



ALBERTA WATER COUNCIL

MEETING #58

November 4, 2021

Remote – Zoom Conferencing

Executive Summary

The board welcomed a new director, Nevin Rosaasen, for the Crop Sector Working Group, and a new project manager, Jacqueline Noga.

The board received an update on the Improving Drought Resilience in Alberta through a Simulation project, including challenges they are facing in regard to in-person or virtual hosting of the simulation. Survey results indicated half of participants were comfortable with an in-person event, but a virtual event would result in the exercise being less effective and with fewer participants. Board members provided feedback that an in-person event was the best use of resources, and the exercise should be postponed. Board members requested additional participation from NGOs and the Livestock sector in the exercise. The project team will request extending the timeline at the next board meeting to accommodate delays.

The board received presentations on statements of opportunity for *Water for Life* Action Plan and Watershed Governance and Capacity projects. Both projects were seen as relevant to *Water for Life*, along with the recommendations from the last *Water for Life* Implementation Review project and the recent Water Futures project. A working group was launched to scope a project that would develop a new 10-year *Water for Life* Action Plan. This group was also tasked with discussing related projects to determine if they can be incorporated within that project. A call for members will be sent to the board with a three week turn-around time so the working group can be initiated quickly.

The meeting ended with discussing information reports and a round table for any announcements from sectors. Several links were provided for recent work that may be of interest to the AWC membership.

The next meeting is scheduled for February 22, 2022.

Summary of Discussion

Board meeting convened at 9:43 a.m.

1 Administration

1.1 Approve the meeting agenda

Andre Asselin chaired the meeting and reviewed the agenda. There were no blocks to adopting the agenda.

Decision 58.1: The board approved the agenda by consensus.

1.2 Review actions from last meeting

There were two actions from the previous meeting, one was addressed in GoA's update and was included in the meeting package. The second was for staff to work with Deanna to arrange a demonstration of the Alberta Water Tool, which is still ongoing.

1.3 Approve the summary report from the June 17, 2021 meeting

A minor edit was incorporated to the summary report provided in the package.

Decision 58.2: The board approved the June 2021 meeting summary by consensus, and it will be posted to the website.

1.4 Approve the draft 2022 Core Budget

AWC's fiscal year runs from January 1 to December 31, and the core budget is provided by a grant from AEP. The 2022 core budget was developed by the executive committee with staff support. AWC shares some core budget items with CASA because the staff support both organizations, and those were identified.

The draft 2022 core budget included the assumption that in-person meetings would resume in 2022.

Discussion

- **Q:** Could we do a financial review each year instead of a full audit to save on costs?
 - **A:** AWC is required to have its financial statements audited each year, but we go to market every three years to ensure the rate remains competitive.
- The budget characterizes the expenses well, and the Council is making good use of its resources.
- **Q:** How stable is the AWC's funding?
 - **A:** The AWC has been funded by AEP since its inception, and the current grant agreement extends to 2023.

Decision 58.3: The board approved the draft 2022 Core Budget by consensus.

1.5 Approve the draft 2022 Operational Plan

AWC develops an operational plan every year which identifies major projects and some smaller projects the organization will take on over the next year. It is based on the three-year business plan.

Discussion

- **Q:** Are the activities under goal 1 linked to the statement of opportunity from AEP?
 - **A:** Yes, and this will be discussed later in the meeting.

Decision 58.4: The board approved the draft 2022 Operational Plan by consensus.

1.6 Approve 2022 meeting dates

The AWC typically holds three meetings per year, and this year the executive committee has proposed a field trip aligning with the June board meeting and an evening event prior to the November board meeting. The AGM would be held in June, and the executive committee meets a month before board meetings to set the agenda.

Decision 58.5: The board approved the 2022 meeting dates by consensus.

1.7 Approve the updated Process Guidelines

The AWC updates its process guidelines every three years, and 2021 aligns with this schedule. A process was approved at the June meeting to allow board members to provide input and review proposed edits. The staff developed an initial draft which was provided for board input. The feedback was incorporated, and the executive committee approved the new version for board approval. It was included in the meeting package.

Discussion

- It's good to see the references to Indigenous partners, peoples, and groups.
- The document attempts to recognize Indigenous Peoples in the ways they would like to be recognized, and there have been some strides with participation at the project team level, but more work is needed.
- How seats on the board are allocated to Indigenous groups could be revisited, but a meaningful conversation with them is required before making any bylaw amendments.

Decision 58.6: The board approved the updated Process Guidelines by consensus.

1.8 Approve the path forward for business planning

At the June meeting, the board approved a process to develop the next three-year business plan (BP) that will cover 2022–2024. A survey was sent to determine whether the core elements of the 2019–2022 BP were still relevant and serve as a good starting point for the next BP, or if a more robust process that included a workshop and third-party consultant should be pursued. There was broad support for option A, which is to build on the 2019-2021 BP rather than host a workshop. A second board survey will be used to identify specific changes they would like to see to the BP, and staff will work with directors and the executive committee to incorporate the changes in a new draft. The executive committee will be asked to approve the draft prior to the board's review and approval.

Discussion

- A Word (.doc) version of the survey should be available for those who cannot access the platform where the staff host the survey.

Decision 58.7: The board approved the proposed path forward for business planning by consensus.

1.9 Appoint executive officers – GoA and PA and Industry

Executive committee members have off-set two years terms. This year, the GoA and Provincial Authorities and Industry executive officer terms have expired. There is no limit to how many times an executive officer can be selected, and the sector groups are responsible for choosing their own representative.

Ahmed Idriss has been selected for the Industry executive officer. Bev Yee and Tom Davis will continue working together to represent GoA and Provincial Authorities at the executive committee.

2 Improving Drought Resilience in Alberta Through a Simulation Project Team

Pamela Duncan from the City of Calgary, and Daryl McEwan from Alberta Environment and Parks presented an update from this project team. The presentation included team membership, background, and both the completed and upcoming milestones. The team is facing challenges related to hosting the event due to participants not being comfortable with a large in-person meeting, and the potential loss of effectiveness if the exercise was held virtually.

Discussion

- It is important to defer the exercise until it can be done in person. The value of the exercise is the dynamic interaction. We want to ensure it's done safely, so delaying it makes sense. There may be some options for controlling the environment, such as separate rooms that are linked through audio-visual equipped.
- **Q:** Is the exercise based on real or theoretical data?
 - **A:** The simulation will use real data from the South Saskatchewan River Basin, and it will incorporate existing infrastructure. Participants will decide on mitigation measures such as allocations as the simulation moves along.
- Participation from some key groups is missing, such as the livestock sector and NGOs beyond Trout and Ducks Unlimited Canada.
- WaterSMART may have previously reached out to other NGOs or the livestock sector, so staff will follow-up with them for details on any communication and then bring the information to a project team meeting for discussion and expansion of the participant list.
- While virtual meetings are useful, for this type of exercise you lose too much over an in-person meeting. I would support waiting until you can have an in-person exercise with as many of the stakeholders as possible, so we can get the best information from the exercise to inform the provincial drought response plan.

- **Q:** What is driving the February 2022 backstop?
 - **A:** One of the main drivers was availability of participants. The team is worried that if the exercise was held after the spring freshet, we would lose participants from some of the most relevant stakeholder groups due to their other priorities like calving, seeding, etc.
- This is important enough that at least irrigation representatives would arrange their schedules to be able to attend this, regardless of if it's held during a busy time.
- We need to do this with the right people, rather than trying to finish it early.
- The NGO community needs some level of comfort that aspects of environmental flow that aren't related to recreational fish or duck interests are being considered. The participation from that sector needs to be increased.
- **Q:** Has the team considered things like using rapid COVID tests for participants, to increase comfort levels with an in-person event?
 - **A:** The team has talked about that as an option, along with confirming vaccination status of the invited participants. They are unsure of the specific logistics, but plan to discuss it further.

Action Item 58.1: Staff and the project team to review participants of the simulation and include representation from the livestock sector and additional NGOs.

3 Setting a Path for AWC Projects

The AWC has capacity to take on new work, and statements of opportunity have been prepared for several project ideas. The project ideas share some overlap, and it's possible a working group could address multiple work areas.

3.1 Watershed Governance and Capacity Ad Hoc Group Statement of Opportunity

Petra Rowell from the Athabasca Watershed Council provided a presentation on the Watershed Governance and Capacity Statement of Opportunity. The presentation included background on the ad hoc group, an overview of the discussions the team had, and the scope of the statement of opportunity.

3.2 *Water for Life* Action Plan Statement of Opportunity

Bev Yee from Alberta Environment and Parks provided a presentation on developing the next *Water for Life* Action Plan Statement of Opportunity. The presentation included some proposed goals for the work, including clarifying roles and responsibilities and ensuring the complexity of the water and watershed systems in Alberta are being addressed, along with a proposed timeline.

Discussion

- The proposed timeline for the *Water for Life* Action Plan project is short; if those timelines aren't negotiable then a lot of resources would have to be allocated.
- The timelines are negotiable, but there is a sense of urgency for this work. The issues are upon us now, and we want to move forward in a constructive, positive way and demonstrate that we're being proactive.

- There is a good opportunity to integrate work on governance into the *Water for Life* Action Plan. The map of partnerships would be a good place to start, and in particular the integration points between land and water planning. A review of the shared governance work previously completed by the AWC would also be valuable.
- Clarifying roles and responsibilities is important; it's not clear we all have the same understanding of that.
- Indigenous water governance isn't the same as the conventional view of water governance, so that should be considered.
- The participation in this group should be well considered and should include groups like the regional growth boards from Edmonton and Calgary.
- There is a significant education component; there isn't consistent understanding, so outreach and education is an important component.
- There are a lot of layers and a lot of decision-makers. More and more are under regional and land-use planning, which doesn't align with a shared governance model. What's the role of the other *Water for Life* partners?
- A governance review should consider how the river and environmental flows are represented, since the environmental community isn't a member of WPACs.
- Caution against layering too much work into the *Water for Life* Action Plan; if the scope is too broad, we won't be able to meet the timeline.
- This is a complex piece of work that could be completed through various teams or sub-teams, but capacity of both participants and AWC staff is a concern.
- **Q:** What is the role of the federal government in this work?
 - **A:** The federal government's jurisdiction is with transboundary waters. They could participate in the work, but their role would need to be clear.
- There are some basic questions around governance that we don't have the answer to; someone may have the answers, but it hasn't been communicated well. For example, it's not clear who sets water quality objectives and other limits for a waterbody.
- The government sets those limits; it's a collaborative process and welcomes the input from other stakeholders.
- One of the things that should come out of this and other AWC projects is a clear line of accountability back to the GoA. An AEP director should consider these documents when making decisions on the *Water Act* or for approvals.

Decision 58.8: The board agreed by consensus to strike a working group to pursue the Water for Life Action Plan project, with the need to consider if the watershed governance and capacity work fits into this project.

A call for members will be distributed for a *Water for Life* Action Plan Working Group, with a three-week deadline for submission of names.

4 Information Reports and Opportunity for Questions

4.1 Government of Alberta Update

No discussion.

4.2 Executive Director's Report

Discussion

- It would be appropriate for the AWC to send a thank-you letter to the AWA, and Bob Cameron specifically, for their participation and work in support of the AWC.

Action Item 58.2: AWC staff to send a thank you letter to the AWC for their participation and work in support of the AWC.

4.3 Source Water Protection Phase I: Risk Assessment and Data Tools Project Team Update

No discussion

4.4 Other Sector Updates

The RDRWA is planning a drought event, and a link was provided for anyone interested in registering.

The next board meeting is scheduled for February 24, 2022.

The board meeting adjourned at 12:25 p.m.

Attachment 1: Meeting #58 Attendees

In Attendance

AWC Directors and Alternates

Rawnauld Axelson, Industry (Livestock)
Maureen Bell, NGO (Environmental)
John Conrad, GoA and Provincial Authorities
(Alberta Agriculture and Forestry)
Deanna Cottrell, Industry (Oil and Gas)
Jaime Davies, NGO (Environmental)
Tom Davis, GoA and Provincial Authorities
(Alberta Environment and Parks)
Brian Deheer, NGO (Environmental)
Mark Donner, GoA and Provincial Authorities
(Science and Research)
James Guthrie, Industry (Mining)
Jim Hackett, Industry (Power Generation)
Jason Hale, Industry (Livestock)
Rob Hoffman, Industry (Chemical and
Petrochemical)
Paul McLaughlin, Government (Rural)
Steve Meadows, NGO (WPACs)
Dan Moore, Industry (Forestry)
Morris Nesdole, NGO (WPACs)
Steph Neufeld, NGO (Lake Environment
Conservation)

Tara Payment, Industry (Oil and Gas)
Brett Purdy, GoA and Provincial Authorities
(Alberta Innovates)
Margo Jarvis Redelback, Industry
(Irrigation)
Alain Richard, NGO (Wetland Conservation)
Nevin Rosaasen, Industry (Crop Sector
Working Group)
Tracy Scott, NGO (Wetland Conservation)
Nancy Stalker, Government (Large Urban)
Merry Turtiak, GoA and Provincial
Authorities (Alberta Health)
Jason Unger, NGO (Environmental)
Craig Werner, Industry (Forestry)
Jay White, NGO (Lake Environment
Conservation)
Bev Yee, GoA and Provincial Authorities
(Alberta Environment and Parks)
Andre Asselin, Executive Director (ex-
officio)

Guests:

Brian Free, Marilea Pattison Perry, Martina Krieger, Daryl McEwan, Morna Hussey, and Cam Lane; AEP
Pam Duncan, City of Calgary
Petra Rowell, Athabasca Watershed Council
Lieserl Woods, Environment and Climate Change Canada
Ruth Mitchell, Alberta Health

AWC Staff and Contractors:

Alec Carrigy, Katie Duffett, Anuja Hoddinott, Scott Millar, Jacqueline Noga

Absent with Regrets:

Darren Calliou, Government (Métis Settlements)
Silvia D'Amelio, NGO (Fisheries Habitat Conservation)
Tanya Thorn, Government (Small Urban)

Attachment 2: Meeting #58 Decision Log and Action Items

Decisions

Decision 58.1: The board approved the agenda by consensus.

Decision 58.2: The board approved the June 2021 meeting summary by consensus, and it will be posted to the website.

Decision 58.3: The board approved the draft 2022 Core Operations Budget by consensus.

Decision 58.4: The board approved the draft 2022 Operational Plan by consensus.

Decision 58.5: The board approved the 2022 meeting dates by consensus.

Decision 58.6: The board approved the updated Process Guidelines by consensus.

Decision 58.7: The board approved the proposed path forward for business planning by consensus.

Decision 58.8: The board agreed by consensus to strike a working group to pursue the Water for Life Action Plan project, with the need to consider how the watershed governance and capacity work fits into this project.

Action Items

Action Item 58.1:

Staff and the project team to review participants of the simulation and include representation from the livestock sector and additional NGOs.

Action Item 58.2: AWC staff to send a thank you letter to the AWC for their participation and work in support of the AWC.