



## Minutes

### MRWCC Board Meeting

May 28, 2020 – 1:00 PM

### Virtual Zoom Meeting

Log in Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81786515767>

**Present:** John Ross, Lorraine Nicol, Brian Hills, William King, Ben Ellert, Ron McNeil, Suzanne Liebelt, Ken Miller, Aaron Domes, Ross Ford, Will Lindeman, Scott MacCumber, Warren Cunningham, Kandra Forbes, Tim Romanow, and Mary Lupwayi

**Absent:** Joan Hughson, Ed Sloboda, Devon Ford, Stephen Kirkpatrick, Darcy Wills

#### 1. Welcome and introductions

- John Ross welcomed everyone to the virtual meeting and brought the meeting to order at 1:03 pm

#### 2. Approve Agenda

**Motion:** Warren Cunningham moved to approve the agenda as presented. Ross Ford seconded. **Carried**

#### 3. Minutes from January 31, 2020 meeting

- It should be noted that due to restrictions imposed because of Covid-19, some of the actions proposed in the workplan had to be either postponed or cancelled

**Motion:** Scott MacCumber moved to accept the minutes as presented noting that due to restrictions imposed because of Covid-19, some of the action items planned had to be either postponed or cancelled. Ben Ellert seconded. **Carried**

#### 4. Organizational election

- Executive Board election
  - i. Chairman
    - Lorraine Nicol nominated **John Ross** as Chairman
  - ii. Vice Chairman
    - Scott MacCumber nominated **Ron McNeil** as Vice Chairman
  - iii. Treasurer
    - Warren Cunningham nominated **Will Lindeman** as Treasurer
  - iv. Secretary
    - Will Lindeman nominated **Warren Cunningham** as Secretary
- Nominations were called out 3 times as they were read. No further nominations were received

**Motion:** Suzanne Liebelt moved to accept the Executive Board nominations as presented. Ross Ford seconded. **Carried.**

- Team Leader election
  - i. Community Awareness and Involvement Team
    - Ed Sloboda
  - ii. Research and Monitoring Team
    - Will Lindeman
  - iii. Water Supply and Management Team
    - Ken Miller
  - iv. Transboundary Watershed Team
    - Ron McNeil

**Motion:** Suzanne Liebelt moved to accept Team Chair appointments. Ross Ford seconded. **Carried.**

## **5. WPAC Core/Project Grant Status Update**

- Grant reporting, application and workplan were approved and have been submitted to finance for finalization. Expecting to receive the total amount of \$275,000 in 6 weeks

## **6. 2020 AGM Report**

- Feedback on the virtual meeting
  - There was a feedback survey at the end of the meeting which was not circulated due to a technical error with zoom
  - In the future, increase the volume as it was hard to hear for some
  - It went fairly well but it was strange not to see people except for the panelists
  - Did great considering it being the first time to hold a meeting virtually
  - Polls and voting went really well
  - A good tool to use as opposed to cancelling meetings because of weather problems
  - Could join meeting from anywhere
  - Can be recorded and broadcasted directly to YouTube or link shared with membership

## **7. MRWCC operations update**

- Staff still working from home offices
- Outreach events postponed due to Covid-19 restrictions
- Appreciate the community support for all the silent auction items donated. May plan to do an online auction
- Close to completing the WRRP projects

## 8. St Mary Diversion update

- Brian Hills gave a brief overview on what AEP had done and is planning to do going forward and also gave a brief update of what was discussed at the IJC call the past week
  - IJC call was organized by the 2 accredited officers from US and Canada. The meeting comprised of US Bureau of Reclamation, State of Montana representatives, and AEP representatives
  - The US Bureau of Reclamation had not been able to get on site to do any sort of evaluation because of access problems due to the rain. They are supposed to be on site this week with engineers to conduct surveys and put plans on how to move forward with regards to the required repairs. Looking at whether to do some interim repair to allow some water to move across or go forward with a permanent repair
  - Without having surveyed the site, it was presumed that the best-case scenario for having a permanent fix in place will be the end of summer
  - They indicated that they were not sure what triggered the failure of drop 5. Ongoing surveillance system identified drop 2 as being at a higher risk of failing. Prior to the long weekend they had identified a small leak closer to the diversion site on the St. Mary's and they were planning to close down the canal anyway, to deal with that leakage
  - There is another call scheduled by the IJC the morning of June 10, 2020 for more updates on the scheduling of repairs
- Discussions:
  - Who will pay for the repairs?
    - No discussion on who is going to pay for it
  - Any discussion, if best scenario is to get it running by August, would there be an operational opportunity for them to store at Sherburne then try to replenish at least some of their supplies on the Highline in September or October?
    - No shortage of water for Sherburne. It will depend on the canal repairs. They will be looking to move water across to Fresno reservoir to help ensure they have enough municipal water through the winter
    - Based on the failure the Milk River Water Control Board has indicated to their users that they are getting water for one irrigation, and will only get water to the end of June. This could change if there is enough precipitation
    - There is information being posted by the US Bureau of Reclamation and Milk River Water Control Board on their websites
  - What level is Fresno at right now?
    - It is full

**Action:** Tim to circulate the June operations report from the US Bureau of Reclamation to the Board members

- Actions taken by AEP:
  - Have set up a water shortage management committee in Lethbridge which includes: regulatory assurance division, approvals compliance staff, as well as the Transboundary section.
    - Brian's role is to support the committee with local knowledge, hydrology and as a contact representing AEP within the MRWCC
    - Lead for Regulatory Assurance is Steven Mathyk. Kathleen Murphy has retired
    - Minister Nixon has been briefed on the situation and has had discussions with Associate Minister Grant Hunter
    - Associate Minister Grant Hunter has scheduled a call with IJC to be briefed on the situation
  - Steps taken by the water shortage management committee so far:
    - Started doing call outs to all water users to inform them of the canal failure and will be giving information updates as more information comes
    - Doing analysis on what to expect from natural flows based on historic natural flow data from 1928 to 2008 period. This information will be shared next week
    - Looking to hold a public meeting after the IJC meeting that is scheduled on June 10, 2020
    - Implemented a larger water quality monitoring program. Deployed a number of data sondes and continue with monthly water sampling to try and understand how water quality will be affected over the course of the summer and fall if there is no diversion water
  - How AEP will work with MRWCC going forward:
    - Communication with the water users. Call outs not the best ideal way to reach out to people since sometimes people don't answer calls or numbers have been updated. Looking for some advice on how to effectively communicate with water users. What role the MRWCC might want to play
    - Collecting water use information and understanding when water users start to have problems accessing water
    - Discussions on how to allocate available water as water levels drop
  - Discussion:
    - Water users have an association of their own and Ken will be glad to pass on information and arrange for dialogue between the two groups.

**Action:** Ken Miller to pass on information to MRWUA and arrange for dialogue between the two groups.

- How to go about disseminating information with current Covid-19 situation:

- Might be able to have a meeting with all water users by using the Civic Centre which is large enough to accommodate a large group and still observe social distance
- Virtual meeting? Issues with computer use and poor internet connection in some areas?
- Phone calls? Difficult reaching people as some people may not answer calls
- Emails? Do people respond to emails?
- Can have discussions at the next WSM Team meeting

**Action:** Tim and Ken to schedule a WSM Team meeting Monday afternoon for further discussions

- What is the threshold of river flow that should make users start to make cut off decisions?
  - Based on license information:
    - If there is 6 cubic metres/sec crossing the eastern crossing of natural flow we should have no issues
    - If there is 4 cubic metres/sec of natural flow crossing the eastern crossing will start to restrict some water users
    - If there is anything less than 4 cubic metres/sec of natural flow crossing the eastern crossing then probably there is no water to access in the river
  - There is need to schedule a RandM Team meeting within the next week or 2 to discuss water quality issues caused by the diversion failure and potential additional data collection that could occur

**Action:** Tim to schedule a RandM Team meeting within the next week to discuss water quality issues caused by the diversion failure

- WOSPP and community water coops get water from the whiskey valley aquifer. Are there other aquifers that can supply water in the event that the river can't supply?
  - This will have an influence on the whiskey valley aquifer but will not affect supply significantly

## 9. Round table discussions

### ➤ Lorraine:

- Have completed a project on precision agriculture studies undertaken with Irrigation Districts
- Going forward, interested in a study to potentially explore working relationships between WPACs and municipalities (rural and urban Municipalities) within watersheds

- Study will involve 4 but not restricted to 4 WPACs with a mixture of municipalities within the watersheds, focusing on the IWMP and the role that municipalities have played in developing the plans and the role of municipalities in using the plans to guide their development in their planning development as well as their BMPs. The study could include a broader range of other activities. Study will be done mostly through online surveys. Looking for advice and assistance in the development of the questionnaire. While Chris and Lorraine have adequate funding for the project, there are plans to apply for an Alberta Real Estate Foundation grant.
- Tim:
  - Studies would be useful for WPACs in evaluating effectiveness of programs
  - Municipal partners play a huge role in WPACs operations
- Ben:
  - Was preparing for the Community Appreciation Forum presentation on greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture that would be useful to the general public
  - Interested in how the conservation offset is going at the County of Forty Mile and is interested in any information regarding the project
  - The presentation that was delivered by a student at the Science Forum on the food habits on the sharp-tailed grouse was a good indicator of the grassland health and a huge contribution to the Milk River watershed
- John:
  - Halo, an air ambulance service that flies in the South East corner of Alberta, might be grounding their newest helicopter as of June 1 due to lack of funding as they do not get any funding from the government
  - There is great need to support Halo with fundraising and keep them in the air
  - Stars Air Ambulance can't go past Lethbridge without refueling, so Halo is the choice for emergency situations past Lethbridge
- William:
  - The Milk River Natural Area is supposed to be having a graze after this year, but due to the government funding limitations, will not get all the fencing finished. Planning to use an electric fence to graze later this year
  - Aden Fire Department truck is currently parked at Roger King's place. If in need of Fire truck to contact Roger King
- Scott:
  - The Northern Broadcasting System has a podcast on the collapse and ongoing saga of the St. Mary's diversion

**Action:** Tim to email the link of the podcast to Board members

**10. Other items**

**11. Meeting Adjournment**

**Motion:** Ross Ford moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:33pm. Suzanne Liebelt seconded. **Carried**

**12. Next Meeting Date**

- Next meeting will be on September 24, 2020 at 1:30pm in Milk River unless otherwise advised

**Signatures:**

**Chairman:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Secretary:** \_\_\_\_\_