



Minutes
MRWCC Board Meeting
January 23, 2025 – 1:30 PM
Town of Milk River

Present:

In-Person: Ron McNeil, Ed Sloboda, Warren Cunningham, William King, Scott MacCumber, John Ross, Peggy Losey, Ross Ford, Tim Romanow, Mary Lupwayi

Virtually: Richard Oster, Cheryl Dash, Jon Boyle, Ben Ellert, Jollin Charest

Absent:

Roger Houghton, Ken Brown, Ken Miller, Jill Makins, Tyler Eresman, Kristen Dykstra, Darcy Wills, Joan Hughson, Mike Bruised Head, Will Lindeman

1. Welcome and Introductions

- Chairman Ross welcomed everyone to the meeting
- He brought the meeting to order at 1:38 pm

2. Approve Agenda

- Part 6, the title should read: Little Fish, Big Stewardship Project update

Motion 1: William King moved to approve the agenda as amended. Ron McNeil seconded. Carried

3. Minutes from November 28, 2024 Board meeting

- Part 6 title should read: Little Fish, Big Stewardship Project update
- Part 6, the last word on the second bullet should be spelled as study

Motion 2: Ross Ford moved to accept the minutes as amended. Ed Sloboda seconded. Carried

4. Financial update

- Financial Statements from November and December 2024

Motion 3: Scott MacCumber moved to accept the financial statements as presented. Ed Sloboda seconded. Carried

- Kim Sturgess has donated \$250,000 to Alberta's Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils towards protecting and preserving Alberta's watersheds, an essential resource that supports communities, wildlife, and ecosystems across the region. The MRWCC has received a \$25,000 donation as part of this donation. WaterSMART Solutions Ltd. has been sold to a new company

5. Grants

- Alberta Environment and Protected Areas Core grant update – cashflow forecast

- In good standing
- Phase 2 - Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk
 - Received \$63,000 of the \$70,000 grant
 - The remaining \$7,000 to be paid upon submission of the final report at the end of the fiscal year
- Phase 3 Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk Project Application:
 - *Bats and Amphibians - Bio-acoustic Monitoring of Sensitive Habitat for Species at Risk in the Milk River Watershed*
 - Pending approval
 - *Pollinators- Growing Our Understanding of Native Pollinators and Their Habitats in the Milk River Watershed*
 - Pending approval
- Cows and Fish – MRWCC CNFASAR – Little Fish, Big Stewardship Project
 - Have submitted the second invoice for \$81,380.16 to Cows and Fish
- Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program Grant Application - Water Conservation and Metering project
 - Pending approval
- Canada Summer Jobs
 - Pending approval
 - We have applied for 2 positions due to the increased projects workload
 - Jessica Olsen might be available to come back

6. Little Fish, Big Stewardship Project update

- We have started five BMP projects with landowners
 - Projects include fencing and watering systems along the river to help protect fish habitat, by redistributing cattle away from the riverbank
- Agreements have been finalized for four of five projects which have been signed by landowners and staff. For these agreements cheques were issued in December 2024
 - Three of these landowners have completed their projects
 - The fifth landowner agreement is being finalized
 - We have added a 6th project with the Razer Grazer MRWCC purchased with the 2023-2024 funding. We are anticipating finishing this agreement in February
- Our fish data contributed to an internal report being written by Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) and Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) for Sandstone Ranch
- We are working collaboratively with Alberta Environment and Protected Areas (AEPA) for data analysis from the temperature and dissolved oxygen data loggers
- Ron and Marnel visited Cows and Fish restoration sites

- It is important to ensure all regulatory Ps and Qs are observed
- Coming up
 - Promoting the project to generate interest from additional landowners
 - Data analysis
 - Continued collaboration with AEPA
 - Planning for this field season

7. Wild Nights Monitoring Project update

- 2 Monitors are set up to monitor for bat winter activity
- All acoustic data from 2024 has been analyzed
- Most of monitoring reports have been sent to the participating landowners
- The Habitat Enhancement projects will be a priority in February

8. 3rd Edition Transboundary State of Watershed Report update

- Completed!
 - Printing to done in a week or so
 - The print quality is good
- Project budget update
 - All invoices have been honoured
 - Total expenditure is \$153,881.37 with an over-expenditure of \$73,881.37
- IJC support/funding update
 - IJC have signed an agreement for a \$30,000 contribution to help with the TSOW expenditure. This will help alleviate the over-expenditure of the project
 - All grant deliverables have been met and sent to IJC

Action 1: Tim to send an invoice and cover letter to IJC in a week

- Thanks to all Board members who spent a lot of time reviewing the report
- GIS data is available if needed by municipalities within the watershed

9. WPAC Managers update

- Two things to update:
 - The OWC brought a proposal to WPAC managers for a collective water partner economic impact assessment for WPACs and some watershed stakeholders
 - After discussions, the Board did not support this proposal
 - Statement of Opportunity for the Alberta Water Council that was completed in 2021 need to be updated and need to include indigenous communities

- The Statement of Opportunity to be submitted to Alberta Water Council by February 3rd, 2025 for review and acceptance

10. WPAC Forum Report

- Opportunity to discuss regional priorities coming down the pipes and how WPACs can support GOA
- At the last forum, there were discussions on the water availability engagements for the survey closing January 24, 2025

11. Online banking

- Letter to ATB for online banking permission
 - To obtain financial statements in a timely manner, there is a need to have online banking
 - We had a meeting with ATB staff on how to go about having online banking and were advised that the bank needs an authorization letter from the MRWCC Board and Board minutes with a motion to support board authorization to conduct online banking

Motion 4: Peggy Losey moved to authorize Mary Lupwayi, Program Coordinator and Tim Romanow, Executive Director to set up online banking for bill payment and act as Accounting Administrators for the MRWCC. Scott MacCumber seconded. Carried.

- Draft Banking Policy
 - A draft policy was reviewed that ensures that there are clear and transparent procedures and appropriate controls for managing funds and cash flow through the MRWCC bank accounts
 - The policy with checks and bounds was discussed

Motion 5: Ross Ford moved to approve the Banking Policy as presented. Ed Sloboda seconded. Carried.

12. Water availability engagement <https://www.alberta.ca/water-availability-engagement>

- Detailed survey – WPAC
- General survey – board members
 - The deadline for the survey extended to January 24, 2025
 - Tim and Ross attended previous town hall meetings and both gave brief reports

13. Youth Engagement Programs

- School programs
 - Gave a presentation on general watershed ideas to a grade 1 to 3 class in Warner
 - Will be in touch with Milk River school in February to plan either in class or field trips
 - Working with WOSPP to plan tour presentations for schools
- Youth Range Days Program
 - Date: July 22-24
 - Location: Kimball Park
 - Funding in good standing and we applied for additional funding that is pending approval
 - Committee working on other logistics

14. Fall/Winter Meander Newsletter 2024

- Late distribution due to Post Office shut down
- Good feedback on the newsletter
- Extra copies available in the office

15. Community Awards Programs

- 2025 Heritage Tree Program
 - Nominations are still open
 - We have received one nomination so far
- 2025 Environmental Stewardship Awards
 - Two potential nominations: Names are not disclosed at this stage
 - It would be fitting to rename the ESA the Tom Gilchrist memorial ESA

16. Milk River Fish Recovery Workshop (DFO)

- Invites, intent, and potential project outcomes
 - A zoom meeting scheduled for mid-February
 - Intent is to look at ways to improve fisheries

Action 2: Tim to send out more information about the meeting to Board members

- Ken Miller and Kevin Ress from the Milk River Water Users Association were invited to attend
- There is interest in additional water quality work 3 or 4 years after diversion repairs to monitor changes

17. Visitor Information Centre Building committee request

- Business case development

- Had an executive meeting early December to see if there is need to pursue investigating the MRWCC offices reallocation to the Visitor Centre as tenants
- Milk River Community Business Association lease ended October 30th, 2024
- It has been offered to the Milk River Town Council and the Town Council has asked for time to investigate the MRWCC's proposal

Action 3: Tim to help the Milk River Community Business Association develop a business plan to figure out if and how to secure the Centre for MRWCC office space

- Committee: Peggy Losey, Tim Romanow, John Ross. Ross Ford

Action 4: Peggy Losey to ask if Mayor Larry Liebelt would be interested in being on the committee

Action 5: Tim to ask Dave Swanson to join the committee

Motion 6: Peggy Losey moved to organize a committee to pursue investigating the Visitor Centre interest. Ron McNeil seconded. Carried.

18. Upcoming Events:

- Community Headwaters Tour – Upon completion
 - Fall 2025, in lieu of a fall hike tour. To be planned for September or early October
 - Two busses – approximately 50 community members (Northern Transit? or company from Browning)
 - Cost recovery for expenses, probably \$50 each for lunch and bussing
 - Tentative schedule:
 - Everyone meets at hooks hideaway approx. 10am
 - Travel to the ST Mary headwaters then to Milk River Headwaters south of St Mary village, Diversion Dam construction, and then St Mary Siphon replacement
 - Lunch at Hooks Hideaway – could do presentation inside if weather is not good to show the remainder of the project
 - Spider Lake and start of Canal system to east
 - Could also visit Halls Coulee Siphon
 - 3:00pm return to vehicles at Hooks – head home
 - Work progressing well
- 20th Annual General Meeting – May 29th, 2025
 - Will be at the County of Warner ASB meeting room
 - It will be the 20th anniversary AGM
 - Business meeting only and celebrations will take place at the Community Appreciation Forum on October 8th, 2025
- 2025 Community Appreciation Forum – October 8, 2025

- Executive Board approved the meeting to take place in fall at the Milk River Civic Centre
- Planning to celebrate the MRWCC 20th Anniversary
- Make the event more celebratory. It will be from 4 to 8pm as per the schedule below:
 - Have 2 presentations only from 4 to 6pm:
 - Photos/videos over time to tell stories of MRWCC significant events
 - A keynote speaker on the St Mary siphon replacement and diversion dam construction project
 - Meal at 6pm followed by entertainment such as a band for one and half hours until 8pm
 - Apply for alcohol licence for drinks at the event
 - Promotional items for the Anniversary:
 - Branded jacket for staff and Board members with 20 years anniversary
 - Other suggested items to give out: Chore gloves, flashlights, Baseball hats, etc.
- There will be a silent auction and possibly a live auction. Still in the planning stages
- Conservation Tools Showcase – March 14th, 2025
 - Date – March 14th, 2025
 - 10am setup for vendors
 - 11am start with quick presentation from MRWCC end at 2:30pm with a round table discussion and debrief with participating organizations
 - Invites to be sent out as soon as possible to conservation partners
 - Important event to solicit for producer projects for the Little Fish, Big Stewardship project
 - Have asked Land Stewardship Centre to sponsor the event as part of the stewards in motion work

Motion 7: Ross Ford moved to host the Conservation Tools Showcase on March 14th, 2025 as planned. Ed Sloboda seconded. Carried.

19. Team updates as discussed:

- Community Awareness and Involvement Team (CAIT)
- Research and Monitoring Team (R&M Team)
- Water Supply and Management Team (WSM Team)
- Transboundary Watershed Team (TWT)

20. Round table discussions

- William King:
 - Milk River Management Committee is in the process of updating the management plan for the Milk River Natural Area and Ecological Reserve
 - The Milk River Management Committee has a new Chairman
 - Requesting some Board members and Tim to attend the AGM

21. Meeting adjournment

Motion 8: Ed Sloboda moved to adjourn the meeting at 4:46 pm.

22. Next meeting date

- March 20th, 2025

Signatures:

Chairman: _____

Secretary: _____