



Minutes
MRWCC Board Meeting
November 23, 2023 – 1:30 PM
Town of Milk River & via Zoom

Present:

In Person: Ed Sloboda, Peggy Losey, Will Lindeman, Scott MacCumber, Ron McNeil, Ross Ford, Warren Cunningham, Roger Houghton, Ben Ellert, Joan Hughson, Jon Boyle, Tyler Eresman, Mary Lupwayi

Virtually: Richard Oster, Jollin Charest, Tim Romanow, Cheryl Dash, Janna Casson

Absent: Kristen Dykstra, Ken Brown, William King, John Ross, Ken Miller

1. Welcome and Introductions

- Ron McNeil welcomed everyone to the meeting
- He brought the meeting to order at 1:34pm
- Introductions were conducted
 - He introduced Tyler Eresman, Wildlife and Outreach Technician

2. Approve Agenda

- Add corporate sponsorship as point 18 by Jon Boyle

Motion 1: Peggy Losey moved to approve the agenda as amended. Will Lindeman seconded. Carried

3. Minutes from September 21, 2023 Board meeting

- Add Cheryl Dash to the list of present board members and remove Aaron Domes
- Add Janna Casson to the list of present board members
- Trevor Murray's spelling should be corrected
- Include the possibility of holding the training at the Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump under point 9

Motion 2: Ross Ford moved to accept the minutes as amended. Warren Cunningham seconded. Carried

4. Financial update

- April to October 2023 Financial Statements
- Finances were reviewed

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

5. Approved Grants

- AEPA core grant update
 - Cashflow is going accordingly
 - Anticipating spending all deferred funding by end of fiscal year

- Will be submitting interim grant report which is due December 1, 2023
- Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk
 - Finished negotiations with HSP
 - Waiting to sign the contract agreement
 - Tyler Eresman gave a brief project update
- Other grants status
 - Pending

6. Producers Leading the Way Project Phase 2 update

- Municipal Grassland SAR Extension Workshops
 - Cardston County held the Succession Planning workshop on November 17th
 - Reg Shandro facilitated the workshop
 - It was well attended
 - Cypress County is planning a Succession Planning workshop sometime in winter
 - The Ag Service Board is planning to host a conference in January and Reg Shandro is on the agenda to present on Succession Planning
- Conservation Tools Workshop
 - Scheduled for January 26, 2024 at the Civic Centre
 - There will be a hot lunch provided
 - Contacting organizations that would set up booths at the showcase
 - Have started advertising the workshop. An ad was placed in the Meander newsletter and planning to post on the MRWCC website and Facebook
 - Will have 2 presentations at the beginning of workshop
 - Nikki Heim with Salts and Ross Adams with Alberta Publiclands in Lethbridge have been contacted to present
 - Thanks to Ron for helping with planning the workshop

7. Community Appreciation Forum – March 28, 2024

- Scheduled on March 28, 2024 at the Civic Centre
- Agenda:
 - In need of 5 speakers for the agenda
 - John and Tim will give a greeting and an introduction to the forum
 - Leta Pezderic with NCC and Ralph Thrall from the McIntyre Ranch will give a presentation on rangeland conservation from both the landowner and land trust perspective
 - William King will present on the 150-year history of the Mounties in the area
 - Wendy Sloboda will present on her fossil discoveries in the watershed
 - We had invited John Acorn to be a keynote speaker, but he had another commitment, so he declined
 - A presentation on the increased drought occurrences in Milk River and what we need to do to ensure future water sustainability was discussed
 - A few names for possible presenters for this topic were discussed

Action 1: Ben to contact Dr. Sandra Yanni a research scientist on energy and irrigation to see if she can contribute on the issue

- Need to keep searching for a good fit
- Fundraising
 - Silent auction
 - Soliciting articles
 - Will have other raffles
 - Last year the silent auction brought in over \$6,000. Thanks to all those who contributed
 - Still working on other logistics

8. Board Governance training

- Planning for February 2024
- Joint venture between MRWCC, SEAWA, and OWC
- Planning to take place in Lethbridge
- There was discussion about possibly holding the training at the Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump. But since it's a joint venture, we will consider what is good for the other WPACs
- Board Governance Training involves financial responsibility, risk management, accountability, and Board and staff roles
- Useful training to all board members and staff
- Alberta Culture is no longer hosting in person workshops, so we are looking for another facilitator
- Might need to get executive board members of the 3 WPACs involved to brainstorm on areas that we can collaborate to maximize resource management
- Will add a discussion on regional collaboration between the 3 WPACs in the afternoon
- SEAWA has a new Executive Director

9. 2023 SOW project update

- Sandi was invited to come and give an update, but she was already committed to another engagement. She plans to give an update at a future Board meeting
- Sandi has been getting information on the chapters but has been facing some challenges in that most of the information received is delivered in raw format with little processing; as the information is compiled and summarized, there has been a need for additional data mining and clarifications of the data; through summer it was difficult to reach many due to vacation time. Several people who worked on the past report are retired, and new connections have been sought
- The draft was supposed to be ready last May, but the challenges are causing the delays
- Anticipating first draft next March
- Waiting for financial commitment of \$20,000 each from MRWA in Montana and SODCAP in Saskatchewan for the project

Action 2: ask Sandi to provide a draft of what she has now to show the progress of where we are with the report so that MT and Sask can also have something tangible that they can see

Action 3: Tim to send invoices to both SODCAP and MRWA

10. Groundwater project update

- Sampling was completed in September

- Only 19 out of the 32 wells that were originally planned were sampled. Reasons for decrease in number of sampled wells:
 - Some of the wells were decommissioned
 - There was lack of interest in some landowners to participate in the project
 - Unable to reach some of the landowners
 - Alberta Health Services sampled Cypress wells while the MRWCC sampled the wells from Warner, Cardston, and Forty Mile
 - Looking for direction from the Board on how to proceed in the face of decreased participation

Action 4: Refer the matter to the Research and Monitoring Team as an order of discussion on how to proceed with the project

11. Transboundary Grasslands Partnership Workshop - December 6-7, 2023. Living Sky Casino, Swift Current, SK

- Up to 2 people can attend
- Ben and Tyler will attend in-person
- Ron will attend virtually

12. Fall/Winter Meander Newsletter update

- The newsletter had good information
- The meander newsletter has been distributed and if anyone needs a copy to see Mary

13. AB WPACs update

- WPACs summit Oct 12-13 Drumheller AB (Red Deer River Watershed Alliance host) – Ron McNeil
 - Hosted by Red Deer Watershed Alliance
 - Tim and Ron attended
 - Opportunity to create a forum for WPACs and GOA reps to showcase projects and partnership work and share successes
 - Excellent perspective from Sandra Cook on how WPACs can work and gave a presentation of her experience in Ontario
 - Drumheller was a good place to host the summit as they showcased the flood mitigation works for the City of Drumheller and Town of East Coulee and the impact it has on the community
 - Tim presented on the upcoming Drought Resiliency workshops delivered by WPACs
- Grassland Restoration Forum - Fall Information Session – November 16, 2023
 - Ron and Jon attended the session
 - Well attended by about 180 attendants. Their largest ever
 - The theme is seeds and restoration
 - Good presentations
 - Jon and Ron can give ideas on “the increased drought occurrences in Milk River and what we need to do to ensure future water sustainability” topic in March at the Community Appreciation Forum
 - Ron gave a brief speech to promotion the Conservation Tools workshop and later developed a list for organizations to invite

14. Municipal appointments to the MRWCC

- The following members retained their representatives to the MRWCC as follows:
 - Cardston County: Roger Houghton
 - County of Warner: Ross Ford
 - County of Forty Mile: Joan Hughson
 - Cypress County: Richard Oster
 - Town of Milk River: Peggy Losey
 - Village of Coutts: Scott MacCumber
- The Board thanked the members and their respective municipalities for their contributions

15. Jessica Olsen, summer student exit letter

- Jessica worked well last summer
- Her tenure was extended over the summer on part time basis to continue the work on the HSP project and education outreach
- The Council will be glad to have her back next summer if she is able to come back

16. Board Appreciation/Christmas dinner

- Scheduled for December 8
- Chairman Ross has offered to host the dinner at his residence in Lethbridge
- He also offered to pay for the catered dinner
- The Board is very appreciative of John's generosity and accepted his offer to host the dinner but felt that since it's a board appreciation dinner, the Council should reimburse the Ross' for the catering bill

Motion 4: Warren Cunningham moved that the Watershed pay the Catering bill for the Board Appreciation/Christmas dinner. Ross Ford seconded. Carried.

Action 5: Board members to let Mary know their availability for the dinner

17. 2024 Board Meeting and other important dates

- The following meeting dates were approved for 2024:
 - Board Meeting:
 - January 25
 - March 21
 - May 30 (after the AGM)
 - September 26
 - November 28
 - All Board meetings start at 1:30pm in the Milk River Town Office Council Chambers
 - The meetings are scheduled for the 4th Thursday of the stated month (unless stated otherwise)
 - Other Meeting Dates:
 - January 26, 2024 – Conservation Tools Workshop
 - February 2024 (date to be determined) – Board Governance Training
 - March 28, 2024 - Community Appreciation Forum
 - May 30, 2024 – 19th Annual General Meeting
 - October 24, 2024 – Strategic Action Plan review

18. Corporate Sponsorship

- Jon sent a very good sponsorship request letter, to International Petroleum Corporation (IPC) Agency, one of the biggest and active oil and gas companies in Southern Alberta
- IPC was the 2023 MRWCC Environmental Stewardship Award recipient
- Jon would like to follow up the request with a meeting with IPC and 2 other reps from the MRWCC to discuss the level of sponsorship
- Trevor Murray will also help reach out to Journey, another oil and gas company that is active in the watershed, for the MRWCC
- The letter sent is well written and can be used as a template for other sponsorship requests

Action 6: Jon, Tim and Mary can work on the proceedings regarding the meeting with IPC

19. Team updates were discussed as follows:

- Community Awareness and Involvement Team (CAIT)
 - A meeting was conducted on November 15, 2023:
 - Tyler gave a brief update on the youth engagement program
 - Caring for Our Watersheds program being advertised to schools
 - Tyler will be in touch with the teachers to promote the program
 - Ads for the Poster/Video contest to schools are being sent out. The theme this year is “How does the Milk River Impact Your Life?”
 - Most of the programs are advertised in the Meander newsletter
- Research and Monitoring Team (R&M Team)
 - Completed the 2023 surface water monitoring in October
 - All data including the EPA has been presented to Sandi for the completion of water quality monitoring report this spring
 - 2023 DataStream has been uploaded to the networks
 - The collaboration with EPA went very well this year
 - Planning another meeting in the new year
- Water Supply and Management Team (WSM Team)
 - Montana donated 1500-acre feet of water to the Milk River water users which saved the crop this year. They are putting the data on the donated water to keep track of water used
 - Looking at a couple of off stream storage sites. This work is preliminary
 - Milk River/Coutts are looking at a regional line from Warner to Coutts, but the project is proving to be costly and there are complexities with working through the Water Act such as inter basin transfer issues
 - The County of Warner met with the Minister of Agriculture and Minister of Environment to discuss water issues
 - The information on the donated water can be highlighted in the next Meander to show appreciation
 - IJC letter of intent meeting has redacted the donation and now states that the credited officers of the IJC approved the water as deficit
- Transboundary Watershed Team (TWT)

20. Round table discussions

- Ed Sloboda advised that another dinosaur discovered in the watershed has been named after the Sloboda family. Named *Gremlin slobodorum*. It was approximately 2 m. The species was a type of leptoceratopsid, a family of hornless, parrot-beaked plant-eating dinosaurs closely related to Triceratops. These dinosaurs differed from Triceratops and other ceratopsids in lacking horns on its face and only having a small frill extending from behind its head.

21. Other items

22. Gift for baby Tess

- Tim was excused for this discussion

Motion 5: Scott MacCumber moved to get a \$100 gift card from Walmart for Baby Tess. Ross Seconded. Carried.

23. Meeting adjournment

Motion 6: Ed Sloboda moved to adjourn the meeting at 4:20pm.

24. Next meeting date

- January 25th, 2023

Signatures:

Chairman: _____

Secretary: _____