



Minutes
MRWCC Board Meeting
March 23, 2023 – 1:30 PM
Town of Milk River

Present:

In Person: Ed Sloboda, Peggy Losey, Will Lindeman, William King, Scott MacCumber, Ron McNeil, Ross Ford, Warren Cunningham, Roger Houghton, Ben Ellert, Aaron Domes, Jollin Charest, John Ross, Ken Brown, Joan Hughson, Tim Romanow, Allison Choquette, Mary Lupwayi

Virtually: Richard Oster, Kristen Dykstra, Darcy Wills

Absent: Jon Boyle, Ken Miller

1. Welcome and Introductions

- John Ross welcomed everyone to the meeting
- He brought the meeting to order at 1:41pm

2. Approve Agenda

Motion 1: Ken Brown moved to approve the agenda as presented. Ron McNeil seconded. Carried

3. Minutes from February 2, 2023, Board meeting

- Past minutes were reviewed

Motion 2: Scott MacCumber moved to accept the minutes as presented. Warren Cunningham seconded. Carried

4. Financial update

- January and February 2023 Financial Statements
 - Financial records were reviewed and discussed

Motion 3: Will Lindeman moved to accept the financial statements as presented. Peggy Losey seconded. Carried

5. Grants

- AEP core grant update
 - Have been approved multi-year grant of \$320,000 per year for the next 4 years ending March 2027. Thank you to the GOA staff who made this commitment possible
 - We received more than was requested, showing the province sees value in our work
 - There is a flexibility for the funds to be moved within grant multiyear grant cycle
- Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk
 - Pending approval
 - The grant will be for a 2-year agreement (\$75,000 and \$85,000 consecutively)
- Canada Summer Jobs

- Pending approval
- Closing date for application submission is March 31
- Have received one good resume at this time

6. Producers Leading the Way Project Phase 2 update

- Workshop series update
 - Succession planning workshop report
 - Was held March 9 at the County of Warner ASB Meeting room
 - Attendance less than anticipated
 - Good feedback from participants
 - Ranching for Profit workshop
 - Scheduled for April 10 and 11
 - Planning to push with more advertisements after the CAF
 - Conservation tools showcase
 - Scheduled for April 26
 - Getting registrations from organizations who would like to showcase work
- Municipal Grassland SAR Extension Program
 - Rural municipal presentations
 - Presentations have already taken place at the Counties of Warner, Cypress, and Forty Mile
 - Scheduling presentation for Cardston County
 - There is support from municipalities
 - Working with municipal ASBs to see how the program will be carried out
 - \$40,000 Funding available
 - If not all of municipalities are not in support, plan would be to host workshops focusing on grassland management and SAR

7. 2023 Community Appreciation Forum – March 27

- Agenda
 - The agenda was presented, and all logistics ready
 - Good numbers for registration
 - Have a professional videographer coming to record the session
- Fundraising opportunities
 - Planning to have:
 - 50:50 draw
 - MRWCC events raffles:
 - Canoe the Milk
 - Tour of the Milk Natural Area to be guided by William King
 - Fly the Milk – donated by John Ross
 - Silent Auction
 - Thanks to those who donated
 - Have some good donations

8. Working Well Workshop – March 30, 2023

- Hosting in conjunction with County of Warner
- An online workshop from 6:30 to 9:30pm

- Ads underway
- Have about 10 registrants
- Looking to have at least 15 for the meeting to take place

9. 2023 AGM – May 30

- Scheduled May 30
- Will be a business meeting only
- Hybrid meeting format (in person with virtual option)
- Business meeting -10 am to 12noon
- Lunch – 12 to 1pm
- Planning a board organizational meeting in the afternoon after the AGM
- Will be held at the County of Warner ASB meeting room
- Working on the agenda and other logistics

10. Summer tour planning

- Elected officials' headwaters tour
 - Scheduled for June 28
 - Should start planning promptly
 - Need to hire a small tour bus
 - Invited guests should include:
 - Provincial and Federal officials (MP – Harder, Motz)
 - MLAs or ministers
 - Municipal Councilors (3 seats per municipality. If more than 3 seats, the municipality must make their own transport arrangements)
 - MRWCC Board
 - A rep from Milk River Water Users Association

Action 1: Tim to present route and agenda for the tour as soon as possible

Action 2: An invitation letter signed by Chairman Ross to be sent out to elected officials when appropriate. Provincial invitation letters to be sent after the election

- Irrigation district expansion tour with OWC
 - Still in planning stages in conjunction with OWC
 - Planning to invite the 3 southern WPACs to participate
- Board Milk River Ridge tour
 - A more informal tour for the MRWCC Board members
 - In planning stages and date to be determined

11. Strategic Planning Session update

- Bylaws amendments
 - The amendments were reviewed

Motion 4: Ron McNeil moved to approve the amendments as presented to the MRWCC bylaws and to be presented for ratification at the 2023 AGM. Ross Ford seconded. Carried

- Indigenous Director update
 - Mike Bruised Head is interested in representing First Nations on the MRWCC Board
 - Mike is very busy, has a lot of experience and is knowledgeable in WPAC and FN relations and his contribution to the Board will be great

- Doug Singer is also interested. Doug has worked with the Balogs in the Milk River area and is very knowledgeable and familiar with our community and work
- Academia Director update
 - Still vacant
 - Have reached out to academic contacts but finding it's difficult for active instructors to make the time commitment
 - There was a suggestion to invite Claire Fitzpatrick from Lethbridge College

Action 3: Ben Ellert and Jollin to contact university/college researchers to seek membership interests

- Alternate Director (AD) draft policy
 - There are two Rural Municipal seats
 - Municipalities (and all sectors) should have an alternate appointed that would allow for all municipalities to participate – either as the representative (rep) or an alternate
 - While each sector has one voting seat – the alternate is encouraged to attend either in the absence of the rep or with the rep; in the absence of the rep, the alternate may participate in voting; when accompanied by the rep, the alternate is an observer
 - A draft Alternate Director Policy was presented, following a directive action to develop a Policy to enable Alternate positions for all sectors and increase participation by all sectors at the Board level
 - The Alternate position may facilitate the transition of Board seats should a current member retire their position. This supports Board succession planning and the valuable mentoring of potentially new member
 - The draft policy was reviewed

Motion 5: Peggy Losey moved to approve the Alternate Director (AD) policy. Will Lindeman seconded. Carried

- Aaron Domes
 - Aaron is leaving his role at the AEPA for a position at Alberta Culture as a Site Manager at Head Smashing Buffalo Jump as of April 17, and will no longer be able to be the AEPA rep. The department has appointed Cheryl Dash to be the interim rep
 - Aaron to be kept in the loop as he will be available if needed for other projects
 - The Board thanked Aaron for his contribution on the Board

12. Little Brown Myotis Bat stewardship project update

- Cory Olsen from AB Bat will be presenting at the CAF on March 27
- Plan to continue monitoring this summer
- Allison had her blood work to ensure she is still immune to rabies
- Waiting for weather to warm up to install the bat condo
- Final reporting is due April 30, 2023

13. 2023 SOW project update

- Production is delayed 3 to 4 months
- Still waiting for funding from Sask and MT at \$20,000 each
- Liz Saunders with Sandpiper Environmental Consultants is working on digitizing with an influence on Culture

Action 4: Tim to liaise with Sandi and get input from Mike Bruised Head

- Looking for Photos for the SOW contest

14. AB WPACs update

- Tim presented at the World Water Day event on Milk River watershed transboundary system
- Have a manager's meeting in April

15. Prairie Conservation and Endangered Species Conference report

- Thanks to all who participated
- Excellent presentations by Ron and Allison
- Those who participated, thanked the Board for the opportunity
- It was noted that there is a disconnect between producers and researchers or wildlife managers. Our producer council members felt there was more focus on preserving grasslands without weighing the value and integration of crop production, cultivation is essential and will continue to be an important landscape feature and more focus needs to be placed on bridging those groups and understanding how we they can work in tandem. The MRWCC's role in facilitating that discussion is essential
- There was an announcement that the McIntyre Ranch just north of Del Bonita has entered a Conservation Easement with the NCC. All employees on the ranch will continue in place and the property will continue as a working ranch operation

16. MRWCC Website revamp quote

- A proposal submitted by Chris Clark to redesign and redevelop the MRWCC website was reviewed, and it outlined:
 - proposed CMS software, process, timeline, and fees for the redesign
 - and development of the existing mrwcc.ca website and minimal ongoing yearly maintenance
 - Will use WordPress system which is more user friendly and most popular content management system
 - The launch date for the new sight will be around August 2023
 - An example of a WPAC website developed by Chris was presented
 - The total cost of the project is \$5,890

Motion 6: Ben Ellert moved to approve Chris Clark to redesign and redevelop the MRWCC website at the associated cost. Ken Brown seconded. Carried

17. Team updates

- Community Awareness and Involvement Team (CAIT)
 - Held a CAIT meeting on March 14
 - After the meeting, the team judged the poster/video contest and confirmed winners who will be announced during the award ceremony at the CAF on March 27
 - YRDs
 - Planned to have the camp further east of the watershed, but it did not workout
 - Scheduled for July 18-20 in Del Bonita at the Country Association Community Hall and the Campground on the Milk River North Fork
 - Advertising is underway
- Research and Monitoring Team (R&M Team)
 - Surface Water Quality Monitoring
 - Will maintain status quo for 2023 and continue collaborating with AEPA

- There is interest to investigate, and source track the Red Creek selenium exceedances.
- Starting 2023 water sampling on April 5th weather permitting
- Groundwater sampling
 - AHS management is on board with this year's groundwater sampling
 - Waiting to hear about chemical samples' analysis from labs by next month
 - AEPA sampling at 880 produced high E.coli counts. Working with AHS lab for source tracking work
 - MRWCC to confirm number of sites (approximately 40), and dates for sampling
- Water Supply and Management Team (WSM Team)
 - A meeting is being planned for this spring when more updates are available from the IJC St Mary/Milk River study
 - Preliminary data and results are now available from the Irrigation Remote Sensing project by the USGS Roy Sando, coordinating with the water user's association and EPA on how to communicate and confirm with community members, both CAF and a water users meeting are possible options to be determined
 - Will need to set priorities for next steps from the water shortages contingency planning work and preparation for the coming irrigation season
- Transboundary Watershed Team (TWT)
 - The Transboundary Grasslands Partnership workshop rotates back to Saskatchewan for 2023
 - Presentations are now available: <https://www.albertapcf.org/2021-transboundary-grasslands-partnership-workshop>

18. Round table discussions

- Warren:
 - Is selenium source attributed to coal mines?
 - It's difficult to tell, likely some natural sources with the shallow coal formations, there is also a history of pit flaring and industrial activity on the US side of the border; hopefully we can learn more
- Richard:
 - Attended a 3-day RMA conference in Edmonton, and met with Brian Ilnicki with Land Stewardship Center on Ecosystem Services. Producers feel there is not enough incentive at .50c/acre, so, Cypress ranchers did not show interest
- Joan:
 - There is distrust with the Federal gov coming from sage grouse order. Carbon tax or EGS could be better framed to benefit landowners
- Ross:
 - There is a disconnect. Not enough incentive and there is limited understanding of agricultural production from the producer's standpoint. It's not economical
 - Need to look at least \$30/acre to get any interest
- Ron:
 - Can Tim put on a presentation for venders during the April 26th Conservation Tools workshop? The presentation can be vetted by other Board members.
 - Yes, Tim will host a partners meeting prior to the public attending the CTS and present the key outcomes of the PLTW survey work and start that conversation

around fair value for EGS and how to actually improve landowner engagement with meaningful programs and incentives

19. Meeting adjournment

Motion 7: Ed Sloboda moved to adjourn the meeting at 4:31pm.

20. Next meeting date

- May 30, 2023, after the AGM

Signatures:

Chairman: _____

Secretary: _____