

ALBERTA WATER COUNCIL

MEETING #47

March 29, 2018

McDougall Centre, Calgary, Alberta

Executive Summary

This board meeting was convened immediately following the 2018 AGM. New director Paul McLauchlin (rural government) and new alternate director Chi-Wei Chung (small urban government) were welcomed to the board. Tanya Thorn is now the Vice-President for the Government sector group, completing the term of Al Kemmere. Board members acknowledged the move of former president Andre Corbould to Alberta Agriculture and Forestry and wished him well in his new department.

With respect to other administrative matters, the board approved the proposed business planning approach as well as the 2018 Operational Plan. Amalgamation with CASA is now complete and new staff are being recruited to fill the positions of operations manager and project manager.

Terms of reference for two new project teams were presented by the respective working groups and approved by the board at this meeting. A Protecting Sources of Drinking Water in Alberta Project Team is being launched along with the Building Resiliency to Multi-Year Drought Project Team. A call for members for both teams will go out shortly, to be followed by a request for additional funding for the Source Water Protection project, as noted in the budget.

Staff reported on the implementation status of AWC recommendations using the new system approved at the October 2017 board meeting. As of 2018, 45% of recommendations have been implemented, 3% are partially implemented, 47% are pending, and 5% are closed.

In addition to the usual update from the Government of Alberta, the board also heard several other presentations for information:

- Barry White of Alberta Agriculture and Forestry gave a presentation on the Wet Areas Mapping Program.
- Janine Higgins from Alberta Environment and Parks provided an update on progress of water literacy and lake management education and outreach efforts.
- Rick Blackwood provided a short update on the North Saskatchewan Regional Plan, noting the opportunity for online public feedback until May 4 at www.landuse.alberta.ca.

Summary of Discussion

Keith Murray convened the board meeting at 9:20 a.m. immediately following the AGM.

1 Administration

1.1 Welcome, Approve Agenda

The Chair reviewed the agenda, which was approved by consensus.

1.2 Action Item from October 26, 2017 Meeting

There were no action items from the last meeting.

1.3 Summary Report from October 26, 2017 Meeting

Decision 47.1: The summary report for the October 26, 2017 meeting was adopted by consensus and will be posted to the website.

1.4 Appointment of Executive Officer

Tanya Thorn has been selected by the Government sector group as its executive vice president, completing Al Kemmere's two-year term in that position. With Andre Corbould's move from AEP to Alberta Agriculture and Forestry, Rick Blackwood will represent AEP until further notice, as there is considerable demand for the time of Eric Denhoff, the new Deputy Minister for both AEP and the Alberta Climate Change Office.

1.5 Executive Director's Report

Andre Asselin directed the board to his report in the briefing package, noting that AWC is in a good financial position. Although amalgamation is complete, the office is very busy and new staff will be hired shortly. One board member with experience of both CASA and AWC commended Andre and staff on the seamless transition and the good work to successfully complete the amalgamation.

1.6 Business Planning Approach

Andre Asselin reviewed the proposed approach from the executive committee to develop a new three-year business plan, which is similar to the approach the AWC has used in the past. A survey has been prepared and will be going out shortly to members for circulation to their sectors. Staff will then work with a consultant to compile the survey information to feed into the workshop in June. The briefing package for the June 13-14 session will go out at the end of May so timelines are tight for collecting and analyzing the feedback. The goal is to get the information down to one response per sector.

Discussion

- The GoA will involve the cross-ministry steering committee to get feedback via the survey. This will ensure that departments in addition to those represented on the AWC can provide input.
- The GoA typically delivers one response back to the AWC so individual responses would not be available.
- The Business Plan is one of three administrative components that the executive committee reviews on a three-year cycle (the Communications Strategy and the

Process Guidelines are the other two). The cycles are slightly off now due to amalgamation, so the intent is that the Process Guidelines will also be reviewed later this year to identify gaps or changes that may be needed. The three-year cycle is long enough that it enables planning for a few years but there might be merit in looking at a four-year cycle that aligns more closely with the political cycle. If there is interest, the board could discuss this in June.

Decision 47.2: The board approved the business planning proposal by consensus.

1.7 Operational Planning

Andre Asselin provided an overview of the draft 2018 Operational Plan, which is guided by the Business Plan and shows where AWC allocates its resources. He reviewed current project work and other activities, noting a new working group could be formed in June and other projects may emerge from the business planning session.

Discussion

- Implementation progress of AWC recommendations is reported annually while the Water for Life (WFL) implementation review is done every three years. Is there an opportunity to consolidate these two activities? Or could we align recommendation tracking with the business planning cycle?
 - It might make sense to do the recommendation tracking every two years rather than annually so more progress might be seen. Also, the WFL review might need to be rethought since implementation is now more diffuse within the GoA. In any event, the WFL review does not necessarily occur every three years; it might be going to a four-year review. We should step back and consider how our internal cycles align, and some of this discussion will likely occur in the workshop.
- The GoA has a big role in accepting and implementing our recommendations, many of which have specified a certain date. We should continue the recommendation tracking given those specific dates and two years may not be often enough.

Decision 47.3: The board approved the draft 2018 Operational Plan by consensus.

2 Government of Alberta (GoA) Update

Rick Blackwood provided GoA updates for a number of theme areas. A summary of his comments will be shared with board members separate from these meeting notes. Among other things:

- Extensive work is underway on water reuse, including development of a guidebook.
- A dedicated lab has been established in Vegreville as part of efforts to deal with whirling disease, which has now been confirmed in areas of the Bow, Oldman, North Saskatchewan and Red Deer watersheds.
- The Mighty Peace and Lesser Slave WPACs have prepared draft integrated watershed management plans, which are undergoing cross-ministry review.
- Alberta Innovates will call for proposals this summer for water innovation programs in four investment areas, with final decisions expected in early 2019.
- A key message from the recent provincial budget is the need to contain costs and return to balance. Efficiencies will continue to be sought across a broad spectrum of activities.

Discussion

- Concerns have been expressed for some time about aggregate mining in floodplains, and the GoA did undertake a consultation and produced a “what we heard” document. Is there any update on this work?
 - AEP: We would need to follow up to get current information.

3 Protecting Sources of Drinking Water in Alberta Working Group

Dean Morin and Mike Christensen presented background on this topic, noting the AWC’s earlier work and the need for a collaborative approach to source water protection (SWP). They presented draft terms of reference for a project team on protecting sources of drinking water in Alberta, describing the five objectives, the seven key tasks, timelines and deliverables, and proposed membership and budget.

Discussion

- For task 2, the intent is to solicit information from everyone who is involved in SWP, including those upstream users that may already be mitigating the impacts of their activities.
- This is a vast topic that seems to look at point and non-point risks to both surface and groundwater. It’s also very place-based and opens up issues related to land use. How can this topic be handled so the outcome is more than just generalities?
 - This is a big topic, but there are a lot of common themes. SWP is a process. This project is intended to guide the process, find out what is working elsewhere and guide people in Alberta to do their own SWP. Given the size of the topic, there could be future phases for this work.
- Is aquifer protection and risks part of this proposed project?
 - Yes, groundwater protection is included. The intent is that the inventory to find out where drinking water comes from will get at this.
- How does climate change and adaptation fit into this work? Any risk analysis would likely need to consider climate change.
 - Adaptation to climate change did not come up in the detailed discussions as it’s considered an accelerant of issues that affect SWP rather than a separate issue. SWP has to consider climate change, while being cautious about the level of detail. This might be something for future work. Climate change is a key policy driver for the GoA so we need to ensure that policy direction is reflected in our work.

Decision 47.4: The board:

- 1. Approved the terms of reference for a Protecting Sources of Drinking Water in Alberta Project Team, with a minor edit to key task 2 to explicitly include upstream and downstream users in that task.***
- 2. Approved the creation of the Source Water Protection Project Team.***
- 3. Agreed to disband the Source Water Protection Working Group.***

The board thanked the working group for its efforts to bring the draft terms of reference forward. A call for project team members will go out to the board next week along with a request for additional funding for the team as noted in the budget.

4 Multi-Year Drought Resiliency Working Group

Carmen de la Chevrotière and Susanna Bruneau, co-chairs of the working group, provided context on this issue by defining drought and the incidence of multi-year droughts. They reviewed the work done to gather information about existing and ongoing work and clarify the scope for the project. They then presented the strategic intent for the project, the five objectives and associated key tasks, timelines, deliverables, membership and budget.

Discussion:

- The proposed task team (in objective 5) would comprise AWC members and would involve more community outreach and education.
- Will the project team try to evaluate or think about early warning communication mechanisms or tools to help people start thinking differently about drought?
 - This work would be a call to action. We know these situations happen and the province does have drought management plans. We want to help smaller municipalities become better prepared so they can respond better to drought.
- Are there AWC sectors that will be especially key to the project team's success?
 - Small municipalities are the key target so it will be important to have them involved. Also, WPACs will be part of the delivery of the education and outreach tool kit. GoA members can share what is already being done.
- It will be crucial for municipalities to be involved. Disaster scenarios tend to focus more on floods, tornados, etc. and not so much on drought.
- I feel there is still a gap in that if we are talking about multi-year droughts, we also need to talk about water allocations. Education is important but does not deal with the fact that there is nothing to prevent licensees from using all their allocation.
 - Regulatory aspects can look at allocations and there is also the Province's drought plan. We wanted to focus this work on calling people to action to think about and make their own plan. Despite allocations, there could be a water shortage in a particular basin and having informal water-sharing agreements and partnerships in advance will be very important.
- Along with drought, usually comes hot weather which can affect water quality, especially in lakes. Is that part of the work plan?
 - Not at this time. We are focused on water quantity.
 - In some places (e.g., the North Saskatchewan watershed) there is a desire to use lakes to expand recreation and tourism opportunities, but many are already affected by blue-green algae, so those objectives may be in conflict.
- Drought could be a risk for source water protection, so these two teams should be sure to share information and avoid duplication of effort.

Decision 47.5: The board:

1. *Approved the draft terms of reference for the Building Resiliency to Multi-Year Drought Project Team.*
2. *Approved the creation of the Building Resiliency to Multi-Year Drought Project Team.*
3. *Agreed to disband the Building Resiliency to Multi-Year Drought Working Group.*

The board thanked the working group for its efforts to bring this initiative forward.

Tanya Thorn took the chair.

5 Wet Areas Mapping Presentation

Barry White, Director of the Forest Program Management Section with Alberta Agriculture and Forestry reviewed the four broad objectives of the Wet Areas Mapping Project, including how best to empower Albertans working on the landscape. He briefly described the lidar technology and aspects of the program that are new since the last presentation to the AWC. Barry illustrated the increased level of detail that is now publicly available and spoke briefly to the advantages of this better information. Some 385 companies have accessed this data; about 25 are affiliated with forestry, others are oil and gas, WPACs, small consulting companies and others. He noted that key attributes of the system include simplicity, effectiveness, its widespread acceptance, cost effectiveness, and value added. He also emphasized that the Foothills Region has been remapped with superior results, so users need to ensure they utilize the latest results. There is a lot of potential value for many sectors, including forestry, oil and gas, and public use. He shared examples of how the results have been used to inform decisions and some of the products that have been developed. A great deal of information is available online.

Discussion

Q: I know you've done some work with Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) on wetlands mapping. Is it possible to overlay these pieces of work to get a richer product? And is there any intent to map in the White Area?

A: Accurately portraying depth-to-water for wetlands has been a formidable challenge partly owing to lidar-based errors associated with these complex land features. The new model better accounts for wetland features and is thought to have particular value in identifying wetland connectivity. Further work in this area is planned though wet areas mapping is never to be confused with wetland mapping.

We are currently unaware of any plans to purchase lidar coverage for the White Zone. Often people make the mistake of thinking that high quality data is not needed for these lands but in fact high precision data is needed to detect very subtle changes in relief typical of this area

We share the latest data with DUC but have not spent a lot of time looking to align the two pieces. The early versions saw good results for uplands but did not do as well on wetlands. There are no plans to do the White Area. A ballpark estimate would put the cost at \$4-5-million, but it varies with the volume of licences purchased. Also, lidar quality varies. We probably could have saved a lot of money initially by doing the province all at once.

Q: Why is the TRAIL tool, developed for recreational trail routing, not being used for road construction?

A: The short answer is that we don't want the university competing with the consulting industry. However, it could inform road mapping. Our role is to produce and distribute the data.

Q: Who stores the data?

A: All the data are stored and distributed by AEP. We had hoped to be able to do this automatically via a web-based approach but that has not been possible. If you want specific data, tell the technical people and they will send s drive in the mail. When this is done, we will have 1.3 trillion pieces of information.

The board thanked Barry for his presentation and he was given a small gift by staff.

6 Recommendation Tracking

Marie-Claire St-Jacques reviewed the implementation status of AWC recommendations using the new system approved at the October 2017 board meeting. She described the content of the detailed report and the update report and pointed out differences between the old and new systems. This year updates were provided on 19 projects and 276 recommendations. Recommendations from three projects have been fully implemented. As of 2018, 45% of recommendations have been implemented, 3% are partially implemented, 47% are pending, and 5% are closed.

Discussion

- I think there are still some issues with respect to what “implemented” really means; e.g., some non-point source recommendations were quite strategic and specific and we know work is being done, but does it reflect the purpose and intent of these recommendations? What is the best way to deal with these? AWC doesn’t necessarily steward its recommendations; we make them then hand them off. This is a broader process issue on how to foster a more integrated view of how WFL is rolling out and how our recommendations are viewed within government. I feel like some recommendations have gone off the rails but we won’t resolve this today.
 - For some pieces, we could bring in a subject matter expert or have a webinar to look in more detail at specific pieces if that would help. We may also need to put more thought into the WFL review.
- Having a common definition of “implemented” is still a challenge. There are different interpretations of what this means.
- When we give our recommendations to the GoA, is there an orientation session with staff that have implementation responsibilities to ensure they understand the intent and expectations?
 - There is a process in GoA where staff involved with our projects do brief up.
- The project TOR need to be very clear about purpose and intent so the outcomes are aligned. We all need to be clear about what the expected outcome is. If an outcome is impossible for GoA to implement, that is a challenge.
 - We have made a concerted effort to do this in developing TORs, but priorities can change. Project teams consider implementation when developing recommendations and test with AWC members throughout the process.
- It would be very helpful if staff could develop a “dashboard” to summarize this work. Right now, you need to go through a lot of material to see the results, and a simple visual tool would help.
- It would also be helpful if a user could query to see what recommendations pertain to major water users, for example. The annual reporting is good, it just needs to be a little more user friendly.

7 Water Literacy and Lake Management Education Update

Janine Higgins with AEP gave a presentation on the progress of water literacy and lake education initiatives. She briefly described what water literacy is with reference to the water literacy ladder. She reviewed the recommendations from the AWC on water literacy and described in more detail the implementation progress including activity underway on social media. A key link is the water channel at www.talkaep.alberta.ca/the-water-channel.

The GoA continues to work with partners to coordinate lake education and outreach through the Respect our Lakes (ROL) program. Janine briefly described the ROL program, which focuses on the bottom of the water literacy ladder. ROL was created to provide information, especially for those who live by and/or use lakes for recreation. ROL is most relevant to recommendation 12 in the AWC's lake watershed management report.

Discussion

Q: Is there a way to create more efficiencies in communicating information via partnerships between AEP and others?

A: AEP communications staff are the keepers and decision makers. They have done some hosting of information from other groups. Groups can reach out if they have something they want to share but it is up to AEP communications staff to decide if the material is appropriate; e.g., last year some promotions were done with WPACs.

Comment: The Alberta News Daily might be a good way to promote material at no cost to a wide audience.

Q: Does this resource package also include information on groundwater?

A: We have identified groundwater information as a gap but have not yet started to produce resource material in the gap areas.

Q: We should also be looking at opportunities to work in good examples of leadership in the community or government. Have you considered how this might be done?

A: A lot of different organizations are taking collective action too (e.g., Cows and Fish). We try to identify the movers and shakers in the community and use their energy to move others along. The water literacy efforts have been very broad so far.

8 North Saskatchewan Regional Plan Progress and Opportunity for Input

Rick Blackwood advised that the GoA is looking for feedback to shape the draft North Saskatchewan Regional Plan, in response to the report from the Regional Advisory Committee. A web-based survey is open until May 4, at www.landuse.alberta.ca. There is a desire to move quickly to develop a draft plan, but it's not possible to specify a firm date at this time.

9 New or Other Business

There was no new or other business.

It was noted that the Alberta Energy Regulator has released information showing how companies are improving their water use, which can be found via the following links:

[Oil and Gas Industry Water Use Report](#)

(https://www2.aer.ca/t/Production/views/AlbertaWaterUseReport/Disclaimer?:embed=top&:showShareOptions=true&:display_count=no)

[Oil Sands Mining Water Use Report](#)

(https://www2.aer.ca/t/Production/views/AlbertaWaterUseReportMining/CompanyData?%3Aembed=top&%3AshowShareOptions=true&%3Adisplay_count=no&%3AshowVizHome=no)

Oil Sands In Situ Water Use Report

(https://www2.aer.ca/t/Production/views/AlbertaWaterUseReportInSitu/CompanyData?%3Aembed=top&%3AshowShareOptions=true&%3Adisplay_count=no&%3AshowVizHome=no)

The board meeting adjourned at 2:02 p.m.

Attachment 1: Meeting #47 Attendees

AWC Directors and Alternates

Rick Blackwood, GoA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Environment and Parks)

Roxane Bretzlaff, NGO (WPACs)

Mark Brostrom, Government (Large Urban)

Bob Cameron, NGO (Environmental)

Carolyn Campbell, NGO (Environmental)

Che-Wei Chung, Government (Small Urban)

Deanna Cottrell, Industry (Oil and Gas)

James Guthrie, Industry (Mining)

Jim Hackett, Industry (Power Generation)

Rob Hoffman, Industry (Chemical and Petrochemical)

Paul McLauchlin, Government (Rural)

Dan Moore, Industry (Forestry)

Keith Murray, Industry (Forestry)

Brad Peter, NGO (Lake Environment Conservation)

Margo Jarvis Redelback, Industry (Irrigation)

Tracy Scott, NGO (Wetlands)

Tanya Thorn, Government (Small Urban)

Jason Unger, NGO (Environmental)

Jamie Wuite, GoA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Agriculture and Forestry)

Andre Asselin, Executive Director (ex-officio)

Presenters:

Andre Asselin, *Executive Director's Report* (Item 1.5), *Business Planning Approach* (Item 1.6), *Operational Planning* (Item 1.7)

Rick Blackwood, *GoA Update* (Item 2) and *North Saskatchewan Regional Plan* (Item 8)

Dean Morin and Mike Christensen, *Source Water Protection* (Item 3)

Carmen de la Chevrotière and Susanna Bruneau, *Multi-Year Drought Resiliency* (Item 4)

Barry White, *Wet Areas Mapping* (Item 5)

Marie-Claire St. Jacques, *Recommendation Tracking System Improvements* (Item 6)

Janine Higgins, *Water Literacy and Lake Management Education Update* (Item 7)

Guests:

Jenna Curtis, Alberta Environment and Parks

Don McCrimmon, Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers

Paula Siwek, Environment and Climate Change Canada

AWC Staff and Contractors:

Katie Duffett, Cara McInnis, Anuja Ramgoolam, Marie-Claire St.-Jacques, Kim Sanderson

Absent with Regrets:

Maureen Bell, NGO (Environmental)

Dave Burdek, GoA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Agriculture and Forestry)

Darren Calliou, Government (Métis Settlements)

Silvia D'Amelio, NGO (Fisheries Habitat Conservation)

Brett Purdy, GoA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Innovates)

Stacey Schorr, GoA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Energy)

Jay White, NGO (Lake Environment Conservation)

Attachment 2: Meeting #47 Decision Log

Decision 47.1: The summary report for the October 26, 2017 meeting was adopted by consensus and will be posted to the website.

Decision 47.2: The board approved the business planning proposal by consensus.

Decision 47.3: The board approved the draft 2018 Operational Plan by consensus.

Decision 47.4: The board:

- 1. Approved the terms of reference for a Protecting Sources of Drinking Water in Alberta Project Team, with a minor edit to key task 2 to explicitly include upstream and downstream users in that task.*
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