

ALBERTA WATER COUNCIL

MEETING #14

January 30, 2007

Calgary, Alberta

Executive Summary

The Water Council welcomed two new members and two new alternate members. New members are Danielle Droitsch (Environmental) and Brian Hammond (Rural), and new alternates are John Hermans (Alberta Agriculture and Food) and Rob Pritchard (Large Urban).

The Reporting Project Team presented a full draft of the second review report on implementation progress of Water for Life, along with a draft communications plan. Council members provided feedback on the report, commending the team for their diligence and hard work in compiling a solid document. The team will revise the draft report in response to comments from this meeting, and will send a final draft to the Council by mid-February for final approval by the executive. The plan is to publish the review report shortly after the Government of Alberta's report on implementation progress, expected in March.

Draft terms of reference for a Shared Governance Project Team were approved in principle. Council noted that the project has a very ambitious scope of work and advised the team to carefully assess its priorities while developing a work plan to ensure it focuses on the most critical aspects first.

The Wetland Policy Project Team presented a draft workbook designed to solicit input from stakeholders and the public. The workbook frames the outcomes and issues as questions, and responses to the questions will guide the team in finalizing the draft wetland policy and implementation plan. Council members provided feedback and agreed that the team could proceed with public consultations in the spring, using the revised workbook. The team will bring a draft policy and implementation plan to the Council later in the year.

Council approved the statement of need in the final report of the Water Conservation, Efficiency and Productivity Definitions Project Team and agreed to disband this team. The final report will be made available to the public through the Council's website.

The Policy Issues and Gaps Project Team was directed to proceed with their planned workshop with subject matter experts to validate the priority issues identified in their earlier work.

Hon. Rob Renner, Minister of Environment met with the Council, acknowledging the work done to date and asking members to consider taking on two specific tasks. Following discussion with the minister, Council agreed to a) assist Alberta Environment in leading the renewal of Water for Life, and b) determine if the current policy on moving water from one sub-basin for use in another sub-basin is still valid and what, if any, changes should be made to the policy and under what conditions. Council will provide recommendations regarding the policy to the minister this fall.

Summary of Discussion

David Hill convened the business meeting at 8:45 am. Those present introduced themselves, and welcomed two new members and two new alternates: new members are Danielle Droitsch (environmental NGO) and Brian Hammond (rural government), and new alternates are John Hermans (Government of Alberta, Alberta Agriculture and Food) and Rob Pritchard (large urban).

1 Administration

1.1 Review of Agenda

An item regarding the Policy Issues and Gaps project team was added under Other Business, as well as an update on the transition. The revised agenda was approved by consensus.

1.2 Approval of Summary Report from November 16, 2006 Meeting

The summary report was adopted by consensus and will be posted on the Council website.

1.3 Action Items from November 16, 2006 Meeting

Terry Sly reviewed the six action items from the November 16th meeting, as noted in the briefing book. Although item 13.5 was not completed, the Policy Issues and Gaps team continues to progress and feedback will be provided under Other Business.

1.4 Executive Committee Report

Council agreed with the executive's recommendation that all Council-approved reports be made public via the Council website.

Decision 14.1: All Council-approved reports will be made accessible to the public via the Council's website.

Action 14.1: The communiqué referenced in the executive committee minutes will be distributed in confidence to AWC members.

1.5 Emerging Opportunity

Peter Watson advised that the new Minister of Environment, Hon. Rob Renner, would attend a portion of the Council's meeting to ask the Council to consider two requests.

2 Reporting Project Team

Ron Pearson presented an overview of the Council's review report on implementation progress of Water for Life. It was suggested that a subtitle – Opportunity for Renewal – might be appropriate. Ron provided a short summary of each of the six elements in the report, reflecting the input provided since the last meeting. The following comments were made:

- One stakeholder group expressed concerns about the statement that water conservation objectives (WCOs) are in place and contributing to protection of healthy aquatic ecosystems in the South Saskatchewan River Basin (SSRB). The SSRB is over-allocated and WCOs are a very junior allocation. Thus, because of their junior status, even if they were set at higher levels, they would not effectively contribute to maintaining healthy aquatic ecosystems. Although WCOs may not be the right tool for protecting aquatic ecosystems in southern Alberta basins, they could potentially be used in basins that have not been as fully allocated. For the southern Alberta basins,

WCOs are a target for which strategies can be developed to improve existing conditions.

- Some members did not agree that a conservation ethic is more important in the long term than capacity to manage supply. Both are important. Supply management tools already exist and tools should be developed for conservation.
- The draft wetland policy will contribute to all three outcomes and could be added to each one as an example of implementation progress.
- Members reiterated the need for collaborative partnerships and for sectors to show leadership on issues that are within their jurisdiction.
- Members agreed they were comfortable advancing the three proposed themes: leadership and management, funding, and public awareness, as well as the potential common theme on increasing and encouraging broad stakeholder involvement.
- Members agreed that integration with land use is very important and that a statement noting, “land use planning is integral to meeting water use objectives” should be added.
- One member provided comments by email and these were shared orally with the Council. It was agreed that some of these comments would be more effectively considered as part of the renewal process rather than in the review of progress. These comments were forwarded to the Reporting Team to incorporate as appropriate.
- Where First Nations or municipalities are mentioned, Métis should also be mentioned.

Decision 14.2: Members agreed that they would like to see a final draft of the review report when it is sent to the executive for approval, and that they would provide any comments within a two-day timeframe to their executive member.

Action 14.2: Council members will email editorial comments on the review report to Ron Pearson by February 2.

Action 14.3: The Reporting Project Team will revise the review report to address comments provided by Council members and meet on February 9 to finalize the report before distributing it to Council for a last review.

Ron Pearson briefly reviewed the draft communications plan for the report. The review report will be released shortly after the Government of Alberta’s report on implementation progress, expected in March. Members noted that the review report could be an important component of the Water for Life renewal.

Action 14.4: The secretariat will discuss with the communications consultant potential opportunities for synergy between the review report and Water for Life renewal.

3 Shared Governance Working Group

Bob Cameron and Phyllis Kobasiuk presented the draft terms of reference for a Shared Governance Project Team. They reviewed the 13 scope items in the draft terms of reference, noting that project timelines are somewhat ambitious because the team must build awareness and understanding of the concept of shared governance, and its relationship to watershed management planning. As well, the team’s products are needed to provide guidance in the area of watershed management planning. The team intends to gather a wide range of information with respect to watershed management planning and to engage a variety of stakeholders. Bob noted that half of the upcoming WPAC Summit will be devoted to

watershed management planning and should provide good opportunities to share information and build on the good work already underway by some WPACs.

Council members recognized that this is an important project, but the scope is very broad and consultation plans are extensive. Several members expressed concern about the size of the task being proposed and whether the timelines are realistic. It was also noted that suggestions for potential amendments to legislation or regulation could result from this work.

Decision 14.3: Council approved in principle the draft terms of reference for a Shared Governance Project Team, adding a member of the federal government to the team.

Council agreed that the team should carefully assess its priorities while developing a work plan to ensure it focuses on the most critical aspects first.

Action 14.5: Susanne Forbrich will advise the secretariat who the federal government representative on the Shared Governance project team will be.

4 Discussion with Hon. Rob Renner, Minister of Environment

Hon. Rob Renner was welcomed to the Council meeting. Mr. Renner spoke of the readiness of the public to deal with environmental issues. At the same time, work is needed to address perceptions that water is limitless and free to all, and that there is no need for cooperation among license holders. In fact, significant cooperation and joint planning are needed to deal with water issues.

Mr. Renner indicated he would like assistance from the Council in two key areas. The first area concerns Water for Life. Renewal and resourcing of Water for Life was one of three priorities assigned to his ministry by Premier Stelmach. Progress has been made in implementing the WFL strategy but some things have changed since the original document was completed. These will need to be considered in determining the best way to move forward. The minister asked the Council to assist his department in leading the renewal and taking the strategy to the next level.

The second area relates to a review of the province's policy governing the movement of water from one sub-basin for use in another sub-basin. Current policy permits this type of diversion as long as the water is safely available from the source and the new withdrawal does not affect existing licensed water users. A recent water licence application raised public concerns about the movement of water from one sub-basin to another within the same major river basin. The minister asked the Council to determine if the current approach is still valid and what, if any, changes should be made to the policy and under what conditions. He indicated that, in the meantime, Alberta Environment would continue to accept and process applications under the *Water Act* in accordance with the present policy. If the Council agrees to take on this task, the minister indicated he would like to receive recommendations by the fall.

The minister also noted that the Premier has asked Alberta Environment to do some work on cumulative impacts on air, water and land to better understand and anticipate the total potential effects of development projects.

Council members engaged in a brief discussion with Minister Renner, and advised him that they were willing to take on both of the tasks he had asked them to consider.

Decision 14.4: Council agreed to a) assist Alberta Environment in leading the renewal of Water for Life, and b) determine if the current policy on moving water from one sub-basin for use in another sub-basin is still valid and what, if any, changes should be made to the policy and under what conditions.

Council recognized that some adjustments will be needed to the 2007 operational plan to accommodate this new work, and these changes will be reflected in the materials brought forward by the Business Plan Subcommittee at the March meeting. A small group was formed to begin scoping out the policy review task, and includes: Bill Berzins, Rob Pritchard, Rick Quail, Danielle Droitsch, Susanne Forbrich and Keith Murray, along with representatives from First Nations/Métis and the Government of Alberta, to be identified. The Executive, working with the Secretariat will do some initial scoping of the renewal of water for Life.

Action 14.6: The secretariat will arrange meetings to begin scoping out the work required to respond to Minister Renner's requests.

5 Wetland Policy Project Team

Jonathan Thompson and Ian Rudland provided an update on the work of the Wetland Policy Project Team, focusing on the draft workbook contained in the Council's briefing package. The team reached consensus on desired outcomes but was unable to agree on several key issues. Working with a consultant, they developed a workbook that frames the outcomes and issues as questions the team will use in its public consultations planned for later this spring. Consultations will be held with stakeholders and a broad cross-section of Albertans. The team is looking for feedback from Council on whether the proposed process is appropriate to get the direction needed to complete work on the draft policy and implementation plan, and on the draft questions. The team wants to make sure it is asking the right questions, and that the questions are being asked appropriately.

Council agreed that the proposed process is appropriate. Members then discussed the workbook questions and format in more detail, making the following comments:

- Every question is a big one, and people are likely to agree that the statement is a good idea; this may raise concerns about whether responses can be trusted.
- Some members felt these are leading questions and the team might want to consider offering a range of options for respondents to choose from.
- The question remains about how wetland protection is integrated into the landscape. Is wetland protection a priority everywhere in Alberta or can it be integrated into a broader landscape perspective?
- The province needs to have a clear goal in mind in terms of what it wants to see with respect to wetland function.
- Some firm deadlines are needed to get a policy in place. Also, the same approach (avoid, mitigate, compensate) has been successfully implemented in other places, including the US, and does not prevent development. There is no reason to think it can't be done here too.

Members provided direction in specific areas of the workbook:

- In the Green Area, avoidance or mitigation may not be possible, so further work is needed to more precisely address the fairness of any compensation.
- The workbook may need to reflect different situations in different parts of the province; e.g., several questions or a series of questions with options and implications, may need to be developed.
- Regarding challenge #4, is the intent to set objectives by region? That would be a big diversion from an overarching provincial policy.
 - Jonathan noted that the intent is that the wetland protection, conservation and restoration objectives would serve as a backstop to WPACs to help them make decisions. The intent is not to regionalize the policy or impede its implementation at the provincial level. Guidance should come from the policy statement and this would provide an extra tier of information or support to enable authorities to make the appropriate decisions in the basin.
- The wetland policy could be implemented before watershed framework plans are completed. Different objectives could be set based on the types of wetlands, the extent of losses already incurred, and other land uses.
- Generally, the team needs to refine the challenges, clarify the questions and propose options for survey respondents to consider.

The previous draft of the policy and implementation plan will not be released or used in any way in the public consultations. Following the consultations, these documents will be revised and will be presented to Council for further discussion.

Council directed the team to revise the workbook consistent with the direction provided at this meeting and in light of any further comments received by February 13. Council agreed that the team could then use the revised workbook as the basis for public consultations, which are expected to occur in March.

Decision 14.5: Council agreed that the team could proceed with public consultations in the spring, based on the direction given at the meeting for a revised workbook, specifically that the team: (1) present more balance in the materials, and (2) ensure the questions elicit responses that are helpful to the team in completing the policy and implementation plan.

6 Water Conservation, Efficiency and Productivity Definition Project Team

David Hill briefly reviewed the history of this team and its work, and directed members to the final report in the briefing book, which includes the revised statement of need. He indicated that although this team is asking to be formally disbanded, all members have agreed to continue with the group to work on Sector Plans.

Decision 14.6: Council approved the statement of need in the final report of the Water Conservation, Efficiency and Productivity Definitions Project Team, and agreed that this report could be posted on the Council's website.

Decision 14.7: Council agreed to disband the Water Conservation, Efficiency and Productivity Definitions Project Team.

7 New or Other Business

a) Policy Issues and Gaps Project Team

Susanne Forbrich advised that this team was thinking of holding a workshop with subject matter experts to further assess the ten priority issues, confirm that they are indeed the right priorities and get advice on the recommendations that will be developed for each priority, with a final report to be presented to Council on the recommended approaches.. The consultant has identified knowledgeable and informed people who would be invited to participate as subject matter experts.

Decision 14.8: Council agreed that the Policy Issues and Gaps Project Team should proceed with the workshop with subject matter experts to look at the ten priority issues, confirm that they are the right priorities, and prepare a final report to be presented to Council on the recommended approaches.

b) Transition

Terry Sly advised that the Transition subcommittee had a teleconference on January 24 to revisit the option of having a joint secretariat with CASA. This arose largely because Donna Tingley, CASA's executive director, resigned in December, and this could be an opportunity to recruit just one executive director rather than two in 2007. As well, the subcommittee considered the opportunity for broader integration of air and water issues by having a joint secretariat. The subcommittee proposed that the executive committees of the two organizations meet to discuss the idea. Members briefly discussed this matter, noting that potential synergy and integration could occur with a joint secretariat, but also recognizing the amount of work that will be needed, particularly on the part of the Council to establish its own secretariat support system.

One stakeholder group is wondering about the rationale for becoming a not-for-profit society. Peter Watson advised that he would be having a detailed discussion very soon with Minister Renner on the transition Peter noted that the communiqué being prepared to assist him in his discussion with the Minister on the rationale for transition can be shared with members to assist them in their sector discussions on this matter. It was also noted that for some sectors, the honorarium currently available is a barrier to participation, although this will change when honoraria are increased following the transition.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 pm.

Attachment 1: Meeting #14 Attendees

Council Members and Alternates:

Bill Berzins, Non-government Organization (Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils)
Gerald Cunningham, Government (Métis Settlements General Council)
Danielle Droitsch, Non-government Organization (Environmental)
Susanne Forbrich, Government (Environment Canada)
Jim Hackett, Industry (Power Generation)
Brian Hammond, Government (Rural)
John Hermans, GOA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Agriculture and Food)
David Hill, Industry (Irrigation)
Gloria Keays, GOA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Health and Wellness)
Mike Kelly, Industry (Power Generation)
Al Kennedy, Industry (Chemical and Petrochemical)
Joe Miller, GOA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Energy)
Keith Murray, Industry (Forestry)
Ron Pearson, Non-government Organization (Fishery Habitat Conservation)
Brad Pickering, GOA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Sustainable Resource Development)
Rob Pritchard, Government (Large Urban)
Richard Quail, Government (Small Urban)
Sharla Rauschnig, GOA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Energy)
Judy Smith, Industry (Mining)
Kevin Stashin, Industry (Oil and Gas)
Kim Sturgess, GOA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Economic Development Authority)
Jonathan Thompson, Non-government Organization (Wetland Habitat Conservation)
Frank Vagi, Non-government Organization (Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils)
Linda Van Gastel, GOA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Science and Research Authority)
Peter Watson, GOA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Environment)
Jay White, Non-government Organization (Lake Environment Conservation)

Non-Member Presenters:

Bob Cameron, South Peace Environmental Ass'n and Phyllis Kobasiuk, AAMD&C, *Item 8.0*

Guests:

Margaret Chandler, GreenFuse
Denise Hammel, First Nations (Alberta) Technical Services Advisory Group
Mark Haxby, Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry
Cam Lane, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development
Rich Smith, Alberta Beef Producers

Hon. Rob Renner, Minister of Environment
Richard Westlund, Executive Assistant, Minister of Environment
Kim Hunt, Communications Director, Alberta Environment

Secretariat:

Kate Rich	Ian Rudland
Terry Sly	Kim Sanderson
Tim Toth	Lorie Wagner

Absent with Regrets:

Nick Bayliss, GOA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Health and Wellness)

John Donner, GOA and Provincial Authorities (AAF)

Lisa King, Government (First Nations)

Al Maurer, Government (Large Urban)

Larry Nolan, Industry (Livestock)

Jim Vollmershausen, Government (Environment Canada)

Attachment 2: Meeting #14 Action Item Log

Action	Who	By when
Action 14.1: The communiqué referenced in the executive committee minutes will be distributed in confidence to AWC members.	Secretariat	Feb. 15
Action 14.2: Council members will email editorial comments on the review report to Ron Pearson by February 2.	Council members	Feb. 2
Action 14.3: The Reporting Project Team will revise the review report to address comments provided by Council members and meet on February 9 to finalize the report before distributing it to Council for a last review.	Reporting Project Team	Feb. 9
Action 14.4: The secretariat will discuss with the communications consultant potential opportunities for synergy between the review report and Water for Life renewal.	Secretariat	Feb. 9
Action 14.5: Susanne Forbrich will advise the secretariat who the federal government representative on the Shared Governance project team will be.	Susanne Forbrich	Feb. 21
Action 14.6: The secretariat will arrange meetings to begin scoping out the work required to respond to Minister Renner's requests.	Secretariat	Feb. 15

Attachment 3: Meeting #14 Decision Log

Decision 14.1: All Council-approved reports will be made accessible to the public via the Council's website.

Decision 14.2: Members agreed that they would like to see a final draft of the review report when it is sent to the executive for approval, and that they would provide any comments within a two-day timeframe to their executive member.

Decision 14.3: Council approved in principle the draft terms of reference for a Shared Governance Project Team, adding a member of the federal government to the team.

Decision 14.4: Council agreed to a) assist Alberta Environment in leading the renewal of Water for Life, and b) determine if the current policy on moving water from one sub-basin for use in another sub-basin is still valid and what, if any, changes should be made to the policy and under what conditions.

Decision 14.5: Council agreed that the team could proceed with public consultations in the spring, based on the direction given at the meeting for a revised workbook, specifically that the team: (1) present more balance in the materials, and (2) ensure the questions elicit responses that are helpful to the team in completing the policy and implementation plan.

Decision 14.6: Council approved the statement of need in the final report of the Water Conservation, Efficiency and Productivity Definitions Project Team, and agreed that this report could be posted on the Council's website.

Decision 14.7: Council agreed to disband the Water Conservation, Efficiency and Productivity Definitions Project Team.

Decision 14.8: Council agreed that the Policy Issues and Gaps Project Team should proceed with the workshop with subject matter experts to look at the ten priority issues, confirm that they are the right priorities, and prepare a final report to be presented to Council on the recommended approaches.

Attachment 4: Meeting #14 Agenda

**ALBERTA WATER COUNCIL
AGENDA, MEETING #14**

**January 30, 2007
McDougall Centre, Calgary, Alberta
455 – 6th Street**

GENERAL BUSINESS OF COUNCIL

- 8:40 1.0 Administration – Chair 80 mins**
1.1 Welcome, introductions and approve agenda
1.2 Approve Summary Report from November 16, 2006 meeting
1.3 Review of actions from last meeting
1.4 Executive Committee Report
- Emerging opportunity
- 10:00 Break**
- 10:15 2.0 Reporting Project Team 90 mins**
Approve the review report on implementation progress and the plan for communicating the report.
- 11:45 Lunch (to be provided in the room) 45 mins**
- 12:30 3.0 Shared Governance Working Group 45 mins**
Approve the terms of reference for a Shared Governance Project Team
- 1:15 4.0 Greetings from the Minister – Honourable Rob Renner 45 min**
- 2:00 5.0 Wetland Policy Project Team 90 mins**
Review the public consultation package
- 3:30 6.0 Water Conservation, Efficiency and Productivity Definition Project Team 15 mins**
Approve project team’s final report and disband the team.
- 3:45 7.0 New or Other Business 15 min**
New items of business or other items of information for Council
- 4:00 Adjournment**

NOTE: An hour has been allotted for Broad Category caucusing – 7:30 to 8:30 am.