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ALBERTA WATER COUNCIL

MEETING #26  
November 19, 2009  
Calgary, Alberta

### Executive Summary

The board appointed David Rushford as the new industry executive member and Jim Ellis was re-appointed as the Government of Alberta and Provincial Authorities executive member for terms ending in November 2011. Gord Edwards was confirmed as the Secretary-Treasurer. Mike Kelly was acknowledged for his several years of service as the industry representative on the Council's executive committee. The board also approved the core operating budget for the next year. Three dates for business meetings were approved for 2010: March 26 (Calgary), June 24 (Edmonton), and October 28 (Calgary). The March meeting will also include another day devoted entirely to a business planning workshop, which the board approved.

Board members were pleased to hear that its report and recommendations on Water Allocation and Transfer System Upgrades will be released on November 23, along with two other reports on water allocation.

The Council's newest report relates to Provincial Ecological Aquatic Criteria for Health (PEACH). The PEACH team developed seven provincial ecological criteria to guide the identification of areas in Alberta that substantially contribute to aquatic ecosystem health. The board approved the report and disbanded the team, commending the members for completing this excellent work with very short timelines. Opportunities will be explored to promote and publicize the report.

Two other teams presented documents, which were approved by the board. The *Water for Life* Implementation Review Committee prepared a "how-to" guide designed to assist future committees in conducting their implementation review and preparing a report. The date for the next review will be part of the discussion at the board's business planning session in March. The Sector Planning for Conservation, Efficiency and Productivity (CEP) Team provided an update on its work, including a summary of the lessons learned to date. The team also asked the board to re-confirm the intended purpose of CEP targets in the sector plans. The board confirmed that there is no expectation that the 'stretch' targets chosen during the voluntary phase of CEP Planning would become mandatory targets. They noted the targets should be challenging but achievable; sectors should strive, in good faith, to reach their targets; and if CEP planning is found to be ineffective in 2012, a new (possibly regulated) process will be developed to identify new targets for each sector.

Board members also heard presentations and updates from Alberta Environment on:

- The new *Water for Life Action Plan*, which reflects input provided by the Council;
- The department's activities and focus related to cumulative effects management; and
- The review of the Water Allocation Management System.

## Summary of Discussion

### 1 Administration

#### 1.1 Welcome and Approve Agenda

Jay White convened the meeting at 9:05 am. Those present introduced themselves. The board thanked Devon Canada and Shell Canada for hosting the dinner and reception the night before. Jay reviewed the agenda, which was adopted by consensus.

#### 1.2 Appointment of Executive Officers

***Decision 26.1: David Rushford was appointed as the new industry executive member and Jim Ellis was appointed as the Government of Alberta and Provincial Authorities executive member for terms ending in November 2011. Gord Edwards was confirmed as the Secretary-Treasurer.***

It was noted that Dave Rushford is presently an alternate director but his sector will shortly be appointing him as its director and a new alternate will be named. The board formally acknowledged Mike Kelly for his service as an executive member for several years.

#### 1.3 Summary Report from June 4, 2009 meeting

***Decision 26.2: The summary report for the June 4, 2009 meeting was adopted by consensus and will be posted on the Council website.***

#### 1.4 Action Items from June 4, 2009 Meeting

In the absence of Gord Edwards, Terry Sly reviewed the action items from the last meeting. All actions have been completed.

#### 1.5 Summary Report from August 24, 2009 meeting

***Decision 26.3: The summary report for the August 24, 2009 meeting was adopted by consensus and will be posted on the Council website.***

#### 1.6 Executive Director's Report and Project Updates from GoA

Terry Sly directed the board to the executive director's report in the briefing book and reviewed the highlights. Three reports related to water allocation will be released on Monday, November 23: the AWC's Water Allocation Transfer System Upgrade report, the report from the Minister's Advisory Committee, and the Alberta Water Research Institute's report. Board members can expect a package tomorrow (November 20) on the AWC report, with the key messages, news release and other information they can use in communicating with their sectors. Printed copies of the report were provided at the meeting, and the board was asked to keep the document embargoed until Monday.

Jim Ellis also advised that the *Water for Life* Action Plan will be released on November 20<sup>th</sup>. With respect to the November 23<sup>rd</sup> announcement on the water allocation reports, he encouraged the board to look at the other two reports coming out. The numerous links among the three reports will help Alberta Environment in its cross-ministry work on water allocation. Issues raised in all three reports make clear the need to look at water reallocation in Alberta and the Government of Alberta (GoA) will soon be consulting on this topic. Jim also noted that there have been challenges moving the draft Wetland Policy forward, but feedback from senior Cabinet ministers on the GoA draft has been generally positive. The GoA's attention will be focused on the budget in the short term and major policy work will

occur after the budget is prepared. Focused consultations will be done as quickly as possible, likely in the spring, since the Wetland Policy is important for the regional plans now being developed.

### **1.7 Proposed 2010 Operating Budget**

Terry presented the 2010 core operating budget for the Council, which was in the briefing book. The proposed business planning workshop is included in this budget. Terry noted that the intent is to hire two new project managers in 2010 to address what is expected to be an increased work load following the business planning session, and to begin the succession planning process well ahead of his departure, expected in mid-2011. A board member suggested that the executive director consider postponing active recruitment for project managers until the new three-year business plan is in place and it is clear what work will be done and when. In response to another question, Terry advised that CASA and AWC staff are in regular contact and continue to look for ways to collaborate and improve the efficiencies of both organizations.

*Decision 26.4: The 2010 Core Operating Budget was approved as presented by consensus.*

### **1.8 Meeting Dates for 2010**

*Decision 26.5: The following meeting schedule for 2010 was approved by consensus:*

- *March 25-26, Calgary (business planning for 1½ days, with ½ day board meeting)*
- *June 24, Edmonton*
- *October 28, Calgary (annual dinner on Oct. 27)*

A question was raised regarding the timing of the Council's Annual General Meeting.

**Action 26.1: Staff will advise the board whether the AGM will be held in March or June 2010.**

## **2 Provincial Ecological Aquatic Criteria for Health (PEACH) Project Team**

Scott Millar and Jason Unger reviewed the team's mandate and areas of activity. The specific task assigned to this team was to select, modify or develop up to ten provincial ecological criteria to aid and guide the identification of areas within Alberta's watersheds that substantially contribute to aquatic ecosystem health. How the individual criteria are applied is an essential next step. The GoA is proceeding with the next steps, and the application of the criteria will be an iterative process. The presenters noted that having all the key stakeholders on the team enabled them to move ahead quickly and respond nimbly to the board's direction. The communication plan will involve an email to key stakeholders, and the report will be posted to the AWC website. The team requested a decision from the board regarding whether or not to do a news release.

The board commended this team for its excellent work under very tight timelines, noting that the team responded well in incorporating the diverse comments. The following comments were noted during the board's discussion of the report:

- The text associated with criterion 7 should be clarified as more than "several" homes and businesses rely on the Grimshaw Gravel Aquifer for water.
- The next steps will feed into regional plans now being developed.
- Defining what "significant" means on the ground is a challenge.

- The report points to places where more data may be needed and acknowledges that a range of people and organizations will likely need to be involved in gathering data.

With respect to the communication plan, board members agreed the report should be made available via the AWC website but opinions varied on whether a news release should be done. Some members felt that the report is an important piece of work and the AWC should promote it. Others were of the view that the criteria are part of a larger process that is not yet completed so a news release may be premature. The Land-use Secretariat offered to showcase the report in its spring newsletter. The GoA may be able to propose other approaches for raising the profile of the document and putting it in the larger context of work that will follow.

***Decision 26.6: The board:***

- 1. Approved the Provincial Ecological Aquatic Criteria for Health (PEACH) Project Team's final report.***
- 2. Disbanded the PEACH Project Team.***

**Action 26.2: Council staff will work with GoA to identify opportunities to showcase the PEACH work and ensure that the messaging does not create concerns or inaccurate expectations.**

**3 Water for Life Renewal Action Plan and Cumulative Effects Management**

Bev Yee briefed the board on the updated *Water for Life* (WFL) Action Plan. To date, 23 key actions have been completed, the GoA has spent nearly \$600-million on implementation and there has been significant engagement and voluntary effort by many key stakeholders. Bev reviewed in detail how the AWC recommendations on renewal and those in the review report have been incorporated into the Action Plan. Several key priority initiatives were noted, with particular emphasis on the transformation to a new cumulative effects management system that looks at air, land, water and biodiversity. Successful implementation of WFL means looking at what others are doing, in addition to the GoA; all sectors are encouraged to report on their progress in implementing WFL.

Alberta Environment (AENV) was complimented on its work to date. The following comments were made during the discussion:

- Watershed Stewardship Groups and the Alberta Stewardship Network are also key components and should be connected to the other players in a diagram Bev presented.
- It is important to continue education and awareness around water wells and health and AENV should encourage this through its cross-ministry interactions.
- We need a better understanding of supply and demand for water, particularly groundwater. Work to map aquifers and inventory groundwater was part of the first action plan, and that work continues, but the budget situation has created some challenges. As regional plans are rolled out, AENV will work to allocate resources to provide the information the plans need.
- The key priorities noted in the presentation are those for which AENV has the lead. Other things are also important (e.g., healthy aquatic ecosystems, wetlands, source water protection) but are generally shared with other departments or

agencies that have the lead on those initiatives. Some of these other priorities are also longer-term.

- The work to develop standards for small drinking water systems includes both First Nations and Métis communities.
- As issues emerge about what is in transboundary agreements, things like water quality, health and groundwater have been examined, and this approach will continue. There is no plan to renegotiate specific agreements.

Bev then presented an update from AENV on cumulative effects management. She noted that if Alberta continues to regulate project-by-project, looking at environmental impact assessments for major projects and not considering smaller projects and unregulated activities, the province will have difficulty meeting its environmental outcomes. AENV is defining what it means to have a Cumulative Effects Management System in place and what changes will need to be made within the department to implement it. The focus for AENV activities includes:

- Support for regional plans being developed under the Land-use Framework
- Develop knowledge and performance management systems
- Delivery system
- Governance (What are the roles and responsibilities of various partners, how can we most effectively deliver on and manage cumulative effects, etc.)
- Enablers (Review policies and legislation to determine if adjustments are needed. If management frameworks are used to deliver, do they need to be enabled through legislation and, if so, can it be done under the Alberta Land Stewardship Act, for example, or is new legislation needed?)

#### **4 Water for Life Implementation Review Committee**

Lisa Maria Fox presented the results of the Committee's work to describe a process that will provide guidance to future committees undertaking the WFL implementation review. She went over the items covered in the guide, including timing and scheduling of reviews, information required to complete the review, organizing and analyzing the collected information, and the proposed structure for the final report. The Committee proposes that the next snapshot date be December 31, 2010, covering progress for 2009 and 2010; the review would be completed approximately 6-9 months later.

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

- If reviews occur too close together, there is a risk that there is too little time to accomplish very much. If they are too far apart, the AWC loses the opportunity to provide timely feedback to the GoA, and WFL implementation could lose momentum. The AWC needs to pick a date and work towards it, as this helps the GoA with its business planning and budgeting.
- December 2010 may be too soon, as the action plan is only just now being released and there is a lot of emerging relevant activity with the Land-use Framework.
- Sectors will need to evaluate their work in light of the new action plan, so enough time is needed to do this.

***Decision 26.7: The board approved the Water for Life Implementation Review Committee's report, "Water for Life Implementation Review: A Brief How-to Guide", noting that the snapshot date could change pending discussion at the AWC business planning session in March 2010.***

## **5 Water Allocation Management System Update**

Bob Barraclough provided an update on the status of the water allocation management system review and the direction in response to input from the AWC and others. The key question is whether Alberta's water management system is ready for what's coming in the next 10-20 years. He discussed the limitations of the current system and noted that the three reports to the GoA on this matter have sent consistent messages about what needs to change. He noted five main areas that need to be addressed:

- Enhance the policy allocation system to manage fair access to the resource and manage risk in times of scarcity. The message was that the *Water Act* is fundamentally sound and only needs some refinements.
- Define and protect a portion of the natural flow in each basin.
- Develop transparent mechanisms to enable efficient and effective (re) allocation of water. A system needs to be in place to allow transfers without waiting for basin management plans.
- Maintain legitimate and credible oversight of the system.
- Enhance the information, knowledge and research base to support decision making.

Next steps involve release of the three reports, stakeholder and Aboriginal engagement, preparation of recommended system enhancements, and public engagement in spring or summer 2010, with some system changes expected to be introduced as soon as fall 2010.

The board engaged in a brief question and answer session with Bob; responses are in open bullets:

- If legislation changes are made in the fall, when will they be implemented?
  - It depends what is changed and how fast. Some things will move fairly quickly and could happen before fall if legislative changes are not required. Other priorities may take longer, such as implementing drought management plans and water sharing agreements. Other market elements may need to be in place first. The sequence will be important but can't be developed until decisions are made about the desired changes and the speed at which they can happen.
- Some irrigation districts have both senior and junior licences. The junior licences often don't get the water they need. The risk is not due to the senior licences, but rather because the junior licensee is not meeting the environmental requirements of the licence.
  - We need to consider situations of prolonged scarcity. If we could freeze things the way they are today, the system would probably continue to work. But when we look at what's coming, we may need changes.
- The AWC WATSUP team started with the existing situation and moved forward rather than looking at whether the current situation needed adjustments. Did the other reports consider that?
  - The Minister's Advisory Committee was asked to provide recommendations on FITFIR. They concluded that for now and in the foreseeable future, the foundation of the priority-based system will work.

- What will be the process for stakeholder engagement?
  - That is still being worked out. The Minister will get Cabinet approval on the process, but it will likely have a couple of components, including some focused engagement with groups that have unique concerns and maybe some open houses. The intention is to have some draft material ready prior to the public engagement.
- It would be interesting to see projections of how much water we expect to need and for what purpose, over time.
  - That information may not exist now, but it probably could be developed.
- The WATSUP team talked about building a model and attaching the economics to it, then having real time stakeholder involvement. This could be done with the right people involved.

## 6 Sector Planning for CEP Project Team

Giselle Beaudry and John Skowronski presented an update on the CEP team's work, summarizing the lessons learned and asking the board to re-confirm the intended use of targets and performance measures as part of the CEP planning process. Two concerns emerged from the Alberta Irrigation Projects Association as it completed its sector plan: 1) the targets are challenging and may not be achieved, and 2) if the targets are not achieved, they may become mandatory or regulated requirements in future. These concerns could also challenge other sectors that are working on their CEP plans. The team did not explicitly state the purpose of targets in its report, but intended that:

- Targets should be challenging, but achievable.
- Sectors should strive, in good faith, to reach their targets.
- There is no expectation that the 'stretch' targets chosen during the voluntary phase of CEP Planning would become mandatory targets. If CEP planning is found to be ineffective in 2012, a new (possibly regulated) process will be developed to identify new targets for each sector.

In its discussion of the intended purpose of targets, board members made the following comments:

- ENGOs explained that they discussed the intent of the original team with their member on that team, who advised that the original team did not contemplate that targets in a voluntary plan would become mandatory. ENGOs support the three points regarding the purpose of targets. The issue is not to punish a sector for not meeting an aggressive target. An issue arises if no progress is made from where we are now.
- A GoA representative noted that the intent is for the plans and targets to be voluntary and to start building stewardship in all sectors. Voluntary plans allow sectors to participate and have good targets. Continuous improvement is also a factor. Once plans are developed, we can start to monitor progress.

***Decision 26.8: The board approved the "Purpose of Targets" document presented by the CEP Sector Planning Team.***

## 7 Business Planning

Terry Sly reviewed the Council's process for preparing its business plan, reminding the board that the executive committee was authorized in 2008 to lead future business planning activities. The executive is proposing a five-step process, including a workshop, to develop a

common understanding of goals and to agree on future activities for a new three-year business plan. A workshop is proposed for March, at which time a team would be formed to develop draft performance measures for consideration at the June board meeting. Terry also reviewed the AWC work currently underway. Ideally, one or two projects would be launched in the spring following the business planning discussions.

Board members provided the following comments:

- What is the purpose of the e-scan and is it really necessary?
  - The e-scan will be a survey of Council members, asking some key questions to build the workshop. The survey will be done prior to the workshop and is intended to provide a starting point for the Council's discussion. The workshop will touch on the vision and mission, but will focus mainly on the goals and strategies for the next three years.
- Is this the most efficient way to determine if we are working on the right things? Would it be better to have a team of board members develop ideas for the whole board to discuss? This approach would likely be more cost-effective too.
- Initially the Council did have a team do the preliminary work, but it still turned into a workshop. The workshop is likely to be more efficient than asking board members to do the initial work.
- There are new people on the board and this will give everyone a chance to contribute.

***Decision 26.9: The board approved the business planning workshop proposal.***

**Action 26.3: The executive will work with Council staff and the consultant to plan the workshop and oversee the business planning process.**

## **8 Status Reports**

Terry Sly reminded the board about the consensus workshop in early December, to honor the late Martha Kostuch. A few spaces are still available if anyone else wants to attend. Registration is free.

## **9 New or Other Business**

There was no new or other business.

The meeting adjourned at 2:07 pm.

## **Attachment 1: Meeting #26 Attendees**

### **Council Directors and Alternates**

Maureen Bell, NGO (Environmental)	Richard Phillips, Industry (Irrigation)
Bob Cameron, NGO (Environmental)	Rob Pritchard, Government (Large Urban)
Carolyn Campbell, NGO (Environmental)	John Skowronski, Industry (Chemical and Petrochemical)
Jerry Cunningham, Government (Métis Settlements General Council)	Judy Smith, Industry (Mining)
Jim Ellis, GOA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Environment)	Kevin Stashin, Industry (Oil and Gas)
Lisa Maria Fox, NGO (Environmental)	Jennifer Steber, GOA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Energy)
Jim Hackett, Industry (Power Generation)	Lindsay Telfer, NGO (Environmental)
Colin Jeffares, GOA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development)	Jason Unger, NGO (Environmental)
Mike Kelly, Industry (Power Generation)	Jay White, NGO (Lake Environment Conservation)
Al Kennedy, Industry (Chemical and Petrochemical)	Jamie Wuite, GOA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Agriculture and Food)
Ron McMullin, Industry (Irrigation)	Bev Yee, GOA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Environment)
Keith Murray, Industry (Forestry)	

### **Presenters:**

Terry Sly, *Executive Director's Report; 2010 Operating Budget; Business Planning* (Items 1.6, 1.7, 7.0)

Scott Millar and Jason Unger, *PEACH Project Team* (Item 2)

Bev Yee, *WFL Action Plan and Cumulative Effects Management* (Item 3)

Lisa Maria Fox, *WFL Implementation Review Committee* (Item 4)

Bob Barraclough, *Water Allocation Management System Review* (Item 5)

Giselle Beaudry and John Skowronski, *Sector Planning for Water CEP* (Item 6)

### **Guests:**

James Guthrie, TransAlta	Pat Kehoe, Ducks Unlimited
Joseph Jobin, Treaty 8 First Nations	Cam Lane, Alberta Environment
Bill Macdonald, Alberta Environment	Kelly Ness, Alberta Environment

### **AWC Staff and Contractor Support**

Terry Sly, Lorie Wagner, Kim Sanderson

### **Absent with Regrets:**

David Breakwell, GOA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Energy)

Gord Edwards, AWC Executive Director

David Hill, GOA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Water Research Institute)

David Kay, NGO (Wetland Habitat Conservation)

Alex MacKenzie, GOA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Health and Wellness)

Dug Major, NGO (WPACs)

Larry Nolan, Industry (Livestock)

Dwight Oliver, Government (Rural)

Ron Pearson, NGO (Fishery Habitat Conservation)

Richard Quail, Government (Small Urban)

Allan Wells, Government (Métis Settlements General Council)

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**Attachment 2: Meeting #26 Action Item Log**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>By when</b>
26.1: Staff will advise the board whether the AGM will be held in March or June 2010.	AWC Staff	Dec 31
26.2: Council staff will with work with GoA to identify opportunities to showcase the PEACH work and ensure that the messaging does not create concerns or inaccurate expectations.	AWC Staff, GoA	January 30
26.3: The executive will work with Council staff and the consultant to plan the workshop and oversee the business planning process.	AWC Staff, Executive	March 25

**Attachment 3: Decision Log**

*Decision 26.1: David Rushford was appointed as the new industry executive member and Jim Ellis was appointed as the Government of Alberta and Provincial Authorities executive member for terms ending in November 2011. Gord Edwards was confirmed as the Secretary-Treasurer.*

*Decision 26.2: The summary report for the June 4, 2009 meeting was adopted by consensus and will be posted on the Council website.*

*Decision 26.3: The summary report for the August 24, 2009 meeting was adopted by consensus and will be posted on the Council website.*

*Decision 26.4: The revised 2010 Core Operating Budget was approved by consensus.*

*Decision 26.5: The following meeting schedule for 2010 was approved by consensus:*

- *March 25-26, Calgary (business planning for 1½ days, with ½ day board meeting)*
- *June 24, Edmonton*
- *October 28, Calgary (annual dinner on Oct. 27)*

*Decision 26.6: The board:*

1. *Approved the Provincial Ecological Aquatic Criteria for Health (PEACH) Project Team’s final report.*
2. *Disbanded the PEACH Project Team.*

*Decision 26.7: The board approved the Water for Life Implementation Review Committee’s report, “Water for Life Implementation Review: A Brief How-to Guide”, noting that the snapshot date could change pending discussion at the AWC business planning session in March 2010.*

*Decision 26.8: The board approved the “Purpose of Targets” document presented by the CEP Sector Planning Team.*

*Decision 26.9: The board approved the business planning workshop proposal.*

ALBERTA WATER COUNCIL  
AGENDA, MEETING #26  
November 19, 2009  
McDougall Centre, Calgary

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

**GENERAL BUSINESS OF COUNCIL**

**9:00 1.0 Administration – Chair 30 min**

- 1.1 Welcome and approve agenda
- 1.2 Appointment of Executive Officer – Industry and GoA and Provincial Authorities broad category
- 1.3 Approve Summary Report from June 4, 2009 meeting
- 1.4 Review of actions from June 4, 2009 meeting
- 1.5 Approve Summary Report from August 24, 2009 meeting
- 1.6 Executive Director's report
- 1.7 Approve proposed 2010 AWC Core Operating Budget
- 1.8 Approve meeting dates for 2010

**9:30 2.0 Provincial Ecological Aquatic Criteria for Health Project Team 60 min**

Approve the final report and communication plan. Disband the project team.

**10:30 Break 15 min**

**10:45 3.0 WFL Renewal Action Plan 90 min**

Hear a presentation from the GoA on the *WFL* Renewal Action Plan and an explanation on how they addressed the Council's recommendations to them.

**12:15 Lunch (provided in the room) 45 min**

**1:00 4.0 WFL Implementation Review Committee 15 min**

Approve the committee template and process for conducting future assessments of implementation progress.

**1:15 5.0 Water Allocation System Project Update 15min**

Hear an update on the work of the GoA on the water allocation system.

**1:30 6.0 Sector Planning for CEP Project Team 15 min**

Hear a presentation on the team's findings in their "What We've Learned" report.

**1:45 7.0 Business Planning 45min**

Approve a proposal for a strategic planning workshop to develop the Council's 2011 to 2013 Business Plan.

**2:30 8.0 Status Reports 15 min**

Refer members to status reports in the board package with brief opportunity for questions or clarification.

**2:45 9.0 New or Other Business 15 min**

New items of business or other items of information for Council

**3:00 Adjournment**