

ALBERTA WATER COUNCIL

MEETING #49

November 8, 2018

McDougall Centre, Calgary, Alberta

Executive Summary

As is customary for the fall meeting, board members attended a dinner the previous evening to recognize retiring directors and alternates.

A number of administrative items were addressed. Tanya Thorn and Jay White were selected by the Government sector group and the Non-Government Organizations sector group respectively as their executive vice presidents for two-year terms. The board approved the 2019 Operational Plan, the 2019 core operating budget, the 2019-2021 Business Plan, and the updated Process Guidelines. The following board meeting dates for 2019 were also approved: February 28 and November 8 in Edmonton, and June 25 in Calgary.

The board received updates from two project teams: Building Resiliency to Multi-Year Drought, and Protecting Sources of Drinking Water in Alberta. Both teams are making good progress and are on track to complete their work in 2019 as planned. There was also agreement to reconvene the *Water for Life* Implementation Review Committee, which is expected to begin its work in January. Pending receipt of statements of opportunity, the Council will launch an additional project later in 2019.

The GoA gave an in-depth presentation on its cross-ministry coordination and how advice and recommendations are considered. Mike Nemeth with Alberta WaterSMART Solutions, presented a summary of a recently completed project entitled Sustainable Water Management in the Athabasca River Basin Initiative. The full report is available online at <https://albertawater.com/athabasca-river-basin-initiative>. The project looked at surface water quantity, land use changes, and climatic change in the basin, and involved a wide variety of stakeholders.

The Council's Indigenous engagement activities were briefly discussed by the board, with members noting the need for careful thought and planning as this work evolves.

Summary of Discussion

Tanya Thorn convened the board meeting at 9:00 a.m. She thanked the Canadian Fuels Association for hosting the reception last night, then reviewed logistics and safety procedures for the venue. Those present introduced themselves.

1 Administration

1.1 Welcome, Review Health and Safety, Approve Agenda

The Chair reviewed the agenda, proposing that the GoA update be distributed after the meeting by email with an opportunity for board members to submit any questions to Rick Blackwood; item 8 would replace item 2 on the agenda. Rick advised that, in future, GoA will send the update out with the briefing package and he will respond to questions at the meeting. The revised agenda was approved by consensus.

1.2 Action Items from Last Meeting

There were no administrative action items from the last meeting.

1.3 Summary Report from June 14, 2018 Meeting

Rick Blackwood addressed the two questions to GoA that arose at the last meeting under item 9, New or Other Business. The summary report was approved by consensus.

Decision 49.1: The summary report for the June 14, 2018 meeting was adopted by consensus and will be posted to the website.

1.4 Appointment of Executive Officers

Tanya Thorn has been selected by the Government sector group as its executive vice president and Jay White was selected by the Non-Government Organizations sector group as its executive vice president, each for a two-year term.

1.5 Executive Director's Report

Andre Asselin directed the board to his report in the briefing package, with particular reference to recent staffing changes, including the hiring of Christa Edwards as the new administrative support person.

1.6 Proposed 2019 Core Operating Budget

The executive committee reviewed the proposed 2019 core operating budget, as presented in the briefing package, and is comfortable it will meet AWC needs for 2019. The budget reflects an expectation of a full workload, including another project, and a full staff load. Andre briefly reviewed each section of the core budget.

Decision 49.2: The board approved the proposed 2019 core operating budget.

1.7 Meeting Dates for 2019

The executive committee proposed that the board again meet three times in the year, alternating between Calgary and Edmonton, as indicated in the briefing package. The decision to go to three meetings per year was made a number of years ago, in part to give

project teams more time between board meetings to advance their work. Board attendance has fluctuated, it is difficult to find dates that work for everyone, and it is common for board members to have to cancel at the last minute. With the amalgamation with CASA, board meetings will need to be well-coordinated to ensure an ongoing high level of support from staff. The executive proposed the use of video conferencing with one location in Calgary and one in Edmonton, and staff are investigating this approach. A trial run will be done before holding a board meeting using this technology.

Decision 49.3: The board approved the meeting dates as presented: February 28 and November 8 in Edmonton, and June 25 in Calgary.

1.8 2018 Business Plan

The 2019-2021 Business Plan was prepared following the June strategic planning workshop, and board members had two opportunities to provide input. Those comments are reflected in the current draft, which the executive has reviewed and recommends be approved.

Decision 49.4: The board approved the draft 2019-2021 Business Plan by consensus.

1.9 2018 Process Guidelines

The AWC Process Guidelines are updated every three years, with staff preparing a first draft. For this review, the board had two opportunities for input. The executive committee had some additional suggestions regarding anti-harassment and bullying, as well as impairment related to the now-legal use of marijuana. These items are already part of the employee handbook, and legal advice was for the Council to consider preparing a Code of Conduct to address these and other items. Andre will continue to work with the lawyers on this matter and will keep the executive and board informed.

With respect to section 3.2.3 regarding suspension or expulsion of members from the Council, board members agreed a more appropriate procedure would be for the executive director to review the situation then make a recommendation to the executive committee, which would bring a recommendation to the board.

Decision 49.5: With the amendment to section 3.2.3, the Process Guidelines were approved by consensus.

1.10 Process to Develop Performance Measures

New performance measures are needed to align with the new business plan and board members were referred to the proposal in the briefing package. There will be opportunities for board input, and the intent is to bring draft performance measures to the executive meeting in January and to the board at the February 2019 meeting. Different approaches can be taken, and AWC performance measures should reflect the Council's activities and mandate.

Decision 49.6: The proposed process for developing new performance measures was approved as presented.

2 Information Presentation on the GoA's Cross-Ministry Coordination and How Advice and Recommendations are Considered

Rick Blackwood presented an overview on GoA cross-ministry coordination and the process for considering advice and recommendations. Three GoA committees support the AWC's work: the GoA and Provincial Authorities Committee, the Water for Life Cross-Ministry Steering Committee, and AEP's Water Committee. With reference to the slides that were provided to board members, he described the membership, governance, and mandate for each committee. He also described the complex decision-making process and how recommendations inform policy. The Auditor General has advised of the need to ensure outcomes for a specific expenditure of time and resources, so that is a key focus. The GoA is the recipient of many AWC recommendations, but other options should always be considered since government capacity is limited. The input AEP receives from the AWC is valuable and AEP wants to ensure that the Council is informed of the issues on which the department needs help. The legislative agenda is very focused and full for this fiscal year with priorities including regulatory certainty with strong environmental performance and overall competitiveness in the larger global marketplace, and health and education.

Discussion

Q: We are inviting First Nations to our table but we don't really know what this means. Direction from the GoA would be helpful in terms of determining the outcome and perspective we are seeking.

Rick Blackwood (RB): AWC is not legally required to consult with Indigenous groups; that is a Crown requirement. The GoA is not asking the Council to engage with First Nations. The executive committee has discussed Indigenous engagement and agreed the idea is laudable but has many challenges. No single First Nation speaks for all. Even if we were to work with a Treaty organization, they will also say they speak for that entity but not for individual Nations. If AWC wants to engage in a thoughtful way, we could spend our entire budget very quickly and barely scratch the surface. We need to be careful not to overcommit. If we build expectations, and can't fulfill them, trust will be violated. Staff have done good work to date, but this needs very careful thought and we need to define clear outcomes. The process will evolve at the speed with which those who want to engage with us are comfortable. AWC has identified seats for First Nations and they are not filled, so this could be a remnant of an old process.

Q: If a team member from the GoA agrees to a recommendation that goes forward from the AWC, how does it move forward in the GoA?

RB: That person would connect with the executive director of the Water Policy branch in AEP and with the ADM. A lot of work does eventually make it up to the DM level, but can still be set aside at the political level for many different reasons (e.g., timing, shifting political landscape).

3 Building Resiliency to Multi-Year Drought Project Update

Margo Redelback and Susanna Bruneau presented background, progress to date, and next steps for the team. They summarized progress on each of the team's three objectives. For objective 1, the team completed a literature review and conducted 13 interviews with individuals knowledgeable about multi-year drought. The main outcome from this work was development of adaptation strategies. For objective 2, team has inventoried existing tools and resources relevant to Alberta, including case studies. Objective 3 entails identifying and

increasing awareness of roles and responsibilities for municipalities. Work will continue in the coming months and the team expects to complete the project by November 2019 with the draft guide and results from the workshop ready in June.

The following points emerged in discussion of this project:

- The concepts of environmental flow and instream flow needs will be considered in the municipal toolkit.
- The team is focusing its work on multi-year droughts as not much work has been done in this area in Alberta. Although the tools to address the different types of drought and their impacts are different, the toolkit will be customizable depending on resources and geographic location, and this aspect could come out in work by municipalities as they start to work with the guide.
- The team has discussed climate change and its potential impacts, but has not specifically looked at things like cost-benefit studies that were done in the past to help assess water storage options. These studies could look different now in light of climate change impacts.
- The tools will include a combination of approaches. The point is to get municipalities to think about things they could do ahead of time to get funding in place, educate residents regarding different scenarios, etc.
- A lot of the focus is on municipalities. We also need to think about everyone who is on a water system so we need tools that show how to work together on regional basis.
- It might be interesting to look at worst-case studies as examples to avoid.

4 Protecting Sources of Drinking Water in Alberta Project Team Update

Mike Christensen and Phil Boehme provided an update on the work of the Protecting Alberta's Sources of Water project team. They presented information on the project's background including the five objectives, progress and findings, and next steps, noting the team expects to wrap up in October 2019. They summarized results to date on the inventory of water treatment plants in Alberta, survey and questionnaire results, and findings from the literature review. Work is underway on the jurisdictional scan and the guidance document. Next steps are to work with the consultant to complete the scan; further analyze data collected to identify source water protection successes, gaps, barriers, redundancies, and lessons learned; and finalize the draft guidance document.

The following points emerged in discussion of this project:

- The title was changed slightly from the original terms of reference to ensure a focus on protecting drinking water sources as a realistic and manageable piece of work.
 - The formal title is the same, we abbreviated it and that may be causing confusion. We need to ensure we are using the full title in future.
- Some sectors see source water protection as much bigger than drinking water, and that would affect the best management practices that might be proposed. Scope creep might make it hard to reach consensus at the end.
 - The team wants to stay focused on protecting drinking water sources, starting at the local level, and helping municipalities and other interested groups look more broadly. We want to give guidance and tools to help them understand the risks and what they can do to accurately assess those risks and respond.
- The interface between land and water is key and complex. We want to make sure that municipalities and service providers understand how complex the dynamic is.

- Survey results for individuals could potentially be sorted geographically to see if perceptions vary by location.
- Private and public water sources may have similar risks, but management options will be different, and the team will need to consider how to provide information for the different audiences.
- Survey perspectives will differ depending on whether the respondent is a water user or a service provider.

Board members with more detailed feedback or who want more specific information about this work were encouraged to contact the project manager.

5 Water for Life Implementation Review Committee

The *Water for Life* Implementation Review (WFLIR) is part of the Council's ongoing efforts to steward the *Water for Life* Strategy. The last review was published in 2017 and the committee that conducted the previous review noted the need to revisit certain aspects of the approach that the Council has been using. Since then, the new Business Plan has updated the strategies associated with the WFLIR, which includes the need for suitable performance measures. Given the additional work that the next WFLIR Committee will need to take on, it is prudent to establish a new group at this time to give the board an opportunity to provide direction to the committee.

Decision 49.7: The board agreed by consensus to reconvene the Water for Life Implementation Review Committee.

6 2019 Operational Plan

Andre Asselin gave a short presentation on the 2019 Operational Plan, summarizing current project team work as well as other work that happens in the background to support the board and the organization. Opportunities for new work in 2019 were also noted. Another group will begin in January and new projects will be sought in the spring. It was requested that the title for the Source Water Protection Project Team should be changed to reflect the project's approved name.

Decision 49.8: The board approved the 2019 Operational Plan by consensus.

Keith Murray took the chair.

7 Information Presentation on a WaterSMART Solutions Project

Mike Nemeth, Director of Environment and Sustainability with Alberta WaterSMART Solutions, gave a presentation on a recent project entitled Sustainable Water Management in the Athabasca River Basin (ARB) Initiative. The full report is available online at <https://albertawater.com/athabasca-river-basin-initiative>. Mike described the scope of the project, which looked at surface water quantity, land use changes, and climatic change in the basin, and involved a wide variety of stakeholders. The goal was to create an ARB roadmap for sustainable water management using the Athabasca Integrated River Model (AIRM). The group identified ten key water challenges to focus on, developed performance measures to show the magnitude and direction of change; and identified potential opportunities and strategies that could be modelled. Twelve strategies were examined in more detail (e.g.,

water conservation, on-stream storage) identifying benefits and trade-offs, and implementation challenges and potential actions. Six high level recommendations resulted from the ARB initiative and the hope is to expand this work to the whole Slave Basin.

Discussion

Q: How much did the project cost and how long did it take to do the work?

Mike Nemeth (MN): This phase was \$1.5-million and took about 18 months. A lot of the funds were spent on engagement.

Comment: Over eight meetings, the working group of more than 30 people representing different groups was very engaged. It was quite exciting to see this level of involvement and diversity of people.

Q: Can you talk about the plans to expand to the Slave Basin?

MN: In partnership with a WPAC, we have submitted a proposal to Alberta Innovates for that work. The federal government may also get involved.

Q: You've created a baseline so we can see the impact of future changes, but how do you ensure this work doesn't get lost and continues to benefit the watershed?

MN: We've done a lot of work in the South Saskatchewan River Basin and some of that has been extended. But it's a good question – who should do it? It could be government, WPACs or others and we would love to have these discussions. The tools and connections are in place and can be used. We recently did a training session with AEP to help inform their work on the Upper Athabasca.

Comment: I would like to encourage AEP to look for opportunities to engage WPACs and keep this work alive.

Comment: The Athabasca WPAC is using this as a key tool in its process.

Q: Can anyone use the AIRM or do they have to hire WaterSMART?

MN: The model is openly available, and AEP has copies.

8 Indigenous Engagement Update

Andre Asselin directed board members to the briefing sheet on this item. He reviewed the discussions and thinking over the years with respect to Indigenous involvement with the AWC. Staff have been working with one First Nation and have reached out to people and organizations with successful experience in Indigenous engagement. Andre has also attended other meetings with Indigenous communities to spread the word about AWC. Staff participated in a Water Ceremony with some of the Samson Cree First Nation elders and Andre provided a brief overview of that event. It is very early in the process and it is clear that if AWC wants to engage with Indigenous groups it must be on their terms.

The following points emerged in discussion of this item:

- Has AWC decided what our approach should be provincially? Can we help WPACs with this process? What is the best way to secure Indigenous input? Do we want their input in our decision making?
 - We can only work with those who want to work with us and we need to build a construct that works for everyone involved. Some WPACs are further along

than we are, so it's unlikely we can offer guidance to them. The executive committee is of the view that we need a broad goal so as to encourage Indigenous engagement, but we clearly need more guidance and training, and must move cautiously.

- In my experience with First Nations, we first need to create awareness at the board level. We need to be careful how we open the door, recognizing that this is not the decision model that Indigenous Peoples have. There are many layers and we can't pretend we have the answers.
- These efforts are very nuanced and there are a lot of political dynamics within First Nations. What we are doing now is an artifact of an old board structure, and a great deal has changed since the initial formation. We should not think that model still works. But we need advice on the best way to go forward.
- The executive committee should discuss next steps and how we can proceed without overcommitting.

One board member advised that he has worked with Indigenous communities for over 20 years and would be willing to explore potential options for the board. He and Andre agreed to have further discussions.

9 New or Other Business

Two questions were put to the GoA at the last board meeting, and Rick Blackwood responded to these.

1. What is the status of the aggregate review and its impact on waterbodies?
Rick provided a detailed oral response to this question and will make his notes available for distribution to the board.
2. What is the status of the strategic environmental assessment for Wood Buffalo National Park?
A First Nation in northern Alberta filed a petition to UNESCO regarding World Heritage status for Wood Buffalo National Park, which also involved BC, NWT, and the Government of Canada. Alberta has worked closely with Parks Canada in responding to this matter. The intent is to release a draft action plan in mid-November, and discussion continues. The final package from Parks Canada must be submitted to UNESCO by February 2019.

The board meeting adjourned at 2:13 p.m.

Attachment 1: Meeting #49 Attendees

AWC Directors and Alternates

Maureen Bell, NGO (Environmental)
Rick Blackwood, GoA and Provincial
Authorities (Alberta Environment and
Parks)
Fiona Briody, Industry (Cropping)
Carolyn Campbell, NGO (Environmental)
Deanna Cottrell, Industry (Oil and Gas)
James Guthrie, Industry (Mining)
Jim Hackett, Industry (Power Generation)
Rob Hoffman, Industry (Chemical and
Petrochemical)
Paul McLauchlin, Government (Rural)
Dan Moore, Industry (Forestry)
Keith Murray, Industry (Forestry)

Margo Jarvis Redelback, Industry
(Irrigation)
Nancy Stalker, Government (Large Urban)
Tanya Thorn, Government (Small Urban)
Jason Unger, NGO (Environmental)
Jay White, NGO (Lake Environment
Conservation)
Jamie Wuite, GoA and Provincial
Authorities (Alberta Agriculture and
Forestry)
Andre Asselin, Executive Director (ex-
officio)

Presenters:

Andre Asselin, *2019 Operational Plan* (Item 6); Indigenous Engagement (Item 8)
Rick Blackwood, *GoA's Cross Ministry Coordination* (Item 2)
Susanna Bruneau and Margo Redelback, *Multi-Year Drought Resiliency* (Item 3)
Mike Christensen and Phil Boehme, *Protecting Alberta's Sources of Water* (Item 4)
Mike Nemeth, *Sustainable Water Management in the Athabasca River Basin Initiative* (Item 7)

Guests:

Jenna Curtis, Alberta Environment and Parks

AWC Staff and Contractors:

Katie Duffett, Cara McInnis, Anuja Ramgoolam, Candice Sawchuk, Kim Sanderson

Absent with Regrets:

Roxane Bretzlaff, NGO (WPACs)
Mark Brostrom, Government (Large Urban)
Che-Wei Chung, Government (Small Urban)
Dave Burdek, GoA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Agriculture and Forestry)
Darren Calliou, Government (Métis Settlements)
Silvia D'Amelio, NGO (Fisheries Habitat Conservation)
Brett Purdy, GoA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Innovates)
Tracy Scott, NGO (Wetlands)
Stephanie Clarke, GoA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Energy)

Attachment 2: Meeting #49 Decision Log

Decision 49.1: The summary report for the June 14, 2018 meeting was adopted by consensus and will be posted to the website.

Decision 49.2: The board approved the proposed 2019 core operating budget.

Decision 49.3: The board approved the meeting dates as presented: February 28 and November 8 in Edmonton, and June 25 in Calgary.

Decision 49.4: The board approved the draft 2019-2021 Business Plan by consensus.

Decision 49.5: With the amendment to section 3.2.3, the Process Guidelines were approved by consensus.

Decision 49.6: The proposed process for developing new performance measures was approved as presented.

Decision 49.7: The board agreed by consensus to reconvene the Water for Life Implementation Review committee.

Decision 49.8: The board approved the 2019 Operational Plan by consensus.