



Minutes
MRWCC Board Meeting
November 25, 2021 – 1:30 PM

Present:

John Ross, Ken Miller, Aaron Domes, Brian Hills, William King, Scott MacCumber, Ron McNeil, Lorraine Nicol, Warren Cunningham, Ben Ellert, Kristen Dykstra, Peggy Losey, Tim Romanow, Mary Lupwayi

Absent:

Ed Sloboda, Joan Hughson, Ken Brown, Will Lindeman, Ross Ford

1. Welcome and introductions

- John Ross welcomed everyone to the zoom meeting
- He brought the meeting to order at 1:33pm
- Introductions were conducted and Peggy Losey was introduced as the newly appointed rep for the Town of Milk River

2. Approve Agenda

Motion: Lorraine Nicol moved to approve the agenda. Brian Hills seconded. **Carried**

3. Minutes from September 23, 2021 meeting

- The following amendments were noted:
 - Part 5, bullet 6 should read:
 - Directly improved the management of over 2300 head of livestock
 - Part 5 - 2021-22 Myotis bat stewardship project - Habitat Stewardship Program (HSP) should read:
 - Approved for \$60,000 grant funding through the SAR stewardship program for SAR to be used for the myotis bat project
 - Some reorganizing of sentences was requested
 - Under Science Forum it should read:
 - November 2021 meeting is postponed until fall 2022
 - Sherburne should be spelt correctly

Motion: Ron McNeil moved to accept the minutes as amended. Scott MacCumber seconded. **Carried**

4. Financial update

- September and October 2021 Financial Statements

Motion: Lorraine Nicol moved to accept the financial statements as presented. Peggy Losey seconded. **Carried**

5. Milk River Water Contingency Plan project update

- The project is ongoing
- The project was awarded to WaterSMART Solutions Ltd.
- Just finalized interviews with water users and managers
- Summarizing the report based on the outcomes of the interviews from the 2020 water shortage scenario. The summary to be expected in a month
- Thanks to all those who contributed through interviews
- Final report to be completed before the fiscal year

Action: Tim to schedule a committee meeting with WaterSMART to give an update on the project

6. Producers leading the way project update

- Producer surveys are live online until January 3rd
- Thanks to the project committee for all the feedback and input in drafting interview questions
- Currently up to 20 responses on the survey
- Rural municipalities within the watershed are helping with sending the surveys to target producers
- The idea behind the project is to provide a menu of native grassland stewardship or conservation incentives and have producers across the watershed identify what is of interest or applicable to their operations and what factors support successful uptake for future programs.
- Second stage is to have community outreach sessions to increase survey participation and ensure messaging is correct for project reporting.

Action: Need to schedule a project committee meeting in January for an update

Action: Tim to send a template of the survey to all Board members

7. Little Brown Myotis Bat stewardship project update

- Staffing update

- The job posting for the position is live online, sent to MRWCC membership, Job boards, and some Universities/Colleges. Closing date is December 3rd
- Organizing the bat project in winter, surveys in spring and installation of bat boxes and condos to be done in the next fiscal year

8. 2023 SOW project update

- Contracted to Palliser Environmental Services Ltd.
- Had a zoom meeting with the representatives of the Transboundary partners in Montana and Saskatchewan
- There is support for the TOR and the 2023 SOW project from the transboundary partners as well as financial

Action: Host a Research and Monitoring Team meeting in January 2022 at the latest with the SOW as major component of the meeting and invite the transboundary partners to attend this meeting

- 2022 will be a busy year with data collection for the SOW

9. Municipal Appointments on the MRWCC Board

- At their respective organizational meeting, the following members were appointed to represent the municipalities on the MRWCC Board:
 - Town of Milk River – Peggy Losey
 - Village of Coutts – Scott MacCumber
 - County of Warner – Ross Ford and Shawn Rodgers as alternate
 - County of Forty Mile – Joan Hughson
 - We also received a letter from Cardston County that Roger Houghton would represent the County as a member
- There was a discussion to have members from other municipalities in the watershed that are currently not represented on the Board to also be invited as alternates to ensure that all municipalities within the watershed have fair representation

Action: Tim to send letters to Cardston County and Cypress County to extend invitation to request representation on the MRWCC Board

10. 2022 AGM

- Scheduled for May 26, 2022
- The following seats will be open in 2022
 - Non-Government Organization - x2 (Environmental and General)
 - Agriculture – Farmer

- Agriculture – Rancher
- Water Users
- Municipal District/County x2
- Provincial Government x2 (one must be Alberta Environment and Parks)
- Health
- Commercial/Industrial (Currently vacant)
- First Nations (Currently vacant)
- The municipalities were thanked for their support and involvement on the Board

11. Proposed 2022 Board meeting dates

- Need to try for hybrid meeting during the next Board meeting if possible
- The following dates were approved as the 2022 Board meeting dates
 - January 27
 - March 24
 - May 26 (after the AGM)
 - September 22
 - November 24

All Board meetings start at 1:30pm in the Milk River Town Office Council Chambers or through Zoom depending on Covid19 restrictions imposed at the time. The meetings are scheduled on the 4th Thursday of the stated month (unless stated otherwise)

Motion: Ron McNeil moved to adopt the dates as the 2022 Board meeting dates. Lorraine Nicol seconded. **Carried.**

12. Strategic planning session

- Due to Covid19 restriction, we have been unable to host the retreat for the long-term strategic planning session. Last year there was a motion to update the past strategic plan to accommodate 2021/22 fiscal year planning

Motion: Ron McNeil moved to defer the 2022/23 Strategic planning session and in lieu of that incorporate an annual plan during the January 27th Board meeting. Ben Ellert seconded. **Carried.**

13. Working Well Workshop

- Hosting the virtual workshop in conjunction with the County of Warner
- Scheduled for December 2, 2021 at 6:30pm
- There are only 13 registrants to date. Minimum of 20 registrants are required in order for the workshop to proceed

- Requesting those who would like to register to do so as soon as possible

14. Virtual WPAC Summit highlights and AB WPACs notes

- It was excellent that the summit was available virtually
- There were four 2-hour sessions on 4 different days
- Good quality speakers
- There was some discussion on the topic of rebranding WPACs, that it was not meant to change the relationship with GOA but to strengthen the public and outreach connection
- There is an in person WPAC Managers meeting next week. One of the discussions will involve reviewing some of the summit presentations including the rebranding topic so that managers can bring back a concrete proposal to their respective Councils for review and feedback

Action: Tim to provide a link for the WPAC Summit presentations to Board members

15. Board Appreciation Christmas Dinner

- The executive board proposed to have an appreciation dinner at Tony Roma in Lethbridge ensuring that all Covid19 restriction protocols are followed. Those who are not comfortable attending will be given a gift certificate to be used at their discretion and/or plan a barbeque in summer if covid19 conditions improve
- There was a discussion on the comfort level of people attending the dinner considering the current Covid19 status
- The appreciation dinner will be on December 6 at 6pm at Tony Roma in Lethbridge. Those who are comfortable attending should register their names with Mary for booking logistics
- The facility follows all covid19 health protocols such as proof of vaccination, distance, and face masks

16. Tim's scheduled vacation days Jan-March

- Tim presented his vacation plan for 2021/22 fiscal year
- He will be taking the following days in lieu of his annual holiday:
 - Jan 12, 19, 26
 - Feb 2, 9, 16
 - Mar 2, 9, 16, 23, 30
 - April 6, 13
- On these days, please contact Mary if required
- The Board appreciated Tim's transparency

17. Ongoing Covid: events and operational update

- The staff is currently working 2 days a week in the Milk River office. Hoping to resume to 3 days a week in January if covid restrictions are lifted

18. Team updates

a) Community Awareness and Involvement Team (CAIT)

Youth Engagement Program

- School programs
 - Continuing to promote Caring for Our Watersheds Program through direct emails to local schools and social media
- YRDs
 - Planning for 2022 camp. Format will depend on Covid19 restrictions
 - The \$4,000 grant from The Rangeland Sustainability Program is a 2-year grant, will be used for the 2022 camp activities
 - There is a turnover on the committee members as a number of them have left the area, a project planning meeting will be held in December
- From the Field Virtual Field Trip Project in collaboration with OWC
 - Working with OWC to promote the program
 - The new Wildlife outreach technician will lead completion of the project
 - Highlight two producers from each WPAC who are doing things for the environment especially SAR
 - Planning to develop a field video of their operation and how it benefits the wildlife to be used for teachers for class presentation

Upcoming events

- Working Well Workshop
 - December 2, 2021 at 6:30pm
- Community Appreciation Forum
 - Date has been set for March 17, 2022, but will depend on Covid-19 restriction status

Community Awards Programs

- Heritage Tree Program
- Environmental Stewardship Awards Program
 - Have started advertising for both programs
 - Nomination deadline is February 11, 2022

Meander Newsletter

- 2021 Fall/Winter Newsletter
 - Articles have been submitted for production
 - Will be ready for distribution November 26, 2021

b) Research and Monitoring Team (R&M Team)

➤ *Water Quality Monitoring Program*

- 2021 Water Monitoring along the Milk River sites has now wrapped up for the season
- Palliser Environmental Services Ltd is working to produce the Water Quality report which will be available through the MRWCC website in the next year
- The Council is working to produce a 15-year long-term water quality trend report. Watch out for the report in the coming year at www.mrwcc.ca
- The 2021 surface water quality data has been added and uploaded online and can now be viewed and downloaded on DataStream, an open-access platform for water quality data, with the aim of promoting knowledge sharing and advancing collaborative water stewardship. The data can be accessed on the link below: <https://doi.org/10.25976/33tj-bs38>
- Red Creek report is now published and can be accessed on the website at https://www.mrwcc.ca/files/4516/3699/4549/RedCreek-WQReport_Final_November_4_2021.pdf

Action: Team meeting to be planned in January, 2022

c) Water Supply and Management Team (WSM Team)

➤ *Milk River Water Contingency Plan for Water Shortage Periods*

- WaterSMART Solutions Ltd. finalized interviews for the plan. Planning a meeting to update the project committee on the project progress
 - Rain, the WaterSMART project leader, anticipates having drafts of the key report requirements available in December
 - \$2 million funding for an IJC review is in place. 4 years to completion
- ### ➤ *100 million infrastructure funding allocated to the Milk River project and US Bureau of Reclamation*
- November 6, 2021 as part of the Federal Infrastructure bill the St. Mary/Milk River project will receive \$100 million in funding
 - Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) recently updated cost for the Diversion structure; construction cost will be \$63 million including fish passage and non-construction cost are 30% of that, making the diversion structure \$82 million alone. The balance of the 100 million will likely be allocated to maintenance and repair of Halls Coulee syphons and canal
 - It may take the BOR until the winter of 2024 to finish the design of the diversion and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis to allow for construction on the diversion dam by spring of 2024
 - There is a buy American clause for all construction materials so despite close proximity to aggregate and concrete in Whiskey Gap/Cardston Alberta it is likely no economic activity will occur in Alberta
 - '60 day to cash' funding, no additional application is required for the BOR

- Removal of the 75% requirement of matching funds from Irrigators along the Montana Hi-Line

Action: Tim to circulate the press release on the \$100 million infrastructure funding to the Board

- The MRWUA are still proceeding with the idea that they may be able to address their own water shortage situation with a small off stream tributary reservoir. Updates will be provided as they develop

d) Transboundary Watershed Team (TWT)

- *The TGP virtual workshop was hosted online in October*
 - For those that missed it or those that need to view the sessions again they are recorded and can be found at:
<https://www.albertapcf.org/about-prairies/transboundary-grasslands>
 - The presentations were impressive and highly relevant to the Producers Leading the Way project
- *PCF Connecting Corridors project update*
 - PCF has contracted a company to do a data portal of the many layers of data related to connecting corridors within different organizations including government and municipalities. The data is more compatible for users
 - The PCF will be holding its' Annual General Meeting on January 20th, 2022. Mark this date in your calendars, registration information will be sent out soon

19. Round table discussions

- Lorraine:
 - The Alberta Irrigation Districts Association have commissioned Brent Patterson Group to update the economic value of irrigation study. The first study was in 2015 and the new update is the additional 5 years of data. More information can be obtained at: <http://www.albertairrigation.ca/>
- Brian:
 - Palliser Airshed Society in Medicine Hat has recently assisted in the installation of the air monitor sensors in Milk River. The sensors can view data near real time online

Action: Brian to forward a link of the air monitor data

- Premier Kenney announced a series of Parliamentary Secretaries and one of those is the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Environment and Parks Nathan Neudorf who is the Parliamentary Secretary for Water Stewardship. In the press release, it states that his role is to focus on engaging with stakeholders and public on

ways to protect source water, improving monitoring and reporting and strengthening water stewardship

➤ Ron:

- There was a well written article by Nathan Neudorf that was published in several news papers including the Lethbridge Herald about water management related to WPACs and the importance of community involvement and engagement
- Would like to thank Brian for providing a link to the salinity exceedances in the winter time in Milk River which has a good value for the 2023 SOW. The executive summary may not be consistent with some of the discussions
- There was a request to bring this issue to the Research and Monitoring (RandM)Team Meeting

Action: Include this topic in the next RandM meeting during the SOW discussions

➤ Aaron:

- Has accepted a new position and will be leaving Alberta Parks after Christmas

➤ John:

- Congratulated Aaron on the new position and thanked him for his service on the Board
- Will need to find a replacement from the WOSPP

➤ Tim:

- Ed Sloboda would like to invite those interested to visit Walley Beach. Once the date is confirmed a notice will be sent to the board

20. Other items

21. Meeting adjournment

Motion: Warren Cunningham moved to adjourn the meeting at 3:56pm.

22. Next meeting date

- January 27, 2022

Signatures:

Chairman: _____

Secretary: _____