



ALBERTA WATER COUNCIL

MEETING #67

October 24, 2024

QEII Building, Edmonton & MS Teams Conference

Executive Summary

The board received an update on the drought conditions in the province and while Water Shortage Advisories are still in effect, most reservoirs have a normal amount of storage for this time of year and water sharing agreements have been deactivated. Kate Rich, of Environment and Protected Areas, shared information on a water management consultation process they are beginning in October 2024 and noted that they will check back with the AWC on the engagement as it proceeds.

Andre Asselin, co-chair for the Drought Mutual Support Committee, provided an update on the committee. As drought conditions have now improved in many areas, the committee requested the team be disbanded with the option to reconvene if drought conditions worsen. The board approved that approach.

The *Water for Life* Action Plan project team has completed its final deliverables, an internal “lessons learned” report and a public factsheet, along with a communications plan. The board approved the deliverables, and the project team has been disbanded.

Catherine Pierce and Mary Ellen Shain, from the Battle River Watershed Alliance and North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance, respectively, provided a presentation on how WPACs used the *Building Resiliency to Multi-Year Drought Guide* in a series of workshops in 2023 and early 2024. Six workshops were held with over 500 total attendees, and feedback from attendees was positive. The guide contents need updating as things change over time, and AWC staff will work with WPACs to establish a process for updating the guide and associated workshop materials.

In October 2023, representatives from the AWC’s water-using sectors provided updates on implementation of their CEP plans for the 2017-2022 period. AWC staff combined the updates into a report, which was presented for decision. The board approved it with changes, as some corrections are needed before it can be publicly released. AWC staff will work with the water-using sectors to incorporate the edits and schedule a meeting to review the changes.

At a previous board meeting, an approach to developing the next multi-year business plan was approved. Initial steps included a survey of board members, and Andre Asselin presented the results of the survey. The results indicated it would be valuable to have a workshop to discuss the multi-year business plan and identify projects that are in alignment with the AWC’s strategic direction. The board approved hosting a workshop paired with the February board meeting, with the specific date pending results of a meeting poll to be distributed after the meeting.

Representatives from the Office of the Auditor General provided a presentation on the Surface Water Management Performance Audit and its findings. The audit looked at long-term planning, licensing, compliance and monitoring, and public reporting, and made recommendations to Environment and Protected Areas (EPA) to address deficiencies. The recommendations were received by EPA, and an implementation plan is being developed. The implementation plan will be reviewed and assessed to determine if the actions effectively address the audit findings.

Steph Neufeld, co-chair of the Source Water Protection Phase 1: Risk Assessment Data and Tools project team provided an update on the team's work. The web platform is largely complete, but the team has experienced some delays and requested a timeline extension to June 2025. The board approved the extension.

The board received an update on the AWC's annual recommendation tracking process. An update report and a detailed report are available for board members. One new project and associated recommendations was added in 2024, and recommendations from the 2017 CEP project, the 2012 *Water for Life* Implementation Review, and the Wetland Policy Implementation Plan Project are now complete.

The next board meeting will be held in February 2025, with the specific date determined via a meeting poll that will be distributed to board members in late October or early November.

Summary of Discussion

Board meeting convened at 9:50a.m.

1 Convene business meeting, introductions, and approve agenda

Members were welcomed and the meeting was confirmed to have quorum. Nancy Mackay chaired the meeting and reviewed the agenda. Some agenda items were moved due to presenter availability, and the other items adjusted accordingly. Agenda Item 8.0 was removed as the presenter was not able to attend the meeting. The agenda was adopted by consensus with the above noted changes.

Decision 67.1: The board approved the agenda by consensus.

2 Drought Mutual Support Committee and Sector Updates

Merry Turtiak, the Drought Incident Commander for Environment and Protected Areas, provided an update on Alberta's drought conditions. The presentation recapped the drought conditions that have been experienced in 2023 and so far in 2024, as well as current conditions.

Water Shortage Advisories are still in effect throughout the province and many basins remain in stage 2 or 3 drought, however most reservoirs have a normal storage amount for this time of year. Water sharing agreements have also been deactivated. Environment and Protected Areas is completing a post-incident assessment with key water management partners, and a lessons learned session will be held to evaluate the 2024 drought response. The results of the assessment and session will be used to update the Drought Response Plan and other tools used to support drought response. The report on the post-incident assessment is expected to be available in early 2025.

Predictions for 2025 are for normal temperatures in most of the province, with normal or above normal levels of precipitation in most areas aside from the Peace Area, which may receive less.

Discussion

- **Q:** Is there an opportunity to get drought updates by large waterbody rather than basin-wide?
 - **A:** How to communicate meaningful information is an ongoing discussion, and we are considering the granularity of the information. Future messaging may contain basin-wide messaging along with conditions in specific waterbodies.
- **Q:** The presentation notes that apportionment was met through the season, but are specific numbers available in terms of percent load?
 - **A:** We're not quite through the season, but the most recent numbers were that we're at 60%, and the requirement is 50%. As we are above the requirement it is not an area of concern right now, and filling of reservoirs is still a priority.
- **Q:** How does the department define low flow?
 - **A:** It is dependent on the waterbody. If the waterbody has a water conservation objective or instream flow objective, then it is whether the flow is below that objective for seven days and is predicted to continue to be below it for a further seven days.

- **Q:** The Battle River is included in the North Saskatchewan River Basin, but the North Saskatchewan River originates in the Rockies, and the Battle River doesn't. Is there consideration for changing that?
 - **A:** Yes, this is something that is being discussed and we're hoping to engage with WPACs on this in the spring.
- **Q:** What's the criteria for determine whether there are releases from lagoons?
 - **A:** The releases are treated wastewater, and surface water guidelines must be met. There's testing before release and then in the river system after release. It also depends on municipal capacity, and the overall flow of the river itself and who the next impacted user is.
- **Q:** Are the lagoons discharging into smaller waterbodies or mainstems?
 - **A:** It is a combination of both. In the north, discharges are often into tributaries, and in the central and south it is into the mainstem. Decisions are made on a case-by-case basis.
- **Q:** The presentation mentioned that there has been compliance monitoring. Is there information available on the number of inspections and where those were located?
 - **A:** Most of the inspections were in the southern basins, but I the numbers aren't on hand. All water license holders had some type of inspection or contact for conversations about drought. AER also did compliance sweeps for their stakeholders. Generally, 5-10% of license holders had compliance issues, and there was concern from people in one area on the Bow River where there was concern that some license holders weren't following their allocations, but that was acted upon quickly.

Action 67.1: Merry to follow-up with Margo on data related to compliance inspections completed during the recent drought.

Kate Rich of Environment and Protected Areas provided a presentation on water availability engagement. Water availability is part of the ministerial mandate letter for Environment and Protected Areas, and it has been a focus area since then. The Government of Alberta will be engaging key water-using sectors, Indigenous communities, and other partners on how Alberta can best address opportunities and barriers to enhance water management and make more water available for use. Engagement will start in October when notification letters sent to stakeholders and Indigenous organizations and will continue through to 2025. Some specific topics the Government of Alberta will engage about are:

- measurements and reporting
- sector-specific conservation, efficiency, and productivity policy tools
- alternative water sources and wastewater reuse
- rainwater use
- water allocation and transfers
- transfers between major basins
- streamlining through exemptions

The Government of Alberta intends to share the results of the engagement process with the AWC and other partners in the future.

Discussion

- **Q:** Inter-basin transfers are noted as an engagement topic in the slides. This has been ruled out for years, has that changed?
 - **A:** We're continuing the principle of first in time, first in right, but we're open to hearing about circumstances that might warrant inter-basin transfers and considering how those could be managed.
- **Q:** The province has taken the position that First Nations are entitled to licenses, but the First Nations did not accept that. Have those issues been resolved?
 - **A:** That is a larger conversation. We are working within the established legislative framework, and we expect to hear there are opportunities to improve both legislation and other policy tools.
- **Q:** The engagement outline states that there will be ongoing consultation in 2025. Is there a timeline the government is aiming for?
 - **A:** The timeline in 2025 is vague to not presuppose the outcome of the engagement. There are a lot of ideas for how to enhance water management, ranging in scope from local solutions to systemic ones. We are aiming to complete this work within the timeframe of the mandate letter.
- **Q:** Will the recommendations of the audit report be addressed through this process? Water conservation objectives or instream flow objectives that meet aquatic health guidelines need to be established before allocating water to other uses.
 - **A:** We expect them to come up through this process, and we know we will have to view water management holistically.
- **Q:** There is significant interest in nature-based solutions and natural infrastructure. Can the Alberta Wetland Policy help achieve goals around water management, and storage in particular?
 - **A:** Through this engagement process we also hope to hear about things that are working and should be maintained. Whether infrastructure is natural or engineered, it will help the discussion if there is an understanding of the economic and environmental consequences and context.
- **Q:** Has the department identified where the opportunities might be in the province?
 - **A:** This engagement is province-wide, but we recognize that not all opportunities are province-wide; some may be region-specific. We are not altering *Water for Life* goals or key directions, and place- and sector-based solutions are part of that.
- **Q:** The language around flexibility and openness creates uncertainty. Will a feedback summary be shared with stakeholders? It is important for all sectors and all beneficiaries of water to have full engagement and an opportunity for feedback.
 - **A:** We recognize there will be a need to prioritize what is feasible and impactful, and that these will need to be communicated back. We will seek ideas and opportunities first, then undergo a prioritization exercise including consideration for regulatory or system delivery. We have plans to share information throughout the process.

Andre Asselin, co-chair of the Drought Mutual Support Committee, provided an update on the committee. The committee has been meeting monthly since early 2024, and it provides a platform for AWC sectors to share information on drought-related activities. The committee has documented those activities in a spreadsheet, which will be available on request and to AWC members through the board's SharePoint site. As drought conditions have improved, the committee is requesting it be disbanded with the option to reconvene if drought conditions

worsen by electronic approval. They are requesting a presentation on drought conditions in February to help determine if the committee should be reconvened for the spring.

There were no questions or comments.

Decision 67.2: The board approved disbanding the Drought Mutual Support Committee with an option to reconvene via electronic approval if drought conditions worsen.

3 Water for Life Action Plan Project Team Update

Andre Asselin, co-chair of the *Water for Life* Action Plan project team, provided a presentation on the team's status and final deliverables.

The original intent of this project was to develop a multi-sector action plan for the *Water for Life* strategy, but the team was unable to complete that deliverable due to the complex and ambitious nature of the task. In June 2024, the project team requested a change to the project scope and a timeline extension. The board approved the request, and the team has since worked to develop deliverables based on the amended scope. The team is now presenting an internal "lessons learned" report to support AWC business planning and future project teams, and a factsheet that will be posted on the AWC's website to inform non-AWC members that the project has been complete. A communications plan that outlines how each document will be used and key messages about the project has also been provided for decision.

There were no questions or comments.

Decision 67.3: The board approved the Water for Life Action Plan project Communications Plan by consensus.

Decision 67.4: The board approved the Water for Life Action Plan Project Report for internal use by AWC members by consensus.

Decision 67.5: The board approved the Water for Life Action Plan factsheet for posting on the project page on the AWC's website by consensus.

Decision 67.6: The board approved disbanding the Water for Life Action Plan project team by consensus.

4 Using the *Building Resiliency to Multi-year Drought Guide* Update from WPACs

In 2020, the board approved the *Building Resiliency to Multi-Year Drought in Alberta Guide*, a companion report, and workshop and communication materials. Since that time, WPACs have engaged the municipalities in their watersheds about building resiliency to drought using the guide and associated materials. Mary Ellen Shain of the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance and Catherine Pierce of the Battle River Watershed Alliance provided a presentation on the drought resiliency workshops the WPACs hosted in 2023 and 2024.

Highlights from the presentation included:

- Six workshops were held between November 30, 2023, and March 7, 2024. They were held in Vegreville, Blackfalds, Grande Prairie, Cochrane, Lethbridge, and Athabasca.

- There were over 500 participants across the sessions, largely representing municipalities, but also included GoA staff, AWC members, industry, NGOs, and Indigenous communities.
- The WPAC investment to plan and host the sessions was at least \$130,000.
- Participants appreciated the workshops, resources, and other support, but noted that it is challenging to find resources for specific regions online, and staff capacity is limited for small municipalities.
- The following needs were identified through the workshops:
 - templates to help municipalities develop drought plans
 - content relevant to Indigenous communities, including the federal role in water management
 - continuous updates to the guide and workshop materials (e.g., some funding sources and resources no longer exist, and new resources have been created)
 - increased funding for on-ground restoration programs

WPACs pivoted quickly to provide regional and local support at a cost of over \$130,000 in staff time, travel and hosting expenses to bring communities together for planning and response on building drought resilience. WPACs are well positioned to support drought management and planning, and they regularly seek out and share regionally relevant information. The WPACs will continue to share provincial messaging and resources via their communication networks and connect people to the appropriate contacts and resources to address their needs and to improve preparedness for droughts and floods.

Discussion:

- **Q:** The presentation notes that there has been a lag between when the guide was complete and when it was used by WPACs, and some of the information in the toolkit is now outdated. There wasn't an indication of next steps. Has a plan for updating the guide been discussed?
 - **A:** We have updated the workshop materials, but there is no specific directive to update it. All WPACs work separately and have individual budgets, and ideally, we would like the AWC to take on something like this.
 - **Comment:** The AWC's recommendation was for WPACs to take the lead on updating the guide as needed, so this will require some further discussion.

Action 67.2: Andre to follow-up with WPACs on a process for updating the *Building Resilience to Multi-Year Drought Guide*.

5 Water Conservation, Efficiency, and Productivity – Sector Reporting

Andre Asselin presented an update on the results of the water conservation, efficiency, and productivity (CEP) sector reporting for the 2017-2022 period. Major water-using sectors convened last fall and reported on their performance indicators and contributions to CEP goals established by the previous project team in 2017. The updates were compiled into a summary report that contains background on the CEP series of projects, and both individual sector updates and collective results.

Some results from the summary report include:

- Several sectors maintained the progress of the initial reporting period or demonstrated improvements.

- Other sectors saw a decline in efficiency and productivity, but often had increased production.
- Declines were due to sector-specific circumstances, which are detailed in the report.

The sectors who provided updates were given time to review their sections of the report for accuracy and clarity before it was sent to the AWC board for a decision, however some late edits were submitted, and the report needs further edits. The board is asked to approve the report with the additional submitted changes along with the communication plan. Once the report is approved, the AWC will work with the Government of Alberta and the water-using sector on key messages for communication of the report.

Discussion:

- **Comment:** The industry caucus discussed the report this morning, and there are some corrections needed in the report that were missed during the review period.
- **Q:** Did the topics of drought management and water availability come up during this update process?
 - **A:** It wasn't specifically discussed, but engagement on CEP looks to be a part of the Government of Alberta's water management engagement. It's part of the broader picture.
- **Q:** The Government of Alberta's engagement process seems to suggest there could be some changes to water management. Will that include water licensing and the way water is apportioned or shared, and how would that impact industry?
 - **A:** The Government of Alberta will maintain the First in Time, First in Right principle, but we are open to improvements in water allocations or other decisions.
- **Q:** Can you characterize the edits needed to the draft report?
 - **A:** They are largely mathematics. Some of the numbers need to be corrected, and it wasn't caught during the August and September review. There are some wording revisions needed to clarify baseline versus reporting years, and to provide some context for activities occurring during the reporting years; for example, the reporting period is 2017-2022, and in 2017 there were significant changes in the electricity sector due to coal to gas conversions and the coal phase out.
- **Comment:** It might be advisable to have a meeting with all the water-using sector representatives who provided updates so we can collectively review the edits.
- **Q:** Is the report coming back to the board for approval after the edits are made?
 - **A:** No, the request today is to approve it with changes. The final version will be sent to the board, but not for decision.

Decision 67.7: The board approved the Water Conservation, Efficiency, and Productivity Sector Plan Implementation – 2023 report with changes as noted above by consensus.

Decision 67.8: The board approved the Water Conservation, Efficiency, and Productivity Sector Plan Implementation – 2023 communications plan by consensus.

Action 67.3: AWC staff to schedule a meeting with the water-using sectors to review the edits to the draft CEP update report.

6 Administration

9.1 Approve summary report from the June 13, 2024, board meeting

Several edits to the June 2024 meeting summary were submitted to staff and incorporated into the document. There were no further questions or comments, and the minutes were approved by consensus.

Decision 67.9: The board approved the June 2024 meeting summary by consensus, and it will be posted to the website.

9.2 Review actions from last meeting

A detailed updates on the action item from the June board meeting was provided in the briefing package.

9.3 Approve the 2025 Core Budget

The proposed budget for 2025 was included in the briefing package. Andre Asselin reviewed the budget, including any assumptions made when it was developed. The budget reflects inflation, the hybrid approach to meetings, and a notable increase in the communications and engagement line item as the AWC staff need additional support to increase outreach.

Discussion

- **Q:** What is the long-term funding security outlook for the Council? There is also a note about us recruiting for an additional staff member, is that included in the budget?
 - **A:** The current grant agreement runs to March 2027. There are deferred contributions noted in the ED report, which belongs to Environment and Protected Areas. The use of those funds is contingent on our discussions with them, but it will likely be used to cover funding needs in future years to reduce the financial burden on Environment and Protected Areas. The salary amount in the budget represents five staff, and we currently have four, so a new staff member is included in the budget.

Decision 67.10: The board approved the 2025 core budget by consensus.

9.4 Receive an update on business planning and approve next steps

The board previously approved a process to guide development of the next multi-year business plan. Since then, an initial survey was distributed to board members and several responses were collected. Andre Asselin provided a presentation that summarized the main findings from the survey, and a potential path forward.

Conclusions based on the survey results were:

- While most responses show that the main purposes of the Council have not drastically changed, there is broad support to host a workshop to update the focus of the Council for the next few years.
- A workshop is a good opportunity to reflect on and discuss how this organization can position itself to best contribute to water management in Alberta.
- There is an opportunity to align with and support EPA's water management priorities and emerging issues.

- There is also an opportunity to start discussing potential projects at the same time to make best use of a window to contribute to shared priorities.

There was a request for the board to approve a business planning and project identification workshop to revise the business plan and discuss priorities in 2025.

Discussion

- No questions or comments.

Decision 67.11: The board approved hosting a facilitated business planning and project identification workshop to revise the plan and discuss priorities in February 2025.

7 Presentation on Surface Water Management Performance Audit Findings

Assistant Auditor General Eric Leonty provided a presentation from the Office of the Auditor General on its findings and recommendations after auditing Alberta's surface water management.

Highlights from the presentation were as follows:

- The OAG is an independent office. It is non-partisan and serves the entire legislative assembly of Alberta, and by extension, Albertans. It is of the utmost importance that the OAG completes credible audits. The OAG has approximately 150 staff in Edmonton and Calgary and completes financial statement audits and performance audits.
- In addition to surface water management, the OAG has done environmental audits on flood mitigation, orphan wells, pest management, and several others. Past audits have not looked at water supply broadly, and there is growing public interest in the topic.
- The audit scope was determined by extensive research, interviews with department staff and experts, and the Alberta Water Council website was one of the information sources.
- The four areas included in the audit are long-term planning, licensing, compliance monitoring, and public reporting. The key findings for each were as follows:
 - Long-term planning:
 - inadequate process for developing and updating water conservation objectives (WCOs)
 - most major basins lack WCOs
 - effectiveness of existing WCOs is unknown
 - Licensing:
 - Guidelines are unclear and the approval process is ineffective
 - Compliance monitoring:
 - lack of monitoring and enforcement of license compliance
 - water usage data is incomplete and not validated
 - Public reporting:
 - no reporting on water allocation
 - no reporting on water usage
 - reporting on water level and flow data is available
- Based on the audit findings, the OAG had several recommendations for the department:
 - Establish a process for identification of when to develop, assess, and update WCOs.
 - Improve licensing and compliance monitoring processes.

- Report relevant and reliable information.
- Management accepted the recommendations and is working on an implementation plan, which includes specific actions and timeline. We expect the implementation plan to be completed by early 2025. We will review the implementation plan and assess if the planned actions will likely result in the recommendations being implemented. If we see any gaps in the plan, we will work with management to resolve them. We will then monitor the implementation progress and once management advises that they've implemented the recommendations, we will do a follow up assessment to confirm.

The presentation slides will be provided to board members following the meeting.

Discussion:

- **Q:** The scope of the audit was surface water, and groundwater was excluded. Was that intentional?
 - **A:** Initially, both surface and groundwater were in the audit's scope. In the initial planning stages for the audit, we found that groundwater is very different than surface water; WCOs are not applicable, and only 1% of groundwater is allocated. So, we decided not to include it, but it is something we will look at in a future audit.
- **Q:** The presentation noted there's no public reporting on water allocation or use. The Alberta Energy Regulator has annual reporting for the energy sector; was that considered out of scope?
 - **A:** The Alberta Energy Regulator was out of scope for the audit, but we are aware that some information is available for the energy sector, and it was noted in the report. Our report notes that water allocation at a license level is public. However, allocation at sub-basin and basin level is difficult to obtain from what is publicly available, especially for the average person.
- **Q:** Does the OAG have a guiding standard for how enforcement and compliance should look for licensing?
 - **A:** It should start with the baseline legislation and regulation; the established rules that need to be followed. It is challenging if exceptions are made and the logic and rationale supporting the decision is not documented. If there are gaps in the legislation and regulation, we would make recommendations to address those. It is important to be clear on what is expected of license holders.
- **Q:** How do different regulatory tools come into play? The department uses both One Stop and the Digital Regulatory Assurance System (DRAS), which makes management more complicated.
 - **A:** We identified the ongoing implementation of DRAS and how that might influence controls and interactions between departments and license holders as a complexity for this audit. Some of the opportunities to implement recommendations may be through implementation of DRAS. We expect that the audit follow-up will provide a clear understanding of how DRAS can help.
- **Q:** Are there any recommendations for improving understanding for compliance requirements and the intent behind them, and measuring their effectiveness?
 - **A:** The audit focuses on the standard set by the department for compliance monitoring and the expectations of license holders. Through our findings we found both approval and compliance monitoring can have exceptions where other things are taken into consideration. Our expectation is that unless there is a non-compliance situation, there is some latitude. The philosophy of working with license holders has

benefits, but there should be a threshold that when breached, action is triggered, and the rationale for decisions is documented.

- **Q:** Was any consideration given to the sustainability of decisions or program directions, given changes in governments or priorities?
 - **A:** Our focus is on the implementation of policy, and whether it's operationally effective, rather than the political decisions that influence policies. Ultimately our concern is that when processes are implemented the results are reported back to Albertans and that they are achieving the outcomes articulated by the Government of Alberta and its departments.
- **Q:** Are you looking for WCOs to be established in all watersheds and in all license situations?
 - **A:** Originally, we considered recommending that WCOs are established for all major basins. It was reconsidered after conversations with management, and instead decided a process should be established that proactively identifies when WCOs are needed. The process for developing a WCO is time intensive and takes a lot of resources, and there are some areas of the province where they aren't needed right now.
- **Q:** The audit findings have a strong emphasis on WCOs. There are two mechanisms in the *Water Act*, the other being water management plans. Were they also considered?
 - **A:** WCOs are part of water management plans. The management plans are typically in place as a strategy to fix a basin that is already experiencing a problem. They were considered, but we focused on planning and proactive processes instead. The WCOs should take industrial uses into account; it will result in better risk management so all needs can be served as well as possible.
- **Q:** Some WCOs that are in place now aren't met and can't be met because they were established because flow conditions have changed since they were established, and the range of variability wasn't captured. Many license holders rely on Alberta River Basins and Environment and Climate Change Canada monitoring stations, and it would be cost prohibitive to have monitoring stations at all withdrawal sites, however, license conditions say the flow must be measured at that point. Did the audit address these issues?
 - **A:** We didn't look at those aspects of specific licenses, but we did highlight the importance of evaluating the WCOs, because many were developed and implemented many years ago. A lot of licenses don't have any conditions, and the license holder can take water at any point. Feasibility should be considered, but ideally not at the expense of achieving the WCO.
- **Q:** Did the audit consider the process for reporting water use in general? For livestock, most licenses are small to minimal, and it would be cost prohibitive to report use.
 - **A:** It is up to the department to determine how to respond to the findings. If there is a situation where it is cost prohibitive to require licensees to report usage, and if the rationale makes sense and there are processes behind the decision, that's okay.
- **Comment:** Environment and Protected Areas is continuing to respond to the audit, and it will help inform engagement and help us improve how we manage water. We have taken steps to address the findings, including investments in the data and reporting system and digitizing records. We recognize the value in creating a transparent process for WCOs, and the need for performance measures to evaluate them. There are a myriad of tools we could use, and we are considering which are appropriate for which circumstances.

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

Steph Neufeld, a co-chair of the project team, presented an update on the team's progress. The project goal is to develop a source water protection (SWP) web platform and educational resources to assist drinking water providers with the risk assessment process, support integration and encourage greater collaboration for SWP planning, and to develop recommendations for an implementation phase to support mitigation of risks and a future strategy for SWP.

The web platform is largely complete, and the team hosted a virtual workshop on October 1, 2024, to provide an overview of the project and the web platform and allow participants to complete a hands-on exercise using the platform. Approximately 35 people attended, and feedback from the session will be used to improve the tool and associated communication materials. A recording of the workshop will be available in the coming weeks. A second workshop is planned during the Alberta Water & Wastewater Operators Association conference in November.

The team has experienced some minor delays; the workshops were postponed from the summer to the fall to allow for more software development and greater participant availability. As such, they are requesting a timeline extension to June 2025.

There were no questions or comments.

Decision 67.12: The board approved the proposed change to the SWP Phase I: Risk Assessment Tools and Data terms of reference to extend the project end date from November 2024 to June 2025.

9 AWC Recommendation Tracking Update

Anuja Hoddinott provided a presentation on the AWC's recommendation tracking process, which is an annual exercise that involves working with targeted implementers to track and report on the status of AWC project recommendations.

Two recommendation tracking reports are available for board members, a detailed report and an update report. The detailed report lists all recommendations grouped by project, along with updates from the implementers. The update report provides a general overview of implementation progress and focuses on changes since the last report.

There are updates for recommendations from 17 projects and 288 total recommendations are tracked. One new project and associated recommendations was added in 2024. Some recommendations for the 2017 CEP project, the *Water for Life* Implementation Review (2012), and Wetland Policy and Implementation Plan project (2008) are now complete. There are 17 pending recommendations from several projects, with the bulk (13) from the *Water for Life* Implementation Review that was completed in 2021. The *Water for Life* Action Plan project, SWP Phase 1: Risk and Assessment Data and Tools project, and the Improving Drought Resilience in Alberta through a Simulation project will be added to the 2025 recommendation tracking update.

Discussion

- **Q:** Is there a role for the AWC in revisiting some of the implemented or closed projects? The issues we dealt with have not necessarily been resolved, even though the recommendations have been implemented. There could be value in screening past work and understanding the status of the issue and if there's more that could be done.
 - **A:** It's something the AWC could think about and discuss.
 - **A:** I would love to see some of the teams revisited. There is a good opportunity to pull former team members together if they are still active in water management to help frame the discussion and provide more rigor.
- **Comment:** I am happy to hear that all recommendations from the Wetland Policy Project have been implemented. There were six recommendations and an 81-step implementation plan; it is a significant achievement to have implemented those recommendations and congratulations to everyone who was involved in that team.

10 Administration (Continued)

10.5 Approve the 2025 Operational Plan

The executive committee has drafted an operational plan for the upcoming year based on existing workloads, sector capacity, and priority work the Council needs to be ready to address. This year includes a business planning and project identification workshop in February. The executive committee recommends the board approve the draft 2025 operational plan.

Discussion

- **Q:** Are we approving the plan with consideration that there may be changes after the business planning workshop in February?
 - **A:** Yes, the plan can be adapted and there will be regular updates at board meetings.

Decision 67.13: The board approved the 2025 operational plan by consensus with flexibility for revisions based on the business planning workshop in February 2025.

10.6 Appoint executive officers for Government and NGO Sector Groups

The current terms of the Government and NGO sector groups expire at the end of this meeting, and executive officers have been identified for each of those sectors. The current executive officers for the Government and NGO sector groups, Jay White and Nancy Mackay, have engaged their sectors on this item. Terms are for two years, and consecutive terms can be served.

The Government sector group has agreed that Nancy Mackay will be the executive officer for their sector group.

The NGO sector group has agreed Jay White will continue as the executive officer for their sector group. They will be in place until the end of 2026.

10.7 Approve the AWC's Process Guidelines

The AWC's Process guidelines are reviewed and updated every three years, and a process to complete the review was approved at the board meeting in June. Several clarifying edits were submitted to staff and incorporated in the version that was included in the briefing package.

Decision 67.14: The board approved the updated Process Guidelines by consensus, and they will be posted to the Council’s website and SharePoint site.

10.8 Approve 2025 meeting dates

The executive committee has suggested the board meet three times in 2025, with the business planning workshop aligned with the February meeting. The suggested dates were provided in the briefing package.

Discussion

- **Comment:** The February board meeting and workshop are planned for reading week, and many people go on vacation with their families during that time.

Decision 67.15: The board approved the 2025 meeting dates pending a possible change to the February workshop and board meeting date by consensus.

Action 67.4: AWC staff to distribute a poll to determine the best date for the February board meeting and business planning workshop.

11 Information reports and opportunity for questions

11.1 Executive Director’s report

The report was included in the board package. There were no comments or questions.

11.2 AWC sector updates (Including the GoA update)

The update was included in the board package and was also posted to the board’s SharePoint site. It was noted that the GoA update contained information on recent organizational changes within Environment and Protected Areas, including the establishment of the Water and Circular Economy Board branch.

11.3 Improving Water Availability in Alberta Working Group Update

An information report on the status of the work was included in the board package.

Discussion

- **Q:** Has Environment and Protected Areas identified any participants for this working group?
 - **A:** Participants have not been identified. The Government of Alberta has a process for this, and engagement is focusing on the regulatory and policy side of water availability; this project should focus on non-regulatory methods to improve water availability.
- **Q:** Without representatives from the provincial governments, how can we encapsulate their perspective on this issue? We need to make sure the outcome of the project is valuable and can be implemented.
 - **A:** That is a valid concern, and we received new information relevant to this team during today’s meeting. The working group should consider this new information before developing terms of reference; we don’t want to work at cross-purposes with other processes, and its appropriate to consider if this is the right time for this project.

- **Q:** Water use intensity is impacted by the political choices being made, and there should be a strategic assessment of that. It impacts both users and the environment. Is it being considered in the water management engagement process?
 - **A:** The provincial government is looking for opportunities to enhance water availability and considering that sort of thing will be part of the process.

11.4 CASA project updates for the AWC Board

A written update was provided on CASA projects for the AWC board; there were no questions or comments. There were no questions or comments.

New or other business

No new business was identified.

An evaluation survey link was provided in the MS Teams chat and will be sent to board members following the meeting.

The AWC is recruiting for a project manager, and board members were encouraged to share the posting with their networks. The closing date is October 27, 2024.

The next board meeting is scheduled for February 20, 2025, in Edmonton, but is subject to change depending on the outcome of the meeting poll that will be distributed after the meeting. The board meeting will be preceded by the business planning and project identification workshop.

The board meeting adjourned at 2:40 pm.

Attachment 1: Meeting #67 Attendees

*Denotes remote attendance via MS Teams

In Attendance

AWC Directors and Alternates

Alan Corbett, NGO (WPACs)
Amber Link, Government (Rural)*
Bill Chapman, Government (Small Urban)*
Brian Deheer, NGO (Environmental)
Cindy Shepel, Government (Large Urban)
Dan Moore, Industry (Forestry)
Doug Kaupp, NGO (WPACs)
Jamie Wuite, GoA and Provincial Authorities
(Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation)
Janice Linehan, Industry (Mining)*
Jason Unger, NGO (Environmental)*
Jay White, NGO (Lake Environment
Conservation)
Jeanette Sarac, GoA and Provincial
Authorities (Health)*
Jeff Shipton, Industry (Forestry)
Jim Hackett, Industry (Power Generation)
John Conrad, GoA and Provincial Authorities
(Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation)*
Kate Rich, GoA and Provincial Authorities
(Environment and Protected Areas)

Lesley Peterson, NGO (Fisheries Habitat
Conservation)
Margo Jarvis Redelback, Industry (Irrigation)
Maureen Bell, NGO (Environmental)*
Melody Garner-Skiba, Industry (Livestock)
Nancy Mackay, Government (Large Urban)
Nevin Rosaasen, Industry (Cropping)*
Reg Warkentin, Industry (Cropping)
Richard Phillips, Industry (Irrigation)*
Rob Hoffman, Industry (Chemical and
Petrochemical)
Rob van Diemen, Industry (Livestock)
Steph Neufeld, NGO (Lake Environment
Conservation)
Tara Payment, Industry (Oil & Gas)
Tracy Scott, NGO (Wetlands Conservation)
Vicki Lightbown, GoA and Provincial
Authorities (Science and Research)*

Andre Asselin, Executive Director (ex-
officio)

Guests:

Catherine Pierce, Battle River Watershed Alliance
Cheryl Schneider, Officer of the Auditor General
Eric Leonty, Office of the Auditor General
Mary Ellen Shain, North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance
Merry Turtiak, Jobs, Economy, and Trade
Marcella Zicha, Office of the Auditor General
Nancy Wang, Office of the Auditor General

Presenters:

Andre Asselin, Alberta Water Council (Item 2.0, 3.0, and 5.0)
Merry Turtiak, Environment and Protected Areas (Item 2.0)
Catherine Pierce, Battle River Watershed Alliance and Mary Ellen Shein, North Saskatchewan
Watershed Alliance (Item 4.0)
Eric Leonty, Office of the Auditor General (Item 7.0)
Steph Neufeld, Alberta Lake Management Society (Item 8.0)

Observers:

Curt Horning, Environment and Protected Areas
Lieserl Woods, Environment and Climate Change Canada

Jaclyn Schmidt, Environment and Protected Areas*

AWC Staff and Contractors:

Alec Carrigy, Anuja Hoddinott, Katie Duffett

Absent with Regrets:

Darren Calliou, Government (Métis Settlements)

Deanna Cottrell, Industry (Oil & Gas)

Sherri Wilson, GoA and Provincial Authorities (Environment and Protected Areas)

Attachment 2: Meeting #67 Decision Log and Action Items

Decisions

Decision 67.1: The board approved the agenda by consensus.

Decision 67.2: The board approved disbanding the Drought Mutual Support Committee with an option to reconvene via electronic approval if drought conditions worsen.

Decision 67.3: The board approved the Water for Life Action Plan project Communications Plan by consensus.

Decision 67.4: The board approved the Water for Life Action Plan Project Report for internal use by AWC members by consensus.

Decision 67.5: The board approved the Water for Life Action Plan factsheet for posting on the project page on the AWC's website by consensus.

Decision 67.6: The board approved disbanding the Water for Life Action Plan project team by consensus.

Decision 67.7: The board approved the Water Conservation, Efficiency, and Productivity Sector Plan Implementation – 2023 report with changes as noted above by consensus.

Decision 67.8: The board approved the Water Conservation, Efficiency, and Productivity Sector Plan Implementation – 2023 communications plan by consensus.

Decision 67.9: The board approved the June 2024 meeting summary by consensus, and it will be posted to the website.

Decision 67.10: The board approved the 2025 core budget by consensus.

Decision 67.11: The board approved hosting a facilitated business planning and project identification workshop to revise the plan and discuss priorities in February 2025.

Decision 67.12: The board approved the proposed change to the SWP Phase 1: Risk Assessment Tools and Data terms of reference to extend the project end date from November 2024 to June 2025.

Decision 67.13: The board approved the 2025 operational plan by consensus with flexibility for revisions based on the business planning workshop in February 2025.

Decision 67.14: The board approved the updated Process Guidelines by consensus, and they will be posted to the Council's website and SharePoint site.

Decision 67.15: The board approved the 2025 meeting dates pending a possible change to the February workshop and board meeting date by consensus.

Action Items

Action 67.1: Merry to follow-up with Margo on data related to compliance inspections completed during the recent drought.

Action 67.2: Andre to follow-up with WPACs on a process for updating the *Building Resilience to Multi-Year Drought Guide*.

Action 67.3: AWC staff to schedule a meeting with the water-using sectors to review the edits to the draft CEP update report.

Action 67.4: AWC staff to distribute a poll to determine the best date for the February board meeting and business planning workshop.