



Minutes
MRWCC Board Meeting
September 23, 2025 – 7:15 to 9:30 PM
Yogo Inn, Lewistown, MT

Present:

In-Person: John Ross, Ron McNeil, Ken Brown, Peggy Losey, Joan Hughson, Tyler Eresman, Jessica Olsen, Tim Romanow, Mary Lupwayi

Virtually: Cheryl Dash, Ben Ellert, Jollin Charest, Cam Goater, Warren Cunningham

Absent:

Darcy Wills, Mike Bruised Head, Ross Ford, William King, Ed Sloboda, Will Lindeman, Scott MacCumber, Jon Boyle, Roger Houghton, Ken Miller, Richard Oster

1. Welcome and Introductions

- Chairman John Ross welcomed everyone to the meeting
- He brought the meeting to order at 7:24 pm
- Introductions were conducted to introduce Cam to the Board members and staff

2. Approve Agenda

Motion 1: Ken Brown moved to approve the agenda as presented. Ben Ellert seconded. Carried

3. Minutes from May 29, 2025 Board meeting

Motion 2: Peggy Losey moved to accept the minutes as presented. Joan Houghton seconded. Carried

4. Financial update

- Since this was a late evening meeting, for expedience and for fear that there might not be quorum the financial updates were tabled for discussion and approval at the November 20th Board meeting

5. Grants

- AEP Core grant update – cashflow forecast
 - Forecast looks positive
 - Budget on track for this 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 - Declined*
 - *Pollinators- Growing Our Understanding of Native Pollinators and Their Habitats in the Milk River Watershed – Declined*
 - *ECCC Budget reductions resulted in fewer projects being funded, a new call for proposals will likely be available after a Minister Mandate letter is provided*

- Cows and Fish – MRWCC CNFASAR – Little Fish, Big Stewardship Project
 - Under budget for stewardship projects, preparing a final call for producer projects
 - To be spent by March 31st 2026
 - Looking for 2 or 3 more producer projects, 7 currently underway for this fiscal
- Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program Grant Application - Water Conservation and Metering project – Approved
 - We received \$190,000
 - \$10,000 has been spent on administration
 - \$180,000 has not been spent since project implementation has been delayed
 - Meeting with Milk River Water Users Association next week to discuss way forward
 - There was a discussion to ask for the project extension
 - Intern report is due in December

Action 1: Tim to look into requesting for project extension due to the diversion failure

- Canada Summer Jobs
 - Approved and received \$4,200 which has been used for part of Jessica's wages
- AB Ecotrust Grant – Pending
 - Applied for \$10,000
 - For updating youth and school programs

6. Little Fish, Big Stewardship Project update

- Looking for more producer projects
- Four of the data loggers have been collected and four will be left for winter data collection
- Three river screens were purchased with one of them still needing a home. This is done at 50/50 co-share
- Fish surveys and water sampling completed with positive results
- Videos of the fish surveys and water sampling projects have been taken that will be shared on the networks to promote the project
- DFO putting together an opportunity to do additional recovery monitoring, Tyler and Tim will be having a meeting with them in the next few weeks to discuss interest
- Reporting to be done by February and submitted by the end of the fiscal year

7. Ecosystems Services Grant application opportunity

- Feedback from R&M Team and possible application
 - The Ecosystem Services Grant Program is being piloted for 2025-26 and is intended to provide opportunities for landowners to conserve high quality natural assets that are at high risk of conversion or in areas of high conservation priority
 - Through this program, the Alberta government gives landowners the opportunity to participate in conservation programs without requiring a perpetual agreement on their land. The Ecosystem Services Grant Program is administered by Environment and Protected Areas, projects need to provide a producer payment for ES over the 4 year term of the pilot projects

Motion 3: Peggy Losey moved that MRWCC submit a grant proposal for the Ecosystems Services Grant. Ron Seconded. Carried.

8. WPAC Summit and Forum update

- The summit that was supposed to be hosted in Waterton by OWC has been postponed to October 28th and 29th as a meeting for managers, staff, and limited Board members to flash out ideas to align with the new grant cycle
- Agenda pending, will be a workshop format flushing out changes needed to the Provincial Mandates and Roles agreement with WPACs
- Actual Summit postponed indefinitely

9. Youth Engagement Programs update

- Programs are ongoing

10. Visitor Information Centre update

- The County of Warner has been assisting the Town of Milk River in the negotiations to purchase the property and had initially put in a \$300,000 offer which was declined, and the property has gone to formal open sale
- It has now been listed for \$538,000
- There is need for the municipalities to get a new property evaluation
- The idea was for MRWCC to help with the cost using the Council's non-restricted funds and assume a 5-year lease agreement as facility tenant and operator
- A decision needs to be made December for an agreement to put together a campaign to fundraise towards the cost of purchasing the Centre
- On hold until new Town Council sits after municipal election

11. Past Events

- Annual General Meeting
 - Went well, continue with location and format for 2026
- Hike Tour
 - Was successful, Thank you to William King, Tyler, and Jessica for arrangements and hosting
- Headwaters Tour
 - Well received, Look into hosting an annual tour of the headwaters and infrastructure for community members and municipal leadership/managers
- LFBS Project Demo Tour and BBQ
 - Low attendance due to poor weather and may be timing of the tour, overall Informative

12. Upcoming Events:

- MRWCC Strategic Planning Session update
 - Milk River Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP)
 - To be discussed during the Strategic Planning Session
- 2025 Community Appreciation Forum – October 8, 2025
 - Working on registration and invitations
 - Inviting all past Board members and staff available
 - Fundraising
 - Silent Auction

- Soliciting for donations
- Raffles
 - Applied for a raffle license and it was denied
- Working on other logistics
- Hall setup
 - Looking for volunteers to help with setting up the hall

13. Meander Newsletter

- Call for topics or articles
- Deadline to receive articles – November 3, 2025
- Ready for distribution November 28, 2025

Discussion:

- Canada Post is no longer distributing flyers and mailout services. It will be costly to mail newsletter to residents individually, so we will no longer be able to mass-produce printed copies. Distribution will be done online by posting on the website, mailing out to members or by dropping off a limited number of printed copies of the newsletter at certain locations for distribution

Action 2: Mary to investigate the minimum Taber Times can produce and the cost

14. Team updates:

- Community Awareness and Involvement Team (CAIT)
- Research and Monitoring Team (R&M Team)
- Water Supply and Management Team (WSM Team)
 - Water availability update
 - St Mary and Halls Coulee Siphon replacement update
- Transboundary Watershed Team (TWT)
 - Transboundary Grasslands Partnership Annual Workshop
 - November 5-6, 2025
 - Milk River, Alberta or virtual

15. Staffing changes

- Planning to divide the position into two positions:
 - Admin Assistant/Bookkeeping - to be hired
 - Program Coordinator – Jessica to take over the position
 - Jessica will be going on maternity leave in February
 - Working through the issues of staffing changes
- A hiring committee is comprised of the following:
 - Tim Romanow, Mary Lupwayi, Warren Cunningham, Will Lindeman, and Peggy Losey
 - Hiring to be done end of November to give ample time for training with Mary
 - Working on the job description for the positions and job ad

16. Round table discussions

17. Meeting adjournment

Motion 4: Ken Brown moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:06 pm.

18. Next meeting date

- November 20, 2025

Signatures:

Chairman: _____

Secretary: _____