



**Board of Directors Meeting**  
Nov. 22, 2021  
Meeting Minutes

**Meeting Summary:**

The Athabasca Watershed Council (AWC) Board of Directors met virtually on November 22, 2021. After a round of introductions including several new municipal members, and approval of the meeting agenda, the board heard a presentation from Dr. Scott Ketcheson (AWC Director, Academia) on his work on wetlands and hydrology just south of Fort McMurray.

Petra Rowell, the Executive Director, then provided an overview of the three-year rolling strategic plan, highlighting current and potential future projects that support the achievement of the plan's five goals. She then asked Board members to think about how to better utilize strengths and opportunities to improve plan implementation and ultimately, the achievement of plan goals.

Finally, the meeting included several administrative items. Petra noted that a quarterly report on activities with financial statements was included in the meeting package, as were the Sept 16, 2021 board meeting minutes. Both documents were accepted as presented. A third document, a revised Employee Handbook, was not approved and will be brought back to the board at its next meeting, February 9, 2022.

**ACTION LOG:**

	<b>Action</b>	<b>Completed by:</b>
	Board members to consider the strategic planning questions asked in Agenda Item 2b. and to share their thoughts with Petra via email or phone call.	Dec. 24, 2021
	Petra to post the approved Sept. 16 meeting minutes on the website.	November 30, 2021
	Morris Nesdole and Robert Holmberg to provide comments on the Employee Guide to Dan who will bring the document back to the board in February 2022.	February 9, 2021

**Meeting Attendees:**

SEAT	DIRECTOR	ALTERNATE	Quorum
AEP Representative	Abdi Siad-Omar		√
Provincial/Federal Government	Vacant	Vacant	
Municipal (Upper Basin)	Not yet appointed		
Municipal (Middle Basin)	Gary Cromwell	Robb Minns	√
Municipal (Lower Basin)	Lorin Tkachuk		
Forestry	Dan Moore		√
Oil & Gas	Janice Linehan		√
Small Agricultural Producer	Marv Fyten		√
Agriculture	Vacant		
Mining/Utilities	Vacant		
Indigenous	Cleo Reece		√
Indigenous	Vacant		
Indigenous	Vacant		
Health or Environment	Morris Nesdole	Julie Hink	√
Health or Environment	Brian Deheer		√
Stewardship	Kendra Gilbert		√
Stewardship	Paula Evans	Alia Schamehorn	√
Research and Academia	Scott Ketcheson	Robert Holmberg	√
Member-at-Large	Tim Polzin		√
Member-at-Large	Laura Pekkola		√
Quorum = >50% filled seats (15) = 8			<b>13</b>
<b>Guests and Staff present:</b> Petra Rowell, AWC Executive Director Sarah MacDonald, Watershed Science Coordinator Ashley Johnson, Science and Outreach Coordinator			

**Call to Order**

**1. Administration**

**a. Introductions, health and safety, quorum met.**

As AWC President and meeting Chair, Dan Moore (Director, Forestry) called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m. welcoming everyone, encouraging everyone to follow health and safety guidelines, confirming that quorum has been met and giving the following Treaty Lands acknowledgement:

*Athabasca Watershed Council acknowledges that the Athabasca watershed is located on Treaty 6, Treaty 8 and Treaty 10 territories. The Athabasca Watershed Council respects the histories, languages, and cultures of First Nations, Metis, Inuit people whose presence continues to enrich our vibrant watershed.*

The Chair then welcomed the new Director and Alternate for Athabasca County (Municipal, Mid-basin), Gary Cromwell and Rob Minns, respectively. He then invited a round table of introductions.

**b. Review and Approval of Agenda**

The Chair asked if there were any additions to the agenda. There were none. He then asked if there were any blocks to approving the agenda. There were none and the agenda was approved by consensus.

**2. New Business:**

**a. Presentation: Understanding water availability for wetlands and streams in the lower Athabasca River Basin, Dr. Scott Ketcheson, Canada Research Chair in Hydrological Sustainability, Athabasca University**

In an effort to gain a better understanding of some of the other initiatives in the basin and elsewhere that might inform us of our own work plans going forward, Dr. Scott Ketcheson, an AWC Director (Academia), was invited to provide an overview of his work studying hydrology and wetlands at the Stony Mountain Headwater Catchment Observatory south of Fort McMurray. Read a summary of the presentation on the Athabasca River Outflow Blog [here](#).

At the end of Scott's presentation, there were some discussion about how this work relates to Oilsands Monitoring work, AEP wetlands indicator work and other initiatives. (Note: this reinforces the role of the AWC to be a connector between various research and monitoring initiatives and the need for a story map or dashboard to show what initiatives are going on in the basin.)

There was also some discussion about what the big impacts to water quantity and quality will be in the future. Future changes in snowpack, land use, climate change etc. reinforce the need to improve our understanding of the contribution of tributary flows, how water flows over the landscape, contribution of tributaries to flow and water quality parameters like mercury, the implementation of water quality management frameworks, the importance of land use planning and adaptive management, etc. All of these areas are of interest to the AWC as it moves forward.

**b. Discussion: Resourcing the 2022-23 Strategic Plan**

Petra Rowell, AWC Executive Director, provided an overview of the current AWC three-year rolling strategic plan, including some of the current projects that contribute to achieving the strategies five goals. She reminded the board that they did a strategic planning session fairly recently and the vision, mission and goals still appear to be relevant and timely. Hence, she suggested that these components of the plan itself do not need updating, however, implementation actions to achieve the plan goals are limited by financial and human capacity. Hence, she encouraged the board to think about how to find more resources for implementing the plan. In particular, Petra encouraged board members to call or email her with their thoughts on the following questions:

- Are there potential opportunities available to us?
- How do we use existing strengths to better seize opportunities?

- What should staff be doing more of?
- What should board members be doing more of?
- How do we improve AWC relevancy?
- How do we gain more support for the AWC?
- Where would you like the AWC to be three years from now?

During the discussion, it was suggested that staff think about working with municipalities to do source water protection planning. More technical forums would also be beneficial. In regards to funding, it was suggested that staff develop a 'sales package'. Petra noted she had put together a folder of information and sent it out with a cover letter to all new Athabasca MPs in the Athabasca watershed. She will do something similar for MLAs and new municipal councils.

*Action: Board members to consider the strategic planning questions above and to share their thoughts with Petra via email or phone call.*

### **3. Reports and Outstanding Business:**

#### **a. Executive Director's Activity and Financial Report**

Petra pointed out that a quarterly report on staff and committee activities was circulated with the meeting agenda package, which also included financial statements. She asked if there were any questions. There were none and the report was accepted as presented.

#### **b. Approval of Sept. 16 Board Meeting minutes**

Petra noted that the minutes of the Sept. 16 board meeting were circulated with the meeting package. She then asked if there were any errors or additions to the minutes. There were none and the minutes were approved by consensus as presented.

*Action: Petra to post the approved Sept. 16 board meeting minutes to the AWC website.*

#### **c. Approval of Updated AWC Employee Handbook**

Petra noted that the HR Committee worked with a professional HR Consultant to update the AWC Employee Handbook to ensure it meets provincial standards. The committee approved draft was circulated to the board prior to this meeting. Petra asked if there was any edits to the document. Board members Morris Nesdole (Director, Environment; HR Committee Chair) and Robert Holmberg (Alternate, Academia) indicated they had a number of comments and could not approve the document. Given the time remaining in the meeting, it was agreed that all comments on the draft would be sent to Dan, who will work with staff to revise the document and provide it back to the board for approval at the next (February 2022) meeting.

*Action: Morris and Robert to provide comments on the Employee Guide to Dan who will bring the document back to the board in February 2022.*

#### **4. Round Table Updates**

- Paula Evans (Director, Stewardship) thanked staff for their involvement in the successful One Book – One Community program which saw a number of water-related activities in and around the Town of Athabasca. She also thanked Brian Deheer for his efforts to coordinate meetings between the environment and stewardship AWC directors and alternates.
- Laura Pekkola (Director, Member at Large) reminded the board she is a volunteer on a committee with a number of other WPACs working on a series of five ‘watershed 101’ videos. Production of these videos will occur in 2022.
- Brian Deheer (Director, Environment) commended staff for organizing the 2021 WPAC Summit which was well attended and well received by the Alberta WPAC community. He then provided an update on Healthy Waters Lac La Biche, where he is a board member, and who now hold a seat on the Alberta Water Council. Brian also mentioned a number of meetings and initiatives as per his report included as Appendix 1 with these minutes.

#### **5. Upcoming Meeting Dates**

- The next Board meeting is February 9, 2023 1:00 – 3:00 pm via zoom.
- Several board members encouraged staff to think about ways to better engage all members; consider scheduling meetings on weekends and evenings, and once the pandemic and capacity allows, meeting at locations around the basin (e.g., Fort Chipewyan). Also consider recording or finding other ways to share information provided in meetings.

#### **6. Meeting Adjourned**

The Chair adjourned the meeting shortly after 3:00 pm.

#### **Appendix 1. Report To: Athabasca Watershed Council Board From AWC Environment Sector Representative Brian Deheer, Date: 22 November, 2021**

- I am a member of the Alberta Environmental Network (AEN) Board, and also sit on the AEN Water Caucus. The AEN Water Caucus holds monthly meetings, and I have attended them regularly for the past year.
- In these AEN Water Caucus meetings, I have heard from various groups about their concerns over the plans to release process water from tailings ponds into the Athabasca River.
- The AEN also has concerns about proposed coal mine expansions in the Hinton area, and the related potential impacts on fish habitat, particularly the endangered Athabasca Rainbow Trout.

- Re: Alberta Water Council: Healthy Waters Lac La Biche is now a member organization of the Alberta Water Council. I am now one of three Environment Sector representatives on the Alberta Water Council (AWC) Board, through the process upheld by contract between the AWC and AEN.
- The Alberta Water Council made an Indigenous relations training Webinar available to Board members, and I participated. It was very helpful and informative.
- I have attended numerous webinars, including most of the WPAC Summit sessions in October. I especially appreciated the session on Indigenous relations on October 8, 2021, which I thought was especially relevant in light of the inaugural September 30 Day of Reconciliation.
- On October 29 (the day of the last WPAC Summit session), I attended two other webinars that fell on the same day as the final WPAC session and overlapped with it a bit. First: the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (the CEC, an institution under the North American Free Trade Agreement, focussing on the environment), through its Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC), held a webinar titled “Sustainable management of transboundary waters: How to build successful collaborations.” The webinar included presentations from several excellent speakers, including Merrell-Ann Phare, one of the commissioners on the International Joint Commission. <http://www.cec.org/media/media-releases/join-us-for-the-jpac-public-forum-on-sustainable-management-of-transboundary-waters/>
- Also on October 29, I attended a webinar from the Environmental Law Centre’s “Reimagining Rivers: Rethinking and Reframing Relationship with the Environment” series. This series included a webinar in June titled “Magpie River as Person,” which regrettably I missed. The webinar on October 29 was “Animals as Legal Beings.” <https://elc.ab.ca/reimagining-rivers-animals-as-legal-beings/>
- I recently attended the “Water Is Life” conference, hosted and organized by the Keepers of the Water, an Indigenous-led, Indigenous-settler-partnership watershed advocacy group. The three-day online conference was excellent, featuring numerous speakers including northern Ontario MPP Sol Mamakwa, Maude Barlow, Winona LaDuke, and various Indigenous leaders and knowledge-holders.
- An article in the Alberta Wilderness Association’s Wildlands Advocate (Summer, 2021), by past AWC-WPAC Board member Carolyn Campbell, describes the recently concluded Moose Lake Access Management Plan for Fort McKay First Nation, regarding their Moose Lake traditional lands. This includes a landmark provision for a ten-kilometre special management zone around the Moose Lake Reserve lands, centred around Gardiner and Namur Lakes. (see article on p.23, <https://albertawilderness.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Advocate-Summer-2021-Web.pdf>)