

ALBERTA WATER COUNCIL

MEETING #31

June 16, 2011

Nisku, Alberta

Executive Summary

The Board approved the final report, the 15 recommendations and the communications plan of the Moving from Words to Actions Project Team. The team was commended for its good work and disbanded. The report's recommendations are variously directed to the three *WFL* partners as well as the Government of Alberta and the Alberta Stewardship Network.

Board members also launched a new project team by approving terms of reference on Riparian Land Conservation and Management. The objective is to gain an understanding of the current state of riparian lands, management, and stewardship in Alberta and the riparian management and stewardship "best practices" of other jurisdictions. The proposed project will also evaluate the current state of riparian lands, management, and stewardship against the needs of all relevant sectors and propose recommendations to improve riparian land conservation and management in Alberta. The team expects to complete its final report by October 2012.

The third project-related topic of the meeting was to amend the terms of reference for the Non-Point Source Pollution Project Team by extending the terms of reference and increasing the budget.

The Board heard three presentations and updates, including:

- An update on the Bow River Project, in which other organizations were encouraged to learn more about the simulation model that was developed for the Bow and that could be applied to other basins.
- "Water Management 101," which was an overview of the components, tools, mechanisms and policies now in use or planned for Alberta.
- Government of Alberta Policy Process. This presentation described the various aspects of policy development to help Board members better understand the process and pathway when the Council makes recommendations to the GoA.

Three important administrative items were also on the agenda for this meeting:

- Response from the Executive Committee to the report and recommendations from the Sustainable Funding Sub-committee.
- The Draft Communication Strategy, 2011-2013, which will be finalized at the October 2011 meeting.
- A revamped Operational Planning Process, which will also be revised in response to Board input and finalized at the October meeting.

Summary of Discussion

Jim Ellis convened the meeting at 9:10 am. Those present introduced themselves.

1 Administration

1.1 Welcome and Approve Agenda

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

1.2 Summary Report from March 24, 2011 meeting

Decision 31.1: The summary report for the March 24, 2011 meeting was adopted by consensus and will be posted on the Council website.

1.3 Action Items from March 24, 2011 Meeting

Gord Edwards reported that the three action items from the March 24, 2011 meeting have been completed or are in progress and will be further addressed during this meeting.

1.4 Executive Director's Report

The chair referred the Board to the executive director's report in the briefing package. Gord Edwards briefly reviewed the key points, noting that staff have been very busy since the last meeting with both project work and Council operational tasks. He thanked those who participated in the stakeholder engagement process. The Council is on budget for the year and is in good financial shape through to early 2013. The Executive Committee has explored options related to sustainable funding as well as how to track Council recommendations.

The Board discussed several related items:

- The Board was informed of the recommendation regarding an Alberta Water Authority in the report from the Premier's Economic Council, and briefly discussed potential implications for the Council. (This report is available online at <http://premier.alberta.ca/plansinitiatives/economic/index.cfm>). Alberta Environment noted that, although this report is a significant piece of work, it was commissioned by the Premier and is not GoA policy. With respect to water, it does align with much of the WATSUP report. The GoA expects more discussion of the Economic Council's report and water allocation issues generally in the fall. It was suggested that the AWC should send a letter to the Premier outlining its views on the water aspects of the report.
- Other policy pieces (e.g., Regulatory Enhancement Process, Lower Athabasca Regional Plan) are moving forward. The GoA also advised that there is no firm timeline for public review of the work on aquatic ecologically significant areas.
- The report of the Alberta Environmental Monitoring Panel will be available in July. The initial focus was on the Lower Athabasca, but the Panel's recommendations will be provincial in scope. This is part of a suite of work, including a Phase 1 report from Environment Canada and the provincial Integrated Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Framework. The timeline for the GoA to move all of this work ahead is still uncertain.

1.5 Sustainable Funding Report

At the March 2010 business planning session, some members raised concerns about long-term, sustainable funding of the Council. The Executive Committee struck a small group to review this matter and recommend next steps. Gord Edwards presented an overview of the Executive Committee's response to the sub-committee's seven recommendations, noting that the GoA has committed to funding the Council to March 2013. The key messages were that core operational funding remains the responsibility of the GoA and that opportunities should be sought for project funding.

The following points were noted during the discussion of this item:

- When considering whether to do conferences we need to assess our motivation – raise money or increase Council profile. Holding conferences to raise money requires considerable resources and may not be worth the effort..
- Recommendation 4 also looked at charging fees for water license allocations. This approach is not likely to be acceptable at this time as the Council does not have any authority to levy such a charge, but it could be revisited once the water allocation review is complete.

Decision 31.2: The Board approved the proposed Executive Committee responses found in the "Executive Committee Review of the Sustainable Funding Sub-committee Report."

2 Moving from Words to Actions Project Team

The "Moving from Words to Actions" Project Team developed recommendations to improve communication and coordination among the three *Water for Life* Partners plus the Alberta Stewardship Network Program and the GoA. Brian Ilnicki presented the report and recommendations as well as the proposed communications plan. The team has fulfilled its terms of reference and can now be disbanded.

The following points were noted during the Board's discussion of this item:

- In the list of team members, County of Rockyview should be Clearwater County.
- Section 2.4 and Appendix 3 on WFL implementation challenges seem to be out of scope. The team noted that although these topics were out of scope for the terms of reference, some members of the team thought they were important ideas that should not be lost, so they were put in an appendix.
- The board should discuss in more detail, perhaps as part of the operational planning process, the question of how to deal with matters that are out of scope but are important, to ensure they are properly addressed. These could be gaps, issues that need further clarification, or other matters.
- There are some 140 stewardship groups in Alberta. Part of the job of the Alberta Stewardship Network Program is to build capacity; however they are presently under-resourced, but are looking at creative ways to strengthen funding.
- One member suggested one measure of success will be having all the WSGs, WPACs and the AWC in the same room at least once a year.

The team was commended for its good work.

Decision 31.3: The Board:

- 1. Approved the Moving from Words to Actions Project Team's final report and recommendations.***
- 2. Approved the team's communication plan.***
- 3. Disbanded the Moving from Words to Actions Project Team.***

3 Non-Point Source Pollution Project Team

Stephanie Neufeld and John Englert presented the request from the project team to amend its terms of reference. The team has applied for a grant from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and is still waiting to hear the results. The team is proceeding with the Phase 1 assessment of the current "state of" non-point source pollution knowledge using \$40,000 of the stakeholder funds raised by the project team. Phase 2 will examine the policy, practices and regulatory tools for NPS pollution, and will begin in the fall of 2011, by which time the team expects to know about the grant. Due to the delay with the grant and the re-assessment of budget needs, the project team is asking for approval of an extension of the timelines and a budget increase.

The following points emerged during the discussion:

- It was suggested that perhaps a university student could undertake some of the work for a lower price. However, the team was not comfortable that a student would have the experience and expertise to effectively address their needs.
- If the grant is not successful, the team will come back to the Board in October to discuss options.

Decision 31.4: The Board agreed to amend the Non-Point Source Pollution Project Team Terms of Reference as follows:

Under the Timelines and Deliverables section:

- ***Extend the draft report timeline from "June 2011" to "June 2012."***
- ***Extend the final report timeline from "October 2011" to "October 2012."***

Under the Budget section:

- ***Increase the project budget cost for Report on policy, practices and regulatory overview from "\$22,000" to "\$40,000", which changes the estimated total budget from "\$132,000" to "\$150,000."***

4 Riparian Land Conservation and Management Working Group

Stephanie Neufeld and Grant Pearsell presented the draft terms of reference to establish a Riparian Land Conservation and Management Project Team. The objective is to gain an understanding of the current state of riparian lands, management, and stewardship in Alberta and the riparian management and stewardship "best practices" of other jurisdictions. The proposed project will also evaluate the current state of riparian lands, management, and stewardship against the needs of all relevant sectors and propose recommendations to improve riparian land conservation and management in Alberta.

The following points were noted during discussion:

- In response to a concern about Alberta Sustainable Resource Development not being on the proposed membership list for the team, it was explained that the GoA has a mechanism to ensure their representatives on a Council team receive the support from the appropriate ministries to participate effectively.

- Many comments about riparian issues were made to the GoA during the Lower Athabasca Regional Planning process. It was pointed out by the GoA that the Council work in this area will complement the regional planning process.
- Regarding implementation of recommendations directed to the GoA, GoA will determine which ministries will be responsible to address them.
- One member cautioned that this is both a land and water issue, and affects both public and private lands.

Decision 31.5: The Board:

- 1. Approved the proposed Riparian Land Conservation and Management Project Team Terms of Reference.***
- 2. Approved the creation of the Riparian Land Conservation and Management Project Team.***
- 3. Disbanded the Riparian Land Conservation and Management Working Group.***

The Working Group was acknowledged for its good work on a challenging task.

5 Communication Strategy

Gord Edwards briefly reviewed the process used to develop the Council’s communication strategy, providing an overview of communications activities and summarizing the key messages regarding communications that emerged from board meetings, feedback, and the stakeholder engagement process. The Executive Committee is requesting feedback from board members by August 15 so the communication strategy can be revised and finalized at the October meeting.

Action 31.1: The Executive Committee will accept any additional feedback on the draft communication strategy until August 15th and present a revised document at the October meeting for final approval.

6 Bow River Project Update

Mike Kelly provided an update on the Bow River Project; information about this project was first shared with the Board in 2010. This initiative involved stakeholders holding over 95% of the licensed water on the Bow River. With about half of Alberta’s population, water is a key constraint on population, economic and recreational growth in the Bow Basin. Mike summarized the findings from the project and the benefits that could emerge from the preferred re-management scenario, which supports all three WFL goals. He also talked about potential river planning activities that could happen across Alberta using the Bow River Operational Model developed for this project, noting opportunities for others to get involved. The project report is available online at www.albertawater.com.

Board members engaged in a brief question and answer session with Mike.

Q: What made this collaborative process so good? The people, the process, or the project?

A: The key elements were defining common interests before we started. We also prepared draft terms of reference so everyone knew what we were going to do. All parties have a vested interest in managing this river better, so everybody had something to lose.

Q: Did TransAlta play any role in the project?

A: We know TransAlta is interested in this work. They knew that in the end there would be some negotiations between them and someone else. They were very cooperative, but did not sit at the table because they didn't want to appear as if they were influencing the process. Part of what we did was look at the electrical system data and historic river flows to see what the impact would be on pricing, but we didn't have time to do the detailed economic analysis.

Comment: There is a lot of potential in this work for healthy aquatic ecosystems and it would be good to see real commitments in those areas in the future, as well as a wider group of stakeholders involved. However, it was noted that we do need to manage for healthy aquatic ecosystems but avoid putting the large capital investments of a company like TransAlta at risk.

Comment: Concerns will be raised if the Red and Bow Rivers are linked in terms of apportionment commitments.

Q: How many fish habitat units could be created?

A: Possibly in the millions.

7 Water Management 101

Bev Yee presented an overview of water management in Alberta, focusing on water management principles, water policy and management (past, present and future), and some of the water management challenges. Bev also noted a number of incremental changes and improvements that have been made over the years. Things that were the focus in the past are still important, but are now being managed or addressed differently. She referred to the earlier focus in Alberta on water management planning, with the Framework for Water Management Planning developed under the *Water Act*. *Water for Life* signaled a shift to Watershed Management Plans through partnerships that deliberately looked at land use activities and broader impacts on water. This approach integrates land based activities with their impact on water quality and quantity. A big change with the shift to cumulative effects management through regional plans is the setting of environmental limits. We need to be able to determine what the associated triggers are so we can take appropriate action to ensure the limits are never reached.

Board members had an opportunity to ask questions of Bev following her presentation.

Q: What is the GoA role and what is the role of WPACs when it comes to watershed planning?

A: Watershed planning is essential to regional plans. The surface water quality management plan in the South Saskatchewan River Basin (SSRB) was done by the Bow River Basin Council and rolled into the SSRB plan. When work began on the Lower Athabasca regional plan, there was no WPAC in that region so Alberta Environment took it on. Regional plans will still be led by the GoA, but there is huge value in having inputs continue to come from organizations like WPACs. The sooner they can be ready for the regional planning process, the better.

Q: Rather than the present and future building on the past, to some extent the past constrains our future actions; for example, the Land use Framework regions are still constrained by an existing regulatory framework. We continue to work in the bubble we know.

A: If some things are seen as a constraint, the GoA would want those opinions.

Q: When you talk about building capacity, capacity for whom and what is the price?

A: It doesn't necessarily mean money. Capacity also means having the knowledge and information to move forward. GoA gets many requests to help build capacity, so decisions must be made about where it is reasonable to invest.

8 Government of Alberta Policy Process

Bev Yee's presentation provided information to increase Board members' understanding of the GoA policy development and approval process. She stressed that the process is not linear and described the factors that shape GoA policy as well as all the steps in the policy development process. In practice, policy is developed through the interaction of multiple processes and systems, with input from the public service.

Board members had an opportunity to ask questions of Bev following her presentation.

Q: Water and land were separated in the *Water Act* and water markets will dictate where and how water will move. This is in the *Act* but doesn't seem to be accepted in the community. How did we get to the point where we have this structure but not the support?

A: Those working on water markets have to ask if the legislation supports where they want to go. The *Water Act* contains a lot of enabling legislation, which may or may not be turned on. If we want to use the tools, we still need to develop the thinking, even if the enablers are in the *Act*. We could develop a new process that is not enabled by the *Act* and that would have to be addressed. Legislation is simply an enabler once the strategic direction is set.

Q: At what stage of the policy process are the budgetary implications assessed and when do those doing the assessments talk to people on the ground to understand the volunteer hours, cost to implement, etc.?

A: With the Ambient Monitoring Strategic Plan done by CASA, it was helpful for Alberta Environment to get an analysis of what a new system could cost. Where the difference occurred was in how to get the money to pay for it. Should it be solely funded by GoA? The analysis does get done and there is consultation with stakeholders.

Action 31.2: Alberta Environment will provide an electronic copy of Bev Yee's presentations to staff that will circulate to board members.

9 Operational Planning Process

Gord Edwards and Meredith Walker presented context and overview of the proposed operational planning process. The overall intent is to better align Council work with GoA priorities for *Water for Life* implementation. The Statement of Opportunity (SOO) process has also been revised and the submission deadline each year will be November 15. The Executive Committee is requesting feedback from board members by August 15 so the operational planning process document can be revised and approved at the October meeting.

A number of points emerged in the discussion of this item:

- In terms of a client, the assumption is that the SOO proponent would be the client. Some background work will be needed and staff can assist if necessary. For many projects, the client has been the GoA.
- A SOO would not necessarily be rejected if funding is not identified.
- To date, the board planning process has been mostly ad hoc. It should become more about using the needs of watersheds to guide priorities.
- By the time the board selects a project, there definitely must be a client, but a client could also emerge between the time a SOO is submitted and the time the board makes a choice. We should have some flexibility on this. Also, we should frame this more broadly. The *WFL* Action Plan refers to a lot of actions, many of which GoA should be doing, so we limit ourselves by only talking about the Action Plan. Emerging issues are consistent with the three *WFL* goals and don't need to be tied to the Action Plan.
- Having a regular agenda item to hear GoA priorities will help keep the board current.
- It will continue to be important not to overload staff or board members.
- The new process will be an improvement. By spending more time developing the concepts at the start, we can work more efficiently and our sectors will have a better idea of what they are getting involved with. We may need to narrow the scope to be more reasonable from the beginning.

Action 31.3: The Executive Committee will accept any additional feedback on the draft operational planning process until August 15th and present a revised document at the October meeting for final approval.

10 Status Reports

The Chair directed board members to the status reports in the briefing package. It was noted that a concern was brought to the Water CEP team about the plans missing some of the opportunities to contribute water to the environment. However they appreciate the consideration the water-using sectors are giving to this issue. The board was informed that they can expect an information email regarding the *WFL* implementation Review sector survey, which will be launched this coming fall.

11 New or Other Business

There was no new or other business.

The Chair noted that the annual report and business plan are ready and people should take extra copies for distribution to their sectors.

The meeting adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

Attachment 1: Meeting #31 Attendees

Council Directors and Alternates

Maureen Bell, NGO (Environmental)
Neil Boyd, Industry (Cropping)
Mark Brostrom, Government (Large Urban)
Ken Brown, NGO (WPACs)
Eric Butterworth, NGO (Wetland Habitat Conservation)
Bob Cameron, NGO (Environmental)
Carolyn Campbell, NGO (Environmental)
Lars DePauw, Industry (Oil and Gas)
Jim Ellis, GOA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Environment)
Chris Fordham, Industry (Mining)
Les Gammie, NGO (WPACs)
Al Kemmere, Government (Rural)
John Kolk, Industry (Livestock)
Stuart Lunn, Industry (Mining)
Sharon McKinnon, Industry (Cropping)
Ron McMullin, Industry (Irrigation)
Audrey Murray, GOA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Energy)

Louis Pawlowich, Government (Métis Settlements)
Tara Payment, Industry (Oil and Gas)
Jeff Surtees, NGO (Fisheries Habitat Conservation)
Judy Stewart, NGO (Environmental)
Jason Unger, NGO (Environmental)
Jay White, NGO (Lake Environment Conservation)
Evelynne Wrangler, GOA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Sustainable Resource Development)
Jamie Wuite, GOA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development)
Bev Yee, GOA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Environment)
Gord Edwards, AWC Executive Director

Presenters:

Gord Edwards, *Executive Director's Report; Communication Strategy* (Items 1.4, 5.0)
Gord Edwards and Meredith Walker, *Operational Planning Process* (Item 9.0)
Brian Ilnicki, *Moving from Words to Actions Project Team* (Item 2.0)
Stephanie Neufeld and John Englert, *Non-Point Source Pollution Project Team* (Item 3.0)
Stephanie Neufeld and Grant Pearsell, *Riparian Land Conservation and Management Working Group* (Item 4.0)
Mike Kelly, *Bow River Project* (Item 6.0)
Bev Yee, *Water Management 101* and *Government of Alberta Policy Process* (Items 7.0 and 8.0)

Guests:

Colin Blair, Alberta Environment
Margaret Glasford, Alberta Stewardship Network
Curtis Horning, Alberta Environment
Scott Millar, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development
Bob Phillips, South East Alberta Watershed Alliance
Shirley Pickering, Highwood Management Plan Public Advisory Committee/Alberta Stewardship Network
David Samm, Battle River Watershed Alliance
Sharon Willianen, Alberta Environment

AWC Staff and Contractor Support

Andre Asselin, Alesha Hill, Terry Sly, Meredith Walker, Petra Rowell, Kim Sanderson

Absent with Regrets:

- Deanne Carson, Industry (Power Generation)
- David Hill, GOA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Water Research Institute)
- Colin Jeffares, GOA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development)
- Al Kennedy, Industry (Chemical and Petrochemical)
- Alex MacKenzie, GOA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Health and Wellness)
- Perry McCormick, NGO (Wetland Habitat Conservation)
- Eric McGhan, GOA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Sustainable Resource Development)
- Keith Murray, Industry (Forestry)
- Rob Pritchard, Government (Large Urban)
- Richard Quail, Government (Small Urban)
- Jennifer Steber, GOA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Energy)

Attachment 2: Meeting #31 Action Item Log

Action	Who	By when
31.1: The Executive Committee will accept any additional feedback on the draft communication strategy until August 15 th and present a revised document at the October meeting for final approval.	Executive Committee	October 2011
31.2: Alberta Environment will provide an electronic copy of Bev Yee’s presentations to staff that will circulate to board members.	AWC Staff	June 30, 2011
31.3: The Executive Committee will accept any additional feedback on the draft operational planning process until August 15 th and present a revised document at the October meeting for final approval.	Executive Committee	October 2011

Attachment 3: Decision Log

Decision 31.1: The summary report for the March 24, 2011 meeting was adopted by consensus and will be posted on the Council website.

Decision 31.2: The Board approved the proposed Executive Committee responses found in the “Executive Committee Review of the Sustainable Funding Sub-committee Report”.

Decision 31.3: The Board:

- 1. Approved the Moving from Words to Actions Project Team’s final report and recommendations.*
- 2. Approved the team’s communication plan*
- 3. Disbanded the Moving from Words to Actions Project Team.*

Decision 31.4: The Board agreed to amend the Non-Point Source Pollution Project Team Terms of Reference as follows:

Under the Timelines and Deliverables section:

- Extend the draft report timeline from “June 2011” to “June 2012.”*
- Extend the final report timeline from “October 2011” to “October 2012.”*

Under the Budget section:

- Increase the project budget cost for Report on policy, practices and regulatory overview from “\$22,000” to “\$40,000”, which changes the estimated total budget from “\$132,000” to “\$150,000.”*

Decision 31.5: The Board:

- 1. Approved the proposed Riparian Land Conservation and Management Project Team Terms of Reference.*
- 2. Approved the creation of the Riparian Land Conservation and Management Project Team.*
- 3. Disbanded the Riparian Land Conservation and Management Working Group.*

ALBERTA WATER COUNCIL
AGENDA, MEETING #31

June 16, 2011
Executive Royal Inn – Nisku
8450 Sparrow Drive

NOTE: Broad Category caucusing from 8:00 to 9:00 am.

GENERAL BUSINESS OF COUNCIL

- 9:00 1.0 Administration – Chair 40 min**
1.1 Welcome and approve agenda
1.2 Approve Summary Report from March 24, 2011 meeting
1.3 Review of actions from last meeting
1.4 Executive Director’s report
1.5 Sustainable Funding report
- 9:40 2.0 Moving from Words to Actions Project Team 30 min**
Approve the final report, the communication plan and the disbandment of the project team
- 10:10 3.0 Non-Point Source (NPS) Pollution Project Team 20 min**
Approve the proposed extension to the team’s terms of reference
- 10:30 Break 15 min**
- 10:45 4.0 Riparian Land Conservation and Management Working Group 30 min**
Approve the terms of reference for Riparian Project Team
- 11:15 5.0 Communication Strategy 30 min**
Review a draft communication strategy
- 11:45 6.0 Bow River Project 30 min**
Hear an update on the key results and opportunities for re-managing the Bow River system
- 12:15 Lunch (provided in the room) 45 min**
- 1:00 7.0 Water Management 101 30 min**
Hear a presentation on water management in Alberta
- 1:30 8.0 Government of Alberta Policy Process 30 min**
Hear a presentation on the process to gain approval for a piece of policy in the GoA
- 2:00 9.0 Operational Planning Process 45 min**
Review a proposal to revamp the process for operational planning and project selection
- 2:45 10.0 Status Reports 15 min**
Refer members to status reports in the board package with a brief opportunity for questions or clarification
- 3:00 11.0 New or Other Business 15 min**
New items of business or other items of information for Council
- 3:15 Adjournment**