



## ALBERTA WATER COUNCIL

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MEETING #70

October 23, 2025

QEII Building, Edmonton

### Executive Summary

The board received a presentation on the draft terms of reference for the Updating the Guide for Building Resiliency to Multi-year Drought project. The project aims to renew the Building Resiliency to Multi-year Drought in Alberta Guide and its associated workshop materials by updating any out-of-date information and including any new information, resources, or tools that have been developed since the original release of the Guide in early 2021, including lessons learned from the 2023-2024 drought. The board approved the draft terms of reference, struck the project team, and disbanded the working group.

The board received a presentation on the draft terms of reference for the Artificial Intelligence Applications for Water Management project. The project goal is to advance understanding of artificial intelligence as a decision support tool for water management through a combination of virtual information sessions (webinars) and an in-person workshop. The board approved the draft terms of reference, struck the project team, and disbanded the working group.

Information presentations were provided on EPA's Surface Water Quality Management Frameworks and the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance's application of the Freshwater Health Index to State of the Watershed reporting. Both presentations were recorded and will be available on the [AWC's YouTube page](#).

The board approved processes for developing performance measures for the 2025-2027 Business Plan and for updating the Multi-year Communications Strategy. The 2026 meeting dates, core budget, and operational plan were also approved.

Megan Van Ham, who joins the board as the director to represent the Large Urban sector effective at the end of this meeting, and Dan Moore were identified as the executive officers and representatives for the Government and Industry sector groups, respectively, on the executive committee.

The board was provided information updates on the Source Water Protection project, AWC sector updates including the GoA update, and the Healthy Aquatic Ecosystem Working Group. Potential new work on the Water License Transfer System was raised by EPA and will be discussed as more information comes available. Due to capacity constraints, the Healthy Aquatic Ecosystem Working Group has been paused while that potential priority work is being explored.

The next board meeting will be held on February 19, 2026, at the Water Centre in Calgary.

## Summary of Discussion

The board meeting was convened at 10:01 a.m.

### 1 Convene meeting

Nancy Mackay chaired the meeting and reviewed the agenda. The agenda was adopted by consensus with the addition of an administration item to update the signing authorities..

Megan Van Ham from the City of Calgary was introduced as the incoming representative for the large urban sector, replacing Nancy Mackay effective at the end of this board meeting.

***Decision 70.1: The board approved the agenda with the above noted change by consensus.***

### 2 Updating the Drought Resiliency Guide Working Group

Co-chair Margo Jarvis Redelback, from the Alberta Irrigation Districts Association, provided a presentation on the draft terms of reference developed by the Updating the Drought Resiliency Guide Working Group.

The proposed project aims to renew the *Building Resiliency to Multi-Year Drought in Alberta Guide* and its associated workshop materials by updating any out-of-date information and including any new information, resources, or tools that have been developed since the original release of the Guide in early 2021, including lessons learned from the 2023-2024 drought.

The presentation summarized the project's goal, objectives, budget, and timeline. Highlights of the presentation included:

- Background on drought and why it is an important issue for Alberta both now and in the future.
- The history of drought projects within the AWC, notably the initial project team that developed the guide and the Building Resiliency to Multi-year Drought in Alberta through a Simulation Project Team, which built on the content of the guide by testing drought mitigation and response through a workshop.
- The WPACs held workshops using the Guide to support drought response during the 2023–2024 drought, and there were over 500 participants across the province.
- The intent of the original project was for WPACs to deliver the Guide to communities within their watershed. For this project, one of the goals will be to make the information accessible to a broader audience.
- The project team will seek to engage Indigenous communities in the work, as lack of Indigenous perspectives was identified as a gap in the Guide during the workshops hosted by WPACs. The engagement will focus on leveraging existing contacts.
- This project is not expected to require any dedicated funding beyond the core funding for operation of the project team (e.g., stakeholder support, hosting, and final report preparation).

### Discussion

- **Q:** Can the timeline of this project be accelerated so it can be completed by February 2027 instead of June 2027?

- **A:** The working group extended the timeline to allow extra time for engagement. They will try to engage Indigenous communities based on the feedback that Indigenous perspectives were an information gap, and that may take some time. If the engagement goes smoothly the project team could complete the work by early 2027.
- This project was one of the top priorities from the project selection process and at that time it was identified as a more expedited project. We should try to accelerate it if at all possible and we can begin with a shorter call for members period so we can start meetings in 2025 rather than waiting until January.
- **Q:** What will the Indigenous engagement look like?
  - **A:** WPACs have been working to establish relationships with the communities within their watersheds, and the working group hoped the project team can leverage those existing relationships.
- Key task 3.1 focuses on Indigenous communities, but it should be revised so it is applicable to all communities.

Two changes to the draft terms of reference were proposed:

- a text change in key task 3.1 to change “Indigenous communities” to “all communities”
- a change to the project timeline so the end date is February 2027

***Decision 70.2: The board approved the Updating the Guide for Building Resiliency to Multi-Year Drought in Alberta project draft terms of reference with the above noted changes by consensus.***

***Decision 70.3: The board approved the creation of the Updating the Guide for Building Resiliency to Multi-Year Drought in Alberta Project Team by consensus.***

***Decision 70.4: The board approved disbanding the Updating the Guide for Building Resiliency to Multi-Year Drought in Alberta Working Group by consensus.***

A call for members for the project team will be distributed following the meeting.

### **3 Facilitating Cross-Sector Technology, Education, and Planning Working Group**

Aravin Amirthalingam, from the City of Calgary, provided a presentation on the draft terms of reference developed by the Facilitating Cross-Sector Technology, Education, and Planning Working Group.

The proposed project, titled Artificial Intelligence Applications for Water Management, aims to advance understanding of artificial intelligence as a decision support tool for water management through a combination of virtual information sessions (webinars) and an in-person workshop.

The presentation summarized the project’s goal, objectives, budget, and timeline. Highlights of the presentation included:

- Artificial intelligence is seeing increased use to support management decisions, and it would benefit decision-makers in Alberta to hear lessons learned from other people and organizations who have experience with the process and the challenges and opportunities that have arisen.

- A webinar series gives opportunities to tackle many topics and broaden the audience, and a final workshop would bring that information together and be used as a basis for any recommendations in the final report.
- The draft terms of reference propose a budget that includes project funds in addition to core funds for the team's operation. Those funds would be used to host the webinars and workshop (e.g., venue, catering, speaker costs).

### Discussion

- **Q:** Will the speakers include researchers working on artificial intelligence, and how will the project team limit the scope of work into something manageable? Water management is a very broad topic.
  - **A:** The project team may need support from subject matter experts to help them determine what topics should be tackled or to moderate a technical discussion; it will be discussed early in the process. The project team will also have to determine the scope of the webinars and workshop and refine their focus. That will also be a part of their early discussions but may be in part determined by speaker availability.
- **Q:** Will the project team incorporate the impacts of the use of artificial intelligence and datacentres on water and energy use?
  - **A:** The project team will be looking at applications of artificial intelligence as a support tool for decision-making during operations, so the environmental impacts of developing AI are not in scope for this project. The potential topic areas are still in development, so the team may consider it if there is an available speaker. There will be recommendations for areas of future work coming out of this project, so it's possible environmental impacts could be included there.

***Decision 70.5: The board approved the Artificial Intelligence Applications for Water Management project draft terms of reference by consensus.***

***Decision 70.6: The board approved the creation of the Artificial Intelligence Applications for Water Management Project Team by consensus.***

***Decision 70.7: The board approved disbanding the Facilitating Cross-Sector Technology, Education, and Planning Working Group by consensus.***

A call for members will be distributed following the meeting.

## **4 Information Presentation: EPA Environmental Management Framework Reports**

Nicole Pysh from Alberta Environment and Protected Areas provided a presentation on Alberta's Surface Water Quality Management Frameworks.

Surface Water Quality Management Frameworks establish a proactive approach to monitoring and managing the long-term cumulative effects of human activities on water quality in the mainstem rivers within a region. Two frameworks have been in place for more than 10 years in the Lower Athabasca Region (2012) and in the South Saskatchewan Region (2014) and two new

frameworks were added more recently in the North Saskatchewan Region (2022) and the Upper Athabasca Region (2022).

The presentation introduced Alberta's Surface Water Quality Management Frameworks, provided an overview of the status of surface water quality and management responses underway in each region, and highlighted stakeholder involvement in management responses to water quality concerns. Highlights from the presentation were based on the 2023 management response reports and included:

- The implementation cycle of the frameworks includes monitoring, verification and evaluation, and reporting in relation to management thresholds. If a trigger or limit is exceeded, a management response is initiated. Management responses include an investigation of cause and an assessment of the effectiveness of any implemented management actions.
- In the Lower Athabasca Region, no limits have been exceeded since the Framework was implemented in 2012. However, some indicators have crossed triggers, as presented in the most recent report. Preliminary assessments have been completed on all indicators crossing triggers, and investigations of cause were closed for several indicators, while others are continuing within a narrowed geographical scope. Management actions have focused on compiling and analyzing surface water quality data within the Muskeg River watershed. Additional actions included enhanced water quality monitoring and developing mitigation measures to manage nitrogen concentrations in the mineable oil sands region. Sub-basins upstream of the Lower Athabasca Region seem to be the source of current and past trigger crossings for lithium, selenium, chloride, barium, and uranium.
- In the Upper Athabasca Region, no limits have been exceeded since the Framework was implemented, but some indicators have crossed triggers. New investigations of cause have been initiated for sulphate and dissolved cobalt, nickel, and uranium. There have also been referred investigations from the Lower Athabasca Region.
- In the North Saskatchewan Region, no limits have been exceeded since the Framework came into effect, but 16 indicators crossed triggers in the most recent published reports. The majority were observed during the open-water season. Preliminary assessments have been performed, and for many indicators there was no evidence of a statistically increasing trend. Some indicators do have evidence of an increasing trend but further actions are pending results of a flow-adjusted analysis.
- For Battle River, limit exceedances and trigger crossings were observed. Both ammonia and MCPA (a pesticide) exceeded limits. Preliminary assessments were completed, and there is some evidence for increasing trends for all indicators aside from sulphate. After flow-adjusted trend analysis is complete, the need for an investigation of cause will be determined. Investigations of cause are underway for the limit exceedances. For ammonia, the driving cause appears to be municipal wastewater effluent, and management actions are being implemented. The investigation of cause for MCPA is focused on identifying hot spots and moments.
- In the South Saskatchewan Region, several indicators have crossed management thresholds since the framework has been implemented. There was a change in statistical methodology between the 2019-2022 and the 2021-2022 reports, which involved moving to rolling averages for yearly data. Six investigations of cause are underway including *E. coli* in Milk River, a multi-parameter investigation in Bow River, chloride in the South Saskatchewan River, selenium in the upper Bow River, and Dicamba (a pesticide) in

South Saskatchewan River. An investigation of cause on total dissolved solids and specific conductivity in the Milk River is complete, and the driving cause was found to be groundwater. Management action development and implementation is underway for salinity in the Milk River and chloride trends in the Bow River and South Saskatchewan River.

- The provincial government's key message is that stakeholder collaboration and partnerships are key to success in maintaining and improving water quality. Stakeholder support is needed to communicate on environmental conditions, participate in investigations of cause, and to identify and implement management actions and report on their effectiveness.

The presentation was recorded and will be made available via the AWC's YouTube channel following the meeting.

### Discussion

- **Q:** There used to be a water quality monitoring station on the North Saskatchewan River on the border with Saskatchewan at Lloydminster. What happened to this station?
  - **A:** The status of the station is unknown, so I will follow-up on that after the meeting.
    - **Post-meeting addition:** They may be referring to the ECCC station, North Saskatchewan River at the Highway #17 Bridge (AL05EF0003). The ECCC station is used for transboundary water quality monitoring and reporting. Reporting is done through the Prairie Provinces Water Board.
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- **Q:** Does the South Saskatchewan Water Quality Plan include the Red Deer sub-basin?
  - **A:** No, but a framework for that region is currently under development.
- **Q:** Why is selenium missing from the update about the Oldman system?
  - **A:** It is being monitored, but it was not specifically included as it hasn't crossed triggers.
    - **Post-meeting addition:** Selenium is a secondary parameter in the South Saskatchewan Region framework. Secondary indicators are parameters of interest that did not have sufficient data to allow for calculation of robust trigger values at the time of framework development. As such, secondary indicators do not officially have thresholds; however, we do continue to monitor and evaluate secondary indicators and will undertake management responses as needed if there is a concerning change in water quality.
- **Q:** Is it possible to separate the data for the SEAWA portion of the South Saskatchewan Region?
  - **A:** I'm unsure and will check into that after the meeting.
    - **Post-meeting addition:** The station at the South Saskatchewan River at Medicine Hat is in the SEAWA watershed. Where identified as necessary, investigations local to the SEAWA watershed may be initiated. Currently, there are investigations in the South Saskatchewan River for chloride and dicamba.
- **Q:** How many of the indicators assessed have triggers or limits?
  - **A:** I will follow up on this after the meeting.

- **Post-meeting addition:** Under the South Saskatchewan Region framework, there are 15 primary indicators and six secondary indicators. All 15 primary indicators have median and 90<sup>th</sup> percentile (peak) triggers. Of the 15 primary indicators, 9 (total ammonia, chloride, nitrate, sulphate, SAR, Sp. Cond., TDS, pH, and E. coli) have limits based on surface water quality guidelines. Secondary indicators are parameters of interest that are currently monitored and evaluated but did not have sufficient data to allow for calculation of robust trigger values at the time of framework development and thus do not have triggers. Secondary indicators also do not have limits, but all six secondary indicators (mercury, selenium, 2,4-D, dicamba, MCPP, MCPA) have surface water quality guidelines that we are able to make comparisons against in lieu of framework-identified limits. For the North Saskatchewan Region, all indicators have triggers except for dissolved oxygen, which is a secondary indicator. Most indicators have limits, with a few exceptions. The full list of triggers and limits can be found in Tables 3 and 4 (pages 31-34) of the Framework document.

## **5 Information Presentation: Transforming Watershed Management - Introducing the Freshwater Health Index to Alberta**

Michelle Gordy from the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance (NSWA) provided a presentation on their ongoing, collaborative work to build the Freshwater Health Index (FHI) as a framework for “State Of” reporting in Alberta.

The FHI provides a more holistic framework for watershed management that integrates indicators of ecosystem vitality, ecosystem services, governance, and engagement. Originally designed for data-poor watersheds in developing nations, FHI has proven effective in diverse regions, offering a scientifically robust, standardized approach that addresses gaps in Alberta’s State of the Watershed reporting system, particularly around governance, equity, and ecosystem services. The NSWA is the first organization to adopt the FHI for North America, and there is expanding interest from other organizations.

Highlights of the presentation included:

- State of the watershed reporting is mandated to the WPACs through *Water for Life* as one of their primary activities. It provides a baseline assessment of the health of the watershed to support management and planning. A wide variety of methods are used, and the connections to decision-making and links to management are unclear.
- The FHI has indicators that examine the strongest signals of ecosystem condition and can be applied to any basin. The indicators are in the categories of ecosystem vitality, ecosystem services, and governance and engagement.
- The results of the FHI application to the North Saskatchewan River watershed provided a high-level perspective of condition and can also represent qualitative measures. It helps prioritize where action is most needed. In the North Saskatchewan River watershed, one of the poorer performing metrics were for biodiversity and habitat.
- The FHI approach combines ecological integrity and ecosystem services and water resource governance, among other benefits. It is freely available, adaptable, and scalable and scientifically supported with multiple peer-reviewed publications. There are also pre-made tools, training materials, and resources available.

- There are ways the framework can be developed for a regional context. The NSWA is undertaking work to expand the framework through a high-impact grant from the Alberta Ecotrust foundation. The work’s objectives are to develop manuals and templates, test scalability and applicability, evaluate capacity and barriers, and build local and scientific credibility.

### Discussion

- **Q:** Were the results in line with your expectations, or were there surprises?
  - **A:** Prior to beginning the analyses, we had discussions with people about what they thought the state of the watershed was. The results matched the stakeholder perspectives quite well. There was room for improvement on some indicators, and much of that is related to the way we collect information.
- **Q:** The Water Rangers look to have applied this tool for the North Saskatchewan Basin already, but their report differs from the NSWA. Why didn’t you adopt the work they’d done to date?
  - **A:** They used a different method altogether, with a different set of indicators and assessed them in a different way. There were also some dimensions they didn’t look at, such as ecosystems services and governance.
- **Q:** How were qualitative measures like enforcement and compliance scored?
  - **A:** Enforcement and compliance, a sub-indicator of the Governance and Engagement dimension, was assessed through stakeholder perception surveys, as were all the sub-indicators. Responses to survey questions were on a 5-point Likert scale. For each section, there was an additional question, asking the person to rate their confidence in their answers. A standard statistical analysis was completed on the results.
- **Q:** As this is the first application of the FHI in North America, are you aware of any interest from other jurisdictions?
  - **A:** We are having conversations with a few groups. We gave a presentation to the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies at their annual conference, by request of the USGS in the United States, and there’s been some interest from the Saskatchewan Association of Watersheds. We also joined the Our Living Waters network and are having conversations about the tool with them, as they are working on governance indicators.

## **6 Administration**

### **6.1 Approve the summary report from the June 12, 2025, meeting**

The summary report was included in the briefing package. The document contains both the summary of the AGM meeting and of the board meeting, and board members were asked to approve the board meeting summary only at this time. The AGM summary will be reviewed during the 2026 AGM. Some comments were submitted to staff and will be incorporated into the final version.

***Decision 70.8: The board approved the June 12, 2025, meeting summary by consensus, and it will be posted to the website.***

## **6.2 Review actions from the last meeting**

A written update was provided in the briefing package.

## **6.3 Approve the 2026 core budget**

The proposed budget for 2026 was included in the briefing package. The executive committee has reviewed and approved the proposed budget for consideration by the board.

***Decision 70.9: The board approved the 2026 core budget by consensus.***

## **6.4 Approve the 2026 operational plan**

The operational plan outlines the expected workload for the coming year based on existing project commitments, staff and sector capacity, and planned administration and communications activities. The executive committee recommends the board approve the draft 2026 operational plan.

***Decision 70.10: The board approved the 2026 operational plan by consensus.***

## **6.5 Approve a process to update the AWC's 2026-2028 Multi-year Communications Strategy**

The AWC's Multi-year Communications Strategy is updated on a regular cycle along with the business plan and process guidelines. The executive committee is tasked with overseeing the process to ensure the strategy remains relevant and updated. The executive committee recommended the following process to revise the strategy:

1. October 2025 – seek board approval of a process to revise the strategy
2. Fall 2025 – staff will review AWC sectors and other approaches to communication to identify emerging trends, consider how to incorporate the elements of the updated business plan, and survey board members to identify preferences or opportunities to improve the existing approach to communicating their work and draft an updated strategy.
3. Winter 2026 – staff will share the results of the review and survey and a first draft of an updated strategy to the board for offline review and input.
4. May 2026 – Executive committee approves an updated strategy based on feedback obtained from the board.
5. June 2026 – the board will be requested to approve the updated Multi-year Communications Strategy.

### Discussion

- The process should start with identifying audiences and targets. Form should follow function.
  - AWC staff will engage with board members about audiences and approaches for communicating the AWC's work.

***Decision 70.11: The board approved the process to update the AWC 2026-2028 Multi-year Communications Strategy by consensus.***

## **6.6 Approve a process to develop performance measures for the 2025-2027 Business Plan**

The AWC prepares three-year business plans to guide its strategic direction and serve as the foundation for annual operational plans. The business plan outlines areas of core business along with related goals, strategies, performance measures, and targets for realizing each.

The board completed a business planning process in mid-2025 and approved the 2025-2027 Business Plan in June with the understanding that performance measures would be developed and incorporated into the plan in the future.

The executive committee is recommending the board strike a small committee (up to one person per sector group) to work with staff to develop draft performance measures and targets and then test them with the board at a future meeting.

### Discussion

- **Q:** This seems like an administrative task. Why is a committee being formed instead of having staff develop performance measures for review by the executive committee and then board approval?
  - **A:** The executive committee takes on a lot of this type of work with staff support already. This is an opportunity for board members to contribute and get involved if they have an interest.
- We've initiated two new projects today, so board members may have limited capacity to support a new committee.
  - If there are no volunteers for the committee we can reconsider the approach.
- We should consider staff capacity for both developing the performance measures and when tracking and reporting on them.
  - We will delay the start of this work if capacity is limited.

***Decision 70.12: The board approved the process to develop new performance measures and targets for the 2025-2027 Business Plan by consensus.***

***Decision 70.13: The board approved striking a performance measures committee with membership to be determined by consensus.***

## **6.7 Approve 2026 meeting dates**

The executive committee has suggested the board meet three times in 2026 with the field tour and evening event held with the last meeting of the year. The suggested dates were provided in the briefing package.

### Discussion

- The field tour is proposed for the October meeting to align with the annual recognition event, but if it was in June we may have better attendance and more options.
- The last couple of tours have been in Edmonton. We should consider other areas. For example, a tour of the Chin reservoir expansion would be good, and we could potentially hold the board meeting in Lethbridge.

. Several members from the Lethbridge area supported the idea of hosting the events in their area in June.

***Decision 70.14: The board approved the 2026 meeting dates by consensus, and looking into changing the June meeting location to the Lethbridge area for a field tour based on further discussions.***

### **6.8 Appoint executive offers for Industry, GoA and PA, and Government sector groups**

The terms for Industry, GoA and Provincial Authorities, and the Government sector groups expire at the end of the meeting and executive officers need to be identified for each. Terms are for two years, and consecutive terms can be served. The current executive officers have engaged their sectors on this item.

The Government sector group has agreed that Megan Van Ham will be the executive officer and representative on the executive committee.

The Industry sector group has agreed that Dan Moore will continue as the executive officer and representative on the executive committee.

The GoA and Provincial Authorities sector group is still discussing the matter internally and has not yet decided on an executive officer.

**Action Item 70.1: The GoA and Provincial Authorities sector group will notify Andre of their representative on the executive officer in advance of the February executive meeting.**

### **6.9 Updating Signing Authorities**

The AWC's current signing authorities include Andre Asselin, Sunny Yeung, Anuja Hoddinott, Jason Unger, and Jamie Curran. Jamie has stepped away from the AWC board and Anuja is on leave until mid 2026. A proposed updated list of signing authorities is as follows:

1. Andre Asselin
2. Sunny Yeung
3. Katie Duffett
4. Dan Moore
5. Jason Unger
6. Vicki Lightbown

***Decision 70.15: The board approved updating the AWC's signing authorities by consensus.***

## **7 Information Reports**

### **7.1 Executive Director's Report**

The executive director's report was included in the briefing package.

### **7.2 Source Water Protection Project Team**

An update on the Source Water Protection project was included in the briefing package. The team has completed their broad sector review process and are working to address the input. The team is expected to request a board decision on their final deliverables via email survey prior to the next board meeting.

C: We are supportive of new tools. Our focus is on continuing to maintain our current tools.

### **7.3 Call for Members for Healthy Aquatic Ecosystems Working Group**

The update report was provided in the briefing package. The deadline for submission of names is November 13, 2025.

As two new projects were just initiated, a project team is not expected to be formed immediately following approval of terms of reference and instead would be considered during the next round of project selection.

#### Discussion

- Capacity may be an issue for this working group given that there is a lot of work happening on water both within and outside of the AWC.
  - If anyone is interested in this working group but is unable to commit to participating, please contact staff. This project was deemed lower priority than the two we initiated today, and there is some flexibility in when it starts.
- Scoping this project will be difficult; we need to understand the drivers and the client to make it meaningful.
- The Water License Transfer System statement of opportunity was set aside initially because of timing, but it is about to become a higher priority piece for the GoA. There's an opportunity to progress it soon with the AWC. We could consider facilitating a forum or workshop; it would be relevant and timely. .
  - We will need to pause or delay other work to accommodate a new project. The HAE call for members and working group could be paused while we investigate what a project on the Water License Transfer System could look like and what the role of the AWC would be.

**Decision 70.16: The Healthy Aquatic Ecosystem Working Group has been paused while potential areas for high priority work are explored. It will be revisited at a later time.**

**Action 70.2: AWC staff to follow up with EPA to investigate a possible project idea and timeline for the AWC on the Water License Transfer System.**

### **7.4 AWC Sector Updates (including the GoA update)**

The AWC sector update report was provided in the briefing package and posted on the AWC's SharePoint.

#### Discussion

- **Q:** Is there any additional information on potential changes coming out of the water availability engagement?
  - **A:** *Water Act* amendments are the focus right now, but they aren't the only action being taken. EPA has also received their mandate letter, which is clear on the changes to the *Water Act* being a priority. One of the initial areas we plan to deliver on will be on measurement and reporting and making that information public. Work on interbasin transfers is progressing, but it is

challenging to define the lower risk category during emergency situations. A process document is being considered as a next step. We will also be engaging on the price paid for transfers and the intent to make that information public. Ultimately, changes to the *Water Act* allow for changes to policy to occur, but they will not be implemented immediately, and there will be further engagement.

- **Q:** Are there any implications from the water availability engagement for the Wetland Policy in the near-term?
  - **A:** The engagement was focused on ephemeral waterbodies and temporary wetlands. We are still gathering feedback and it's unclear where this will land.
- **Q:** Potable water availability for rural residents is an issue. There is a significant amount of potable water co-ops that have a backlog of people who aren't afraid to spend money on licenses, but due to red table or availability they can't access potable water even though the infrastructure is available.
  - **A:** There's work for rural residents and co-ops happening on various fronts, such as maintenance of water systems and how funding is allocated to them versus major capital investments. We are also working on system elements as a whole to increase water availability. The mandate letter for Transportation and Economic Corridors included them working with us, and it may include elements on this, but the mandate letters are new, and the deliverables aren't yet defined.
- **Q:** There's an information GoA process for approving water license transfers but there doesn't seem to be a standardization on priority, such as between municipal vs. business uses for water. Is there any thought to formalizing priorities for who gets water licenses in times of water scarcity?
  - **A:** Our priorities are protection of the ecosystem. Applications for transfers are assessed in terms of harm to the aquatic environment or to others, and we don't make judgements based on the water use. During an emergency there are more tools that can be employed, some are softer for sharing water allocations, but it could include forcing the use of un-used allocations and other harder actions.

## **7.5 Clean Air Strategic Alliance Project updates for the AWC Board**

The update report was provided in the briefing package. There were no comments or questions.

### **New or other business**

An evaluation survey will be sent to board members following the meeting.

The next board meeting is scheduled for February 19, 2026, at the Water Centre in Calgary. There will be an option for board members to attend virtually via MS Teams.

The board meeting adjourned at 2:14p.m.

## **Attachment 1: Meeting #70 Attendees**

### **In Attendance**

\*Denotes attendance via MS Teams

*Italics* indicate the representative is an alternate for their sector when the director was present.

### **AWC Directors and Alternates**

Bill Chapman, Government (Small Urban)  
Brian Deheer, NGO (Environmental)  
Doug Kaupp, NGO (WPACs)  
Emily Jobson, Industry (Oil and Gas)  
Jamie Wuite, GoA and Provincial Authorities  
(Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation)  
Janice Linehan, Industry (Mining)  
Jay White, NGO (Lake Environment  
Conservation)\*  
Jeanette Sarac, GoA and Provincial  
Authorities (Health)  
Kate Rich, GoA and Provincial Authorities  
(Environment and Protected Areas)  
Lesley Peterson, NGO (Fisheries Habitat  
Conservation)

Lindsay McBlane, NGO (Wetlands  
Conservation)  
Margo Jarvis Redelback, Industry (Irrigation)  
Mark Donner, GoA and Provincial Authorities  
(Science and Research)  
*Melody Garner-Skiba, Industry (Livestock)*  
Nancy Mackay, Government (Large Urban)  
*Nicola Lewin, Government (Large Urban)*  
Nevin Rosaasen, Industry (Cropping)\*  
Rob Hoffman, Industry (Chemical and  
Petrochemical)  
Rob van Diemen, Industry (Livestock)  
*Stephanie Neufeld, NGO (Lake Environment  
Conservation)*

Andre Asselin, Executive Director (ex-officio)

### **Guests:**

Aravin Amirthalingam, City of Calgary\*  
Joshua Baller, Canada Water Agency  
Kara Westerlund, Rural Municipalities of Alberta\*  
Megan Van Ham, City of Calgary  
Michelle Gordy, North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance\*  
Nicole Pysh, Alberta Environment and Protected Areas  
Rebecca Kauffman, Environmental Law Centre  
Scott Millar, North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance

### **Presenters:**

Margo Jarvis Redelback, Alberta Irrigation Districts Association (Item 3.0)  
Aravin Amirthalingam, City of Calgary (Item 4.0)  
Nicole Pysh, Alberta Environment and Protected Areas (Item 5.0)  
Ehimai Ohiozebau, Alberta Environment and Protected Areas (Item 5.0)  
Michelle Gordy, North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance (Item 5.0)

### **Observers:**

Jennifer Kerr, Alberta Environment and Protected Areas\*  
Nathan Ballard, Alberta Environment and Protected Areas\*  
Long Fu, Alberta Environment and Protected Areas\*

**AWC Staff:**

Alec Carrigy, Katrina Calon, Katie Duffett

**Absent with Regrets:**

Amber Link, Government (Rural)

Dan Moore, Industry (Forestry)

Darren Calliou, Government (Métis Settlements)

Jason Unger, NGO (Environmental)

John Conrad, GoA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation)

Vicki Lightbown, GoA and Provincial Authorities (Science and Research)

**Attachment 2: Meeting #70 Decision Log and Action Items**

**Decisions**

Decision 70.1: The board approved the agenda by consensus.

Decision 70.2: The board approved the Updating the Guide for Building Resiliency to Multi-Year Drought in Alberta project draft terms of reference by consensus.

Decision 70.3: The board approved the creation of the Updating the Guide for Building Resiliency to Multi-Year Drought in Alberta Project Team by consensus.

Decision 70.4: The board approved disbanding the Updating the Guide for Building Resiliency to Multi-Year Drought in Alberta Working Group by consensus.

Decision 70.5: The board approved the Artificial Intelligence Applications for Water Management project draft terms of reference by consensus.

Decision 70.6: The board approved the creation of the Artificial Intelligence Applications for Water Management Project Team by consensus.

Decision 70.7: The board approved disbanding the Facilitating Cross-Sector Technology, Education, and Planning Working Group by consensus.

Decision 70.8: The board approved the June 12, 2025, meeting summary by consensus, and it will be posted to the website.

Decision 70.9: The board approved the 2026 core budget by consensus.

Decision 70.10: The board approved the 2026 operational plan by consensus.

Decision 70.11: The board approved the process to update the AWC 2026-2028 Multi-year Communications Strategy by consensus.

Decision 70.12: The board approved the process to develop new performance measures and targets for the 2025-2027 Business Plan by consensus.

Decision 70.13: The board approved striking a performance measures committee with membership to be determined by consensus.

Decision 70.14: The board approved the 2026 meeting dates by consensus, and looking into changing the June meeting location to the Lethbridge area for a field tour based on further discussions.

Decision 70.15: The board approved updating the AWC's signing authorities by consensus.

Decision 70.16: The Healthy Aquatic Ecosystem Working Group has been paused while potential areas for high priority work are explored. It will be revisited at a later time.

### **Action Items**

Action 70.1: The GoA and Provincial Authorities sector group will notify Andre of their representative on the executive officer in advance of the February executive meeting.

Action 70.2: AWC staff to follow up with EPA to investigate a possible project idea and timeline for the AWC on the Water License Transfer System.