSM Team)
- Transboundary Watershed Team
 - i. MRWA – River Rendezvous Tour June 27th
 - ii. Joint Milk River Film Project update
 - iii. Transboundary Grasslands – Montana workshop and work plan

11. Upcoming Events

- Fall Hike Tour – October 6, 2017
- Eastern Watershed Tour – October 20, 2017

- Strategic Business Plan Retreat and SODCAP Tour, Cypress Hills Resort, Saskatchewan – October 25 and 26, 2017

12. Round table discussions

- Farewell to Lloyd Closson
 - i. Lloyd Closson advised that he is not running for the municipal representation
 - ii. He thanked everyone for a good working relationship and stated that he enjoyed serving on the Board
 - iii. John thanked Lloyd for his contribution on the Board and wished him well

13. Other items

- Ron:
 - PCF would like to invite Courtney Taylor, the top hand award winner of the 2017 YRDs to give a presentation at the January AGM near Calgary
 - PCF will help sponsor her travel to compete at the Society for Range Management Competition in Sparks NV, at the end of January
- Tim:
 - The Southern Alberta Agricultural Service Board conference will take place in Milk River at the Civic Center on October 31, 2017
 - Looking for donations or displays
 - Consensus felt that the MRWCC should have a display at the conference if requested.
- Ron:
 - Thanked the MRWCC's involvement at the PCF meeting and tour of the Sweetgrass Hills
 - About 25 people attended, Great participation
 - Thanked William, John and Tim for arranging the meeting facility
- Tim:
 - The Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute (ABMI) are planning facilitated sessions as a part of their 10-year Science and Program Review
 - In 2017, the Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute entered its 10th year of formal operations
 - The decisions made about the direction of operations since the Institute's inception were based on the feedback of stakeholders between 2002-2006, a time when there was absence of a consistent biodiversity monitoring program in the province
 - Ten-years later, they want to take a step back and have a frank conversation with stakeholders about what new needs have emerged, and how they can

plan future operations to align with emerging needs through a Stakeholder Needs Assessment to:

1. Evaluate the Institute's scientific framework through a Science Review
 2. Assess the range of products and services provided by the ABMI
- As part of the Stakeholder Needs Assessment portion of the review, the ABMI is hosting sector-specific facilitated workshops to evaluate the evolving and emerging needs of stakeholders, and how they align with current and future ABMI operations through a series of presentations and break-out sessions
 - The results from the workshops will be compiled into a recommendations report that the ABMI Board of Directors will use to inform decisions about the next ten-years of operations
 - Hosting a workshop on Tuesday, October 3 from 10:00 - 15:00 at the University of Alberta to talk to representatives from both WPACs and select ENGOs. The workshop will be limited to 15 participants
 - ABMI will cover travel costs for WPAC and ENGO representatives traveling from out of town
- Scott/Tim:
- Scott is planning an Industry Operations tour of sites near Warner and will advise council when logistics and safety concerns are addressed and arranged. Tour will likely be in the New Year
- William King:
- Ecological Reserve fire tour coming up. Date to be announced
- Lorraine:
- Wanted to know the status of the deferred funding issue
 - A report was sent to AEP with a balance of about \$68,000 owing to AEP and we have not received any feedback yet. It is anticipated that this amount will be reduced from our closing grant payment this fiscal year

14. Meeting Adjournment

Motion: Ed Sloboda moved to adjourn the meeting at 4:27pm. **Carried.**

15. Next Meeting Date

- October 25 to 26, 2017 – Strategic Business Planning Session, Cypress Hills Resort
Saskatchewan

Signatures:

Chairman: _____

Secretary: _____