



Board of Directors Meeting

February 9, 2023

Virtual

Approved Meeting Minutes

Meeting Summary:

The Athabasca Watershed Council (AWC) held a virtual board meeting the morning of February 9, 2023. The board heard and approved staff activities and a financial update for the third quarter of 2022-23 (October through December). They also approved a preliminary 2023-24 budget, noting that the budget will be adjusted when AEPA core funding is confirmed. Directors discussed and approved some minor change to the Board Terms of Reference. These changes help to better define our purpose (through our vision, mission and goals) and our board composition. The board then discussed its role in achieving our purpose, and whether or not staff are providing the information and tools (e.g., budgets, strategies, reports, etc.) needed for the board to do its work. Finally, a round table of sector updates and information about upcoming events was shared before the meeting was adjourned. The next board meeting will be held in person on Saturday June 17, following the Annual General Meeting.

Meeting Attendees:

SEAT	DIRECTOR	ALTERNATE	Quorum
AEP Representative	Abdi Siad Omar		√
Provincial/Federal Government	vacant		
Municipal (Upper Basin)	vacant		
Municipal (Middle Basin)	Rob Minns		√
Municipal (Lower Basin)	Lorin Tkachuk		√
Forestry	regrets	Jennifer Knievel	√
Oil & Gas	regrets		
Small Agricultural Producer	vacant		
Agriculture	Kennedy Deregt-Taschuk		√
Mining/Utilities	vacant		
Indigenous	regrets		
Indigenous	Alyssa Mae Laviolette		√
Indigenous	vacant		
Health or Environment	Brian Deheer		√
Health or Environment	Julie Hink		√
Stewardship	regrets		

Stewardship	Paula Evans	Alia Schamehorn	√
Research and Academia	regrets		
Member-at-Large	Laura Pekkola		√
Member-at-Large	vacant		
Past President	vacant		
Quorum = >50% filled seats (14) = >7			10
Guests: Ida Edwards, Athabasca County Nancy Sand, MD Lesser Slave River Walter Preugschas, Barrhead County Staff present: Petra Rowell, AWC Executive Director Sarah MacDonald, Watershed Science Coordinator Ashley Johnson, Science and Outreach Coordinator			

Actions arising from the February 9, 2023 AWC Board meeting:

Action (Lead):	To be completed by:
<i>Action: Petra post the approved Nov. 22 2022 meeting minutes to the website.</i>	March 31
<i>ACTION: Develop and share list of all previous funders with the board and continue the discussion about potential funding sources.</i>	Ongoing with 15 year anniversary work.
<i>ACTION: add a stakeholder discussion to the next meeting.</i>	Deferred.
<i>ACTION: Board members think about how to be an ambassador for the Athabasca Watershed Council.</i>	Ongoing.

1. Welcome

a. Call to Order, Health and Safety, Quorum

AWC Secretary-Treasurer Paula Evans called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m. Executive Director Petra Rowell confirmed health and safety logistics and that quorum was met. She also welcomed a number of municipal representatives returning or newly assigned as representatives last fall including Rob Minns from Athabasca County, Lorin Tkachuk from Lac La Biche County and our new members, Nancy Sand from MD Lesser Slave River, Paul Properzi, Walter Preugschas from County of Barrhead, and Ida Edwards from the Town of Athabasca. Petra noted that Yellowhead County has resigned their seat and she asked that Brigette Lemieux be formally thanked for her time serving on the board, which was approved by consensus.

b. Treaty Land Acknowledgements

The Chair provided a Treaty Land acknowledgement as follows: *The Athabasca Watershed Council acknowledges that our watershed is located on Treaty 6, 8 and 10 territories. We make this acknowledgment as an act of Truth and Reconciliation, showing our respect for the land and the*

Indigenous ancestors who came before us. We also acknowledge and respect the languages and culture of today's First Nation and Metis people, whose presence continues to enrich our watershed.

c. Round Table Introductions

The Chair invited all participants to introduce themselves and to say a few words about their favorite winter get away or activity.

2. Administration

a. Review Meeting Objectives and Approve Meeting Agenda

As per the agenda circulated prior to the meeting, meeting objectives were as follows:

- Hear updates / celebrate achievements
- Approve a 2023-24 preliminary core operational budget
- Discuss and approve a renewed vision, mission and values (and the Board TOR)
- Discuss board, committee and staff roles in achieving our vision and mission

The agenda was approved by consensus as presented with no additions or deletions.

b. Review Action Items and Approve Meeting Minutes

Petra went through the Nov. 22, 2022 meeting's action log and minutes: all action items have either been completed or are in progress.

Action (Lead):	Status:
Post the approved Sept 15 2022 board meeting minutes to the website. (Ashley)	Done
Continue to work with the board to review their policies and processes: circulate the approved honorarium and expense policy (to be included in Directors Binders) and add a discussion about the vision, mission and board terms of reference to the Feb. 9/23 board meeting agenda. (Petra)	Ongoing
Work with the ATB to ensure Sarah has signing authority and access to all AWC bank accounts. (Petra, Sarah)	Yet to be done.
Draft a letter reflecting the AWC board consensus review of the LARP and seek consensus from the board before submitting it to the LUF Secretariat. (Petra)	Done.
Post the approved updated strategic plan document on the AWC website. (Ashley)	Done.

The minutes were approved by consensus as presented.

Action: Post the approved Nov. 22 2022 meeting minutes to the website.

3. Reports and Updates

a. Review and approve Q3 activities and financial reports

The Q3 report was included in the agenda meeting package. Staff reviewed some of the highlights for the October – December period:

1. As Executive Director, Petra went over some administration and governance highlights and mentioned that it was her 2-year work anniversary Feb. 8, 2023. Adding additional staff was a great highlight in the last few months. Caity and Jason are interns from the University of Alberta's Sustainability Council Adaptation and Resiliency Training program. Caity works on the state of drinking water in the Athabasca watershed. Jason is looking at warming waterbodies as an indicator of climate change and what tools municipal planners have to reduce the impact of development on waterbodies. Additionally, Hugh, a SAIT capstone student is preparing a report on ponds and dams in the Athabasca watershed (numbered to be about 140 regulated ponds). Another highlight: We were very happy to have an in-person board meeting in November, our first in two years! Staff performance reviews occurred in December.
2. As Education and Outreach Coordinator, Ashley's highlights were completing a newsletter refresh, the World Water Day social media campaign, receiving the TD FEF grant money to run the X-Stream Science program, and helping to promote the Water Management in Alberta's Boreal conference.
3. As Watershed Science Coordinator, Sarah's highlights were collecting benthic invertebrate samples in October, a fall planting in Jarvie, an open house in Tawatinaw with over 40 attendees, the Pembina watershed working group water quality monitoring project, and finding the interactive atlas files!
4. Petra also provided a financial update for the third quarter (to Dec. 31, 2022). Petra informed the board that every year we receive a core operational grant from Alberta Environment. We are on track to expend our budget by March 31st of this year. We are on track to expend the Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Project funds that we received 3 years ago. Staff have been busy applying for a number of other grants to help in project implementation moving forward, and will be keeping the board posted.

The board approved the activity and financial reports as presented by consensus.

b. Review and approve a 2023-24 core operational budget

Petra presented a preliminary 2023-2024 operating budget (based on previous years), and informed the board that the amount from the Government of Alberta has yet to be confirmed. Petra asked for an increase in core funding for 2023-24. We are going into a new 4-year agreement. WPAC managers met with AEPA Minister Sonya Savage to talk about an increase in funding. There should be an announcement fairly soon. If additional funds are received (above \$200k), Petra would like to see them go to increase staff wages (including adding a new Project Coordinator position) and to travel (we have more people doing more things). Depending on AEPA funds received, Petra will bring another budget to be approved in June. There was some discussion with a few questions about how WPACs are funded, where we get additional funds from (grants, industry, municipalities, etc.). It was suggested we look to agriculture for dollars (although Petra noted we get in-kind support through our partnerships with West

Central Forage Association, ALUS, etc.). It was also requested that we develop a list of all funding to date (Petra noted that she plans on doing this for our 15th year anniversary report for 2024).

The preliminary 2023-24 budget was approved by the board by consensus.

ACTION: Develop and share list of all previous funders with the board to inform continued discussion about potential funding sources.

4. Governance

a. Approve a renewed board terms of reference including an updated vision, mission and values.

Petra went over the Board of Directors Terms of Reference. She noted that a few small changes were needed to provide a bit more clarity.

The vision was adjusted to: “The Athabasca watershed is ecologically healthy, supporting resilient communities and a sustainable economy”. Comments included an appreciation that the statement focuses on the health of the water and is inclusive.

The mission was shortened to: “To demonstrate leadership and facilitate informed decision-making in the Athabasca watershed by bringing stakeholders and Indigenous peoples together to achieve our shared vision”. Comments included that collaboration is a major role for this organization. We bring stakeholders together to work on watershed opportunities.

Finally, values were discussed. Petra noted that the values are the same but for better graphical presentation, they have been combined into 3 statements (rather than a long list).

Board seats were also discussed. Petra proposed changing Small Ag Producer to just “Ag or Industry”. This gives us greater flexibility. The remaining changes were just providing more clarity to environment and stewardship seats.

Petra reminded the group that these are living documents and should be reviewed from time to time. The revised Board Terms of Reference was approved by consensus.

b. Discuss staff, Executive and Board roles in achieving our mission

Petra gave a presentation on the board’s 4 key roles and the tools staff provide to the board to help them in turn, work towards our vision and mission. Thinking about the 4 roles of WPAC organizations can help guide the board. She then asked board members if they feel informed enough to talk about the work of the AWC? A question was asked: do we have a definition of stakeholder anywhere? Petra – it would be great to talk about that at the board meeting.

ACTION: add a stakeholder discussion to the next meeting to inform development of a definition.

5. Engaging Our Sectors (Round Table Updates and Announcements)

Petra asked for a round table of updates from our sectors/ affiliations:

- a. Paula noted that the Crooked Creek Conservancy has a grant to rejuvenate the land trust aspect of their mandate.
- b. Rob is happy to see the Tawatinaw group forming and is looking forward to the 2023 Fort Assiniboine Voyageur Canoe Brigade.
- c. Lorin noted that Lac La Biche County is making good progress on implementing the LLB watershed management plan through an update of their Land Use Bylaw and by working with a multi-stakeholder LLB WMP Implementation Committee (co-chaired by AWC Director Brian Deheer).
- d. Kennedy has been working with producers to access the farm climate action fund. She is looking forward to working on the Eco-buffer site together May 25th and May 26th.
- e. Alyssa-mae noted that her community is concerned about the ice road - Peace-River overflow is impacting access to Fort Chipewyan. Last year the winter access road was open just over 30 days. The season keeps getting shorter.
- f. Julie noted there was a lot of push back on an Environmental Reserve bylaw in Lac La Biche. Her and Lorin noted that more education is needed to enlighten shore owners. Education is important.
- g. Brian – the LLB Implementation committee has great support from Lac La Biche County and Indigenous communities. Keepers of the water group are concerned about tailings ponds release. Regulations are being developed.
- h. Laura – Inside Education is hosting a youth conference in Canmore in March. Schools from across Alberta are coming. Fort McMurray and Westlock will be there. Laura is excited to have Ashley there to help out.
- i. Walter noted he is the Chairman of Wild Alberta. He is interested in the concept of having historic markers along the river.
- j. Ida – Athabasca is having a deer study on the Tawatinaw and Muskeg Creek involving schools, Athabasca Watershed Council, and Crooked Creek Conservancy. She also noted that the RCMP will have a 150th birthday this year – maybe an opportunity to collaborate?
- k. Nancy – interested in sport fishing side of the Athabasca watershed. Noted that the Hamlet of Smith is involved in the brigade.

ACTION: Board members think about how to be an ambassador for the Athabasca Watershed Council.

6. Next Steps / Meetings:

Staff provided details on some upcoming events, including Water Management in Alberta's Boreal, the World Water Day webinar, and the Fort Assiniboine Bicentennial Voyageur Canoe Brigade.

Important Dates:

- a. Feb. 15-16 Northern WPACs conference in Grande Prairie
- b. March 22 World Water Day webinar
- c. May 25-26 Sangudo Riparian planting and outreach event (board members please attend!)
- d. June 17/23 – combined in person AGM and board meeting

- e. July 6 – 13 Fort Assiniboine Bicentennial Voyageur Canoe Brigade (a paddle from Whitecourt to Athabasca, with community events in Whitecourt, Blue Ridge, Fort Assiniboine, and Athabasca. There can be 6 to 8 paddlers per canoe, so each team is approximately 12 people.)
- f. Sept. 21/23 – board meeting (in person)
- g. Nov. 23/23 – hybrid
- h. Feb 15/24 - online

Paula adjourned the meeting at 12:02.

Meeting Adjourned.