



ALBERTA WATER COUNCIL

MEETING #55

November 5, 2020

Remote – Zoom Conferencing

Executive Summary

The board approved three key administrative tasks looking ahead to 2021: the core operations budget, the operational plan, and board meeting dates. The board also approved dropping omissions and errors insurance coverage, as it was deemed unnecessary based on the organization's work and comprised half the Council's insurance costs. The executive committee's vice presidents' terms for the Government and NGO sector groups expired at this meeting; Tanya Thorn (Government) and Jay White (NGO) were both re-appointed.

An update on the *Water for Life* Implementation Review Committee's work was presented. The committee has completed its tasks and is about to begin broad sector engagement, which is expected to last two months. The board extended the timeline for completion of the project to February 2021.

A discussion at the June meeting to identify potential work using a nimbler process resulted in a decision to convene two ad hoc groups to determine if there were viable AWC projects. Both ad hoc groups were transitioned to become working groups using offline decisions by the board, and presented Terms of Reference for short, intense projects at this meeting. The board discussed how the nimbler process has gone, how it can be improved, and how the board would like to move forward. There was support for the new process but cautioned that keeping sectors engaged would be a challenge due to the pace of the projects. Staff will provide monthly written updates and the process can be adjusted as necessary to address emerging issues. This topic will be revisited in February 2021 for further discussion.

Terms of Reference were presented and approved from the two working groups to form project teams that will move very quickly and feature different outputs compared to typical AWC projects:

1. Alberta Water Futures Project Team - - the purpose of the project is to explore potential future challenges and opportunities facing Alberta's water management system. The project will include a current state assessment, identification of top risks to water in the province, gathering of cross-sector perspectives, and development of a perspectives report. The team does not anticipate putting forward any recommendations.
2. Wetland Policy Implementation Review Project Team – this project team will identify potential performance measures for the Alberta Wetland Policy and describe common challenges, opportunities, or unintended consequences experienced in its implementation to date. This project will inform AEP's implementation of the policy but will not make recommendations to GoA.

The board had a few project-specific questions but were primarily concerned about the capacity of staff and team members, given that the projects would run in parallel and over a short period of time (Nov. 2020 – Mar. 2021). There was some discussion around capacity of specific sectors, but ultimately the board approved both projects, noting that if capacity issues were encountered, alternates could be identified, or the projects could be temporarily placed on hold. A brief call for members will be distributed following the meeting.

The meeting ended with a discussion around GoA's update which was distributed prior to the meeting. Participants appreciated GoA's efforts to issue the updates well in advance of the meeting as it allowed them to come prepared with questions. Board members are invited to send questions regarding the GoA update to Anuja and Andre in advance of the board meeting so answers can be provided at the meeting. There was discussion around a few items in the update, primarily regarding the irrigation expansion funding; in particular, where the project will take place and the expected impacts on water in the region. GoA will follow up with the board regarding questions on wetland implementation program funding and issues with the Alberta Rivers app.

The next meeting will be held in Edmonton on February 25, 2021, though there is a strong likelihood that the meeting will be converted to a remote meeting depending on the status of the pandemic.

Summary of Discussion

The board meeting was convened at 9:32 a.m. Andre Asselin chaired the meeting.

Andre acknowledged that Kim Sanderson, a long-time supporting contractor for AWC and CASA had recently passed away, noting she was an important contributor to AWC's work, and she enjoyed working with the AWC. A letter of condolences was sent to her family on behalf of the Council and a donation made to the Edmonton Area Land Trust, as Kim requested in lieu of flowers.

John Conrad was welcomed as the new director representing Agriculture and Forestry.

1 Administration

1.1 Approve the meeting agenda

Andre noted that a revised agenda was sent out with the supplementary package that added item 1.8 to the original agenda, which was adopted by consensus.

1.2 Review actions from last meeting

Three actions were noted from the June 2020 meeting. All three actions are complete; the third is addressed in the GoA update distributed prior to the meeting. Board members had no comments regarding the action items.

1.3 Approve the summary report from the June 17, 2020 meeting

No edits on the summary report were submitted following the previous meeting and no comments were put forward by board members in the meeting. The summary was approved by consensus and will be posted to the AWC website.

1.4 Approve the proposed 2021 core budget

The proposed 2021 core operating budget was presented. The 2021 budget amount aligns with the multi-year core funding grant from AEP in the amount of \$500,000. Andre noted two key assumptions of the budget, 1) board and project team meetings will continue to be remote for the first half of 2021, reducing travel expenses and honoraria costs, and 2) staff positions that have become vacant will not be filled.

Discussion:

- Does the insurance cost shown include the errors and omissions insurance noted in agenda item 1.8?
 - Yes, it does. The actual cost will decrease by roughly \$3,000 if the board approves not to carry errors and omissions.

The 2021 core budget of \$500,000 was approved by consensus.

1.5 Approve the 2021 operational plan

The draft 2021 operational plan was presented, which outlines the work of the board, executive committee, project teams, and staff. Andre noted that there may be potential for AWC staff to take on another project in June 2021 depending on the progress of existing projects; the board will be asked for input on project ideas when the time comes.

Discussion:

Are there any risks to existing projects given our 3-year business plan ends in 2021?

- It is very unlikely, but if the board decided to shift directions towards a new core business, we could adjust.

The 2021 Operational Plan was approved by consensus

1.6 Approve 2021 meeting dates

The executive committee proposed the board meet three times in 2021. The February and June meetings are proposed to be full day in Edmonton, with the AGM taking place prior to the June meeting. It is likely that these two meetings will ultimately be held remotely due to the pandemic but are put forward as in-person as it is easier to change to remote meetings than the other way around. The annual evening event is proposed to occur prior to the final meeting of the year in November in Calgary.

The board approved the proposed meeting dates by consensus:

- **February 25**; Edmonton – venue TBD or remotely
- **June 17**; Edmonton – venue TBD or remotely
- **November 4**; Calgary – McDougall Centre
*AWC hosts a year-end dinner the evening of **November 3**, at the same venue as the next day's board meeting.

1.7 Appoint executive officers – Government and NGO

The terms for the Government and NGO vice presidents of the executive committee expired at this meeting. These positions are selected by their respective sector groups, with a term limit of two years; there are no limits on consecutive terms.

Tanya Thorn, representing the small urban sector was designated by the Government sector group to be their representative and Jay White was designated by the NGO sector group to continue as their representative. The terms of these two representatives will end in fall 2022.

No decision was required on this item.

1.8 – Approve dropping errors and omissions insurance

The AWC carries errors and omissions insurance, which protects against acts of professional negligence or bodily injury that is not covered by a standard general liability policy. The executive director is seeking a formal decision from the board to drop the coverage as AWC does not provide “professional services, the insurance is costly and unnecessary, and the board directed staff to carry the insurance at the AWC’s inception. The AWC will continue carrying standard general liability insurance, and consultants hired to support project teams will be required to have errors and omissions insurance, which is standard practice.

The board approved dropping errors and omissions insurance by consensus.

Decision 55.1: The revised agenda was approved by consensus.

Decision 55.2: The board approved the June 17, 2020 meeting summary by consensus, and it will be posted to the AWC website.

Decision 55.3: The board approved the 2021 Core Operating Budget of \$500,000 by consensus.

Decision 55.4: The board approved the 2021 Operational Plan by consensus.

Decision 55.5: The 2021 board meeting dates of February 25 (Edmonton or remote), June 17 (Edmonton), and November 3 and 4 (Calgary) were approved by consensus.

Decision 55.6: The board approved dropping errors and omissions insurance by consensus.

2 Water for Life (WFL) Implementation Review Committee Update

Committee co-chair Jason Unger provided a presentation on the committee's purpose, tasks, and their progress as they move toward broad sector review. The current review covers implementation actions from 2016-2019. Broad sector engagement will begin following the meeting and will last two months.

The committee has reviewed the 2009 WFL Action Plan and is preparing a report including 15 recommendations to improve WFL implementation. Some lessons learned during the review process and the 15 recommendations were presented. The committee also developed a suite of performance indicators which will be included in the appendix of the how-to guide for feedback during the broad sector review.

The committee requested an extension to complete their work by February 2021.

Discussion

- Regarding Recommendation 4: “Add an audit function to Drinking Water Safety Plans (DWSPs)”, the recent Source Water Protection (SWP) team looked into why the DWSP program struggled and found that it was due to capacity issues among those creating DWSPs and a lack of availability of tools. The upcoming SWP project team plans to address these issues and an audit may not be that useful.
 - There are likely capacity issues to populate the DWSPs, the issue was raised more in relation to partnerships. The review and audit would highlight those issues, but it is correct that if there is no capacity to respond to that audit, undertaking the audit is of low value.
 - This recommendation could be updated to include this information after the sector review; the report could note that the SWP team is addressing it, but it may be premature to make a recommendation based on a project that isn't finished yet.
 - The recommendation should be clear as to who should complete the audit and for what purpose, as the word audit can mean different things to different people. The assumption of the committee was that GoA would do the audit, but further clarification will be added in the report.
 - The preamble to the recommendations can be a good place to provide more context to address some of the issues raised.
- How is the committee determining the baseline by which to measure performance on indicators?
 - The baseline is in some cases inherent in the recommendation itself (e.g. how many boil water advisories?) but is currently undetermined for others. Significant effort would be required to frame the methodology for measuring data against the indicators, explain what the indicators mean, develop the indicators at the right scale, and analyze them properly; this issue could be addressed in future work.

- Is there a path forward for integrating this work with planning at the regional level (e.g. with water management frameworks) and if so, whether specific examples of how that is being done will be added?
 - That is a gap, and the committee will look at it in the broader narrative of the report.

Decision 55.7: The board extended the timeline for the Water for Life Implementation Review Committee to complete their work by February 2021.

Andre thanked the committee members and staff for their efforts to date and noted that engagement package will be sent to the board soon.

3 Board discussion regarding the recent nimblor process to develop project ideas

At the June board meeting, a discussion around identifying potential work resulted in a decision to convene two ad hoc groups to determine if there were viable AWC projects and interest in approving them. If the projects were to go ahead, the idea was that the ad hoc groups could take advantage of the board’s decision in 2019 to approve priority work offline via electronic voting, to move the project selection process more quickly, and to develop more complete ideas. Indeed, both ad hoc groups were transitioned to become working groups with offline decisions, and both developed Terms of Reference to be considered at this meeting. The speed at which these groups did their work and used offline decisions to address the AWC’s process to take on new work is referred to as the nimblor process. At every stage of the nimblor process, the AWC’s values of openness, inclusiveness, and transparency were maintained.

The purpose of the discussion for this item was to review the nimblor process, how it went, how it can be improved, and how the board would like to move forward with the approach.

Andre presented an overview of the ad hoc group process including the history of the ad hoc group idea, the experience of the existing two ad hoc groups, and lessons learned.

Discussion

- The faster process has several advantages. In particular:
 1. It allows participants to commit to all stages of the project. Continuity of representation from working groups to project teams was recognized as good practice and desirable.
 2. It may increase participation (due to the shorter time commitment required).
- We should be cautious and ensure that there is a balance of speed, engagement, and opportunity for members to participate.
- The GoA requested that AWC take on a nimblor approach for this work and thanks the board and groups for their efforts to make the process work well and quickly.
- The process generally worked well for the forestry sector.
- A few sectors shared that some challenges include having enough time for proper engagement with their sector members, the length of time for calls for members, and sector engagement at the end stages of a project.

- A lack of proper engagement due to moving too quickly may result in non-consensus outcomes.
 - These projects are different than typical AWC projects in that they are more about gathering perspectives from around the table and providing those perspectives to government without trying to find agreement on solutions to substantive issues. But it is noted that some groups may require more time for engagement for any given project than others.
- Shorter timeframes for these projects is better for municipalities due to the speed at which their priorities change. But the process should allow for sectors to check back if someone is not engaged or to invite additional feedback as needed.
- Some sectors have been challenged to participate in projects that they would like to be fully engaged in due to competing priorities. It should be recognized that some sectors have fewer individuals to call on for teams and that project managers should be aware of this when scheduling team meetings.
- Not every project is suitable for the nimbler, quicker process, especially where data may be lacking which could slow down projects.

The board is supportive of the nimbler process, but it should include the ability to pause when additional time is needed for engagement. Monthly written updates will be provided to keep the board informed on a more regular basis than typical project teams. No decision was required on this item and it will be revisited in February 2021 for further discussion as the project teams make progress.

4 Future of Water Management in Alberta Working Group

The Future of Water Management in Alberta Working Group members Brian Deheer and James Guthrie delivered a presentation on the group's progress to date, along with a request to approve Terms of Reference and strike a project team. The purpose of the project is to explore potential future challenges and opportunities facing Alberta's water management system. The working group met six times from August to October 2020. The proposed project includes a current state assessment (using SWOT analysis), identification of top risks to water in the province, gathering cross-sector perspectives, and developing a perspectives report. The team does not anticipate putting forward any recommendations. The project team will strive to complete their work between November 2020 and March 2021, with a budget of \$18,000 of AWC core operations funds.

Discussion

- What is the driver of the SWOT analysis, and is there is a method of fact checking the risk assessments, and how risks will be weighted?
 - Many water users would be included during the analysis and the results will be tested with sectors to ensure that they are as accurate as possible.
- There is no Indigenous representation on the project yet. That may be a problem.
 - When the ad hoc groups started, staff reached out to AWC's Indigenous partners offering the opportunity to participate. They will reach out again if the board strikes the project teams.
- There has been broad support and interest in this project to date. In order to keep the momentum going and avoid delays, members of the working group will be automatically

transitioned to the project team unless they opt out, and a brief call for members will be sent out to allow anyone not participating to join the team.

Decision 55.8: The board approved:

- ***The Alberta Water Futures Terms of Reference.***
- ***The creating the Alberta Water Futures Project Team.***
- ***Disbanding the Alberta Water Futures Working Group.***

5 Wetland Policy Implementation Review Working Group

Nissa Pettersen and Keith Murray, members of the Wetland Policy Implementation Review Working Group, presented the Terms of Reference for decision by the board. If approved, the team will identify potential performance measures for the Alberta Wetland Policy and describe common challenges, opportunities, or unintended consequences experienced in its implementation to date. This project will inform AEP of the various perspectives regarding the implementation of the policy but will not make any specific recommendations to GoA. The project team will strive to complete their work between November 2020 and March 2021, with a budget of \$18,000 of AWC core operations funds.

Discussion

- Will the board and staff be able to support having two projects running concurrently on the same accelerated schedule?
 - The irrigation sector has competing priorities given the recent announcement of significant funding for expansion and will struggle with capacity. We may have to appoint an alternate or follow up with the project managers offline to participate.
 - The rural sector has overlapping interests with the irrigation sector. Maybe we can work together to identify areas of overlap and find ways to support irrigation.
 - The environmental sector has capacity issues but acknowledged that might not be an issue due to the environmental expertise and experience among those with capacity to participate.

Decision 55.9: The board approved:

- ***The Wetland Policy Implementation Review Terms of Reference.***
- ***Creating the Wetland Policy Implementation Review Project Team***
- ***Disbanding the Wetland Policy Implementation Review Working Group.***

6 Information Reports and Opportunity for Questions

6.1 Executive director's report

There was no discussion on this item.

6.2 Source Water Protection Web Platform Working Group Update

Discussion

- The working group membership seems small given the amount of work. Is there sufficient capacity to complete the work?

- Working groups are typically smaller than project teams as they are scoping the project and not carrying out the work.
- There is good representation on the team but ideally would have better representation for small urban municipalities, who are a target audience for the work.
- Source Water Protection is voluntary, is there interest from GoA in supporting this work?
 - GoA has capacity and interest in the project, and Service Alberta has been engaged with respect to hosting the web platform and other technical components of the project.

6.3 Improving Resiliency to Drought in Alberta Through a Simulation Project Team update

There was no discussion on this item.

6.4 Government of Alberta Update

Discussion

- Several participants thanked AEP for providing a robust update and noted that having the update in advance is useful, providing time to review and come prepared with questions.
 - Questions can also be sent to Anuja or Andre prior the board meeting who will send them along to GoA. This will benefit all parties as it may lead to more questions to being answered and allow deeper discussion at the meeting as GoA can come prepared with answers.
- While the update is largely from AEP, this is a great opportunity to raise awareness of other good work happening in the government. Agriculture and Forestry will strive to include more information about their water-related work in future updates.
- Recent announcements regarding investments to expand irrigation generated much discussion (\$815 million for irrigation infrastructure, 208,000 acres of irrigable land, 6,000 direct and indirect jobs). Key points of discussion included:
 - The project is focused on water conveyance efficiency (i.e. more acres irrigated with the same amount of water).
 - The water will come from existing irrigation water licences, not new allotments. There are expected to be minimal impacts to established flow targets (e.g. instream objectives).
 - Irrigation Districts must go through a plebiscite process to agree with any proposed expansion. The District irrigators can develop any dry land pieces on private land or infill existing irrigation parcels to convert to more efficient irrigation methods.
 - A Conservation, Efficiency, Productivity (CEP) update is planned for 2023 based on 2022 data; it will be interesting to see how these investments impact the update.
 - While there are many questions about this, the project is still in the early stages of the approvals process and answers will likely emerge as the project progresses.
- Regarding the wetland replacement program, does all the money collected go directly to that program or into a pool of funding for several programs?

- The funding is intended for the wetlands program only but is having ongoing conversations about this internally as they discuss budgets for next year. We can address this in the next GoA update.
- What are the performance measures of the wetland implementation program?
 - GoA will follow up and provide an answer in the next update.
- There are some errors and inconsistencies in the Alberta Rivers app in terms of instream objectives, water conservation objectives, and measurement of flows against those objectives. Are there any plans to update the app to be more accurate?
 - GoA will follow up and provide an answer in the next update.

Action 55.1: GoA will include updates on where the money collected from the wetland replacement program is being spent, performance measures of the wetlands implementation program, and additional information on the Alberta Rivers app in the next GoA update.

7 New Business

Andre provided a few reminders to the board:

- The Building Resiliency to Multi-Year Drought in Alberta Project Team’s guide and companion report are nearing completion and should be released before 2021.
- A call for members for the new project teams will be sent out to members in the coming days.
- The WFLIR sector engagement package will be distributed next week.
- A post-meeting survey will be sent out to board members shortly.

The next meeting will be held in Edmonton on February 25, 2021.

The board meeting adjourned at 11:53 a.m.

Attachment 1: Meeting #55 Attendees

AWC Directors and Alternates

Maureen Bell, NGO (Environmental)
Fiona Briody, Industry (Crop Sector Working Group)
Mark Brostrom, Government (Large Urban)
Deanna Cottrell, Industry (Oil and Gas)
Tom Davis, GoA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Environment and Parks)
James Guthrie, Industry (Mining)
Jim Hackett, Industry (Power Generation)
Rob Hoffman, Industry (Chemical and Petrochemical)
Vicki Lightbown, GoA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Innovates)
Che-Wei Chung, Government (Small Urban)
Paul McLaughlin, Government (Rural)
Keith Murray, Industry (Forestry)
Morris Nesdole, NGO (WPACs)

Steph Neufeld, NGO (Lake Environment Conservation)
Tara Payment, Industry (Oil and Gas)
Nissa Petterson, NGO (Environmental)
Margo Jarvis Redelback, Industry (Irrigation)
Roxane Bretzlaff, NGO (WPACs)
Tanya Thorn, Government (Small Urban)
Jason Unger, NGO (Environmental)
Jay White, NGO (Lake Environment Conservation)

John Conrad, GoA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Agriculture and Forestry)
Andre Asselin, Executive Director (ex-officio)

Presenters:

Jason Unger, *Water for Life Implementation Review* (Item 2)
Andre Asselin, *Board Discussion Regarding the Nimblar Approach to Developing Project Ideas* (Item 3)
Brian DeHeer and James Guthrie, *Future of Water Management in Alberta Working Group* (Item 4)
Nissa Petterson and Keith Murray, *The Wetland Policy Implementation Review Working Group* (Item 5)

Guests:

Brian Free, Martina Krieger, Douglas Thrussell, Alberta Environment and Parks
Liserl Woods, Environment and Climate Change Canada
Brian Deheer, Athabasca Watershed Council

AWC Staff and Contractors:

Alec Carrigy, Katie Duffett, Lauren Hall, Anuja Hoddinott, Petra Rowell, Scott Millar

Absent with Regrets:

Bev Yee, GoA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Environment and Parks)
Brett Purdy, GoA and Provincial Authorities (Science and Research)
Darren Calliou, Government (Métis Settlements)
Doug Sawyer, Industry (Livestock)
Merry Turtiak, GoA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Health)
Silvia D'Amelio, NGO (Fisheries Habitat Conservation)
Tracy Scott, NGO (Wetlands)

Attachment 2: Meeting #55 Decision Log and Action Items

Decisions

Decision 55.1: The revised board meeting agenda was approved by consensus.

Decision 55.2: The board approved the June 17, 2020 meeting summary by consensus, and it will be posted to the AWC website.

Decision 55.3: The board approved the 2021 Core Operating Budget of \$500,000 by consensus.

Decision 55.4: The board approved the 2021 Operational Plan by consensus.

Decision 55.5: The 2021 board meeting dates of February 25 (Edmonton or remote), June 17 (Edmonton), and November 3 and 4 (Calgary) were approved by consensus.

Decision 55.6: The board approved dropping errors and omissions insurance by consensus.

Decision 55.7: The board extended the timeline for the Water for Life Implementation Review Committee to complete their work by February 2021.

Decision 55.8: The board approved:

- *The Alberta Water Futures Terms of Reference.*
- *Creating the Alberta Water Futures Project Team.*
- *Disbanding the Alberta Water Futures Working Group.*

Decision 55.9: The board approved:

- *The Wetland Policy Implementation Review Terms of Reference.*
- *Creating the Wetland Policy Implementation Review Project Team*
- *Disbanding the Wetland Policy Implementation Review Working Group.*

Action Items

Action 55.1: GoA will include updates on where the money collected from the wetland replacement program is being spent, performance measures of the wetlands implementation program, and additional information on the Alberta Rivers app in the next GoA update.