



Board of Directors Meeting
February 9, 2022
Meeting Minutes

Meeting Summary:

The Athabasca Watershed Council (AWC) Board of Directors met virtually on February 9, 2022. A round of introductions was made, including welcome of a new alternate, Jennifer Knievel, for the forestry seat. The board then approved by consensus the meeting agenda, the previous (Nov. 22, 2021) meeting minutes, and the Executive Directors activity and financial report.

Petra Rowell, the Executive Director, then walked the board through several documents distributed prior to the meeting, which were also approved by consensus, including the 2022 Employee Handbook, the Integrated Watershed Management Plan, and the 2022-25 Strategic Plan and 2022-23 Core Operations Budget.

The remainder of the meeting focused on the Water for Life partnerships, with Petra providing an update on the AWC's relationship to the Alberta Water Council and the Alberta WPACs collaborative. The board also heard a presentation from Shannon Frank and Susanna Bruneau on a new Policy and Legislation initiative of the Alberta WPACs. Before adjourning, the board agreed to combine the next board meeting and AGM, meeting in Hinton June 10-11.

ACTION LOG:

	Action	Completed by:
	<i>Action: Petra to post the approved Nov. 22, 2021 board meeting minutes to the AWC website.</i>	February 28-22
	<i>Action: Petra to initiate a board policy review process by organizing board member information binders for all Directors and Alternates.</i>	Next board meeting.

Meeting Attendees:

SEAT	DIRECTOR	ALTERNATE	Quorum
AEP Representative	Abdi Siad-Omar		√
Provincial/Federal Government	Vacant	Vacant	
Municipal (Upper Basin)	Brigette Lemieux		√
Municipal (Middle Basin)	Gary Cromwell	Robb Minns	√√
Municipal (Lower Basin)			
Forestry	Dan Moore	Jennifer Knievel	√√
Oil & Gas			
Small Agricultural Producer	Marv Fyten		√
Agriculture	Vacant		
Mining/Utilities	Vacant		
Indigenous			
Indigenous	Vacant		
Indigenous	Vacant		
Health or Environment		Julie Hink	√
Health or Environment	Brian Deheer		√
Stewardship			
Stewardship	Paula Evans	Alia Schamehorn	√√
Research and Academia	Scott Ketcheson	Robert Holmberg	√√
Member-at-Large			
Member-at-Large	Laura Pekkola		√
Quorum = >50% filled seats (15) = 8			10
Guests and Staff present: Petra Rowell, AWC Executive Director Sarah MacDonald, Watershed Science Coordinator Ashley Johnson, Science and Outreach Coordinator Brian Free, Alberta Environment and Parks Shannon Frank, Oldman Watershed Council Susanna Bruneau, Oldman Watershed Council			
Regrets: Janice Linehan, Tim Polzin, Lorin Tkachuk and Kendra Gilbert			

1) Welcome: Call to Order, Health and Safety, Quorum

AWC President and meeting chair Dan Moore called the meeting to order at 1:30 pm, checking for any health and safety concerns and confirming quorum.

2) Treaty Land Acknowledgement

Petra Rowell, Executive Director, provided a Treaty Land Acknowledgement.

3) Administration

a) Introductions

Dan introduced Jennifer Knievel as his alternate in the forestry seat. Jennifer works for West Fraser at the Hinton Pulp Mill. A round table of introductions was then made.

b) 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.

c) Approval of Past (Nov. 22, 2021) Meeting Minutes

Petra noted that the minutes of the November 22, 2021 board meeting were circulated with the meeting package. All meeting action items have been completed or will be discussed later in today's agenda. 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 Nov. 22, 2021 board meeting minutes to the AWC website.

d) Approve ED 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 to December 31, 2021. She asked if there were any questions about committee and staff activities and projects. Dan noted that AWC staff have been very busy. Petra concurred and noted that, with the help of Dan and Abdi, staff have had a number of meetings with several Alberta Environment and Parks teams and other potential partners, and these meetings were starting to result in tangible projects and collaborations. This in turn is helping to build AWC credibility. Brian, Morris, and Laura have also been promoting the AWC through Alberta Water Council and Alberta WPAC projects.

Petra then asked if there were any comments on the Financial Report. She was asked if there is any room in the budget to initiate any new projects. Petra noted that staff are the biggest asset of the AWC. However, she noted that current staff are at maximum capacity/workloads. She would like to hire another project coordinator but will have to find the funds to do so. Sarah has again applied for summer student funding. Petra is reaching out to municipal and industry board members for advice on how to be more relevant and to request their support. The ED Activity and financial report was approved by consensus.

4) Board Business:

a) Approve Employee Handbook

Petra provided a quick overview of the process taken by the HR Committee to update the Employee Handbook, which was circulated to the board for one last review prior to this meeting. The Chair asked if there were any questions or concerns about the document. Other than clarification that the

AWC is guided by but does not fall under the *Personal Information and Protection Act (PIPA)*, there were no other comments, and the document was approved by consensus. All previous versions and drafts are rescinded. Petra will now make sure that all other HR documents (job descriptions, contracts, etc.) are updated and consistent with the approved 2022 Employee Handbook.

Petra noted that there are a number of other policy and process documents that are out of date. She suggested that she will provide binders and hard copies to all board members, before starting a review process to systematically go through these documents. The board agreed to this approach.

Action: Petra to initiate a board policy review process by organizing board member information binders for all Directors and Alternates.

b) Approve IWMP

Petra noted that work on the Integrated Watershed Management Plan has been ongoing since 2018. The document is now ready for board approval and was included in the meeting package. She asked if there were any questions about the final draft. A question about earlier versions was asked: Petra noted that by approving this document today, all earlier drafts would be rescinded. She also noted that while the current version has been edited for length, most of the original intent has been retained. The Chair noted that this is a major milestone for the AWC. He then asked if there were any blocks to consensus to approve the document. There were none. The AWC IWMP is approved.

Petra noted that the document will go through a last edit to catch any typos and because it is a substantive document, we will get professional design and layout and we will print hard copies. We will then integrate IWMP actions into strategic and annual work plans, and report on its implementation through our annual reporting process.

c) Approve Strategic Plan and 2022-23 Core Operational Budget

Petra provided an overview of the current AWC three-year rolling strategic plan, which was included in the agenda meeting package. She noted that this is a living document and provides guidance only – the AWC needs to be flexible in order to seize opportunities as they become available.

A question was asked about the relationship between the IWMP and the strategic plan. Petra noted that the strategic plan is the overarching document guiding AWC work. However, in developing the strategic plan, she reviewed both the communications strategy and the IWMP to ensure they were incorporated into the strategic plan, and in turn, into staff workplans. She noted that in the strategic plan, goal #1 largely reflects actions from the communications plan, and goal #3 reflects a number of actions from the IWMP.

It was noted that while the strategic plan provides high level guidance, we need more boots on the ground, doing things like source water protection. This might fit with the work Lac La Biche County has done on their watershed management plan (which they have just struck an implementation committee for).

Petra than reviewed the proposed 2022-2023 core operational budget included with the strategic plan. Dan made a motion to approve the budget as presented. Brian Deheer seconded the motion. There were no blocks and the motion to approve the budget was approved by consensus.

5) WFL Partnerships Update

a) WFL partnerships framework presentation

Petra provided an overview of the Water for Life partnership framework, explaining the relationship between the AWC and the Alberta Water Council board and project teams; the Alberta WPACs collaboration (with a managers committee, education and outreach committee and other shared products like the WPAC Compendium); and Watershed Stewardship Groups. She noted that while there are many benefits to these partnerships, the board needs to be aware that this work requires a good portion of staff time (as well as some board member time). It was noted that the WPACs share a number of resources, however, they don't collaborate on financial instruments like insurance or employee benefit packages yet (could occur in the future).

b) Discussion and approve WPAC MOU

After the discussion about partnerships, and in particular the Alberta WPACs collaboration, Petra asked the Board to approve for signature the WPAC MOU included in the agenda meeting package. This document lays out how Alberta's 11 WPACs will collaborate but is non-binding and does not require a financial contribution (although in-kind support is inferred). There were no objections to the document, which was approved by consensus for signature by the Chair and ED.

As Brian Free, Alberta Environment and Parks, joined the meeting for this portion of the discussion, Petra asked him to say a few words. Brian is a point of contact for and often joins the WPAC managers meetings. He noted that we are all working to improve communications and collaborations. Each WPAC AEP rep – in our case, Abdi – is also an important point of contact and part of the communication chain.

6) Alberta WPACs Policy and Legislation project:

a) Presentation

Shannon Frank, the Executive Director of the Oldman Watershed Council and Susanna Bruneau, seconded to this project from the Battle River Watershed Alliance, provided a presentation on a new initiative undertaken by the 11 WPACs. This project, funded by Alberta Ecotrust and several of the WPACs, and guided by a committee, looks at how WPACs can collectively provide input to provincial and federal policy and legislation initiatives. Susanna will spend the year developing and testing a decision-making process, in order to strengthen the role of WPACs as conveners and collaborators.

Susanna noted that there are many benefits to this type of collaborative work including

- Relevancy and visibility

- Funding alignment
- Policy understanding
- Strengthening partnerships
- Confidence working together

There was some discussion about the experience of providing feedback to the federal initiative to form the Canada water agency – it was the first time we tried to attempt this collaborative work. We went to board members to get feedback and collected this feedback. Other examples of collaborative work include applying to the 2 billion trees initiative and having a seat on the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) stakeholder committee (WPAC representative is Jim Fujikawa).

Next steps for the project are to:

- Get WPAC board engagement for input (current step)
- Develop a Process document
- Pilot the process with a topic TBD
- Write grants to keep the project going

b) Discussion

Some comments about this initiative included the following:

- WPAC managers get asked to comment on a lot of initiatives – takes time to research the issue and to respond
- Boards need to be able to review things in a timely manner; make decisions between board meetings
- Board members also have to have their networks set up, so that they can collect sector feedback in a timely manner to feed into processes
- There will be times WPAC may not participate and that’s okay. It doesn’t always have to be all 11 WPACs approving something
- Also, we can provide high level approval, without getting into the details. For example, at a conceptual level, we support having a public policy on orphan wells. We acknowledge this is happening and want to support it.
- The renewal of the WFL Action Plan will be coming out quickly and will be a good test for this process.

7) Upcoming Meeting Dates and Announcements

Sarah and Ashley invited the board to participate in 2 major events: the benthic invertebrate webinar on February 22 and a World Water Day webinar on groundwater on March 22.

Petra asked the board, with Covid restrictions likely to be lifted, could we meet in person in Hinton and combine the AGM and next Board meeting for June 10-11. All agreed but suggested that the meeting be a hybrid for those that still want to join virtually. Petra also noted that the September meeting will be in the eastern part of the basin and she will follow up with Brian and Cleo for ideas for this get together.

8. Meeting Adjourned

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