

## Board of Directors Meeting ~ Minutes (Approved)

November 23, 2023; 10:00 am to 4:00 pm.

AEP Boardroom, 250 Diamond Avenue, Spruce Grove, AB

### Meeting Summary:

The Athabasca Watershed Council (AWC) met on November 23, 2023 in person in Spruce Grove and online. The board approved previous (Sept. 21, 2023) board meeting minutes and shared round table sector updates. They approved the Q2 (Jul-Sep) staff activities and financial report and heard about other fall activities. They also approved a proposal to update the AWC website and provided staff guidance on several communication and technical activities. The next board meeting is February 15, 2024.



**Meeting Attendees:**

SEAT	DIRECTOR	ALTERNATE	Quorum
AEP Representative	Abdi Siad Omar	Curtis Brock	√
Provincial/Federal Government	vacant		
Municipal (Upper Basin)	vacant		
Municipal (Middle Basin)	Robb Minns		√
Municipal (Lower Basin)			
Forestry	Dan Moore		√
Oil & Gas	Janice Linehan		√
Ag or Industry	vacant		
Agriculture	vacant		
Mining/Utilities	Amanda Buchanan		√
Indigenous			
Indigenous	vacant		
Indigenous	vacant		
Health or Environment	Brian Deheer		√
Health or Environment	Julie Hink		√
Stewardship	Kendra Gilbert		√
Stewardship	Paula Evans		√
Research and Academia			
Member-at-Large	Laura Pekkola		√
Member-at-Large	Ida Edwards		√
Past President	vacant		
Quorum = >50% filled seats (14) = >7			11
<b>Staff present:</b> Petra Rowell, AWC Executive Director; Ashley Johnson, Science and Outreach Coordinator; Caity Seifert, Project Coordinator; Shayla Watson, ART Intern			

**Actions arising from the Nov. 23 2023 AWC Board meeting:**

<b>Lead /Action:</b>	<b>To be completed by:</b>
Ashley post the approved Sept. 2023 board meeting minutes to the website.	Next meeting
Petra develop a list of all previous supporters for inclusion in the 15 <sup>th</sup> anniversary report.	June AGM
Petra build a list of stakeholders/sectors in the Athabasca and develop a draft communications plan and materials (introductory folder, slide deck, sector fact sheets) to engage potential supporters	Provide update at Feb. Board meeting
Sarah work with board members identified to develop an AWC safety protocol, procure a satellite phone(s), and develop a waiver form.	Summer field season

1. **Coffee's On!** Coffee and snacks were provided from 9:30 to 10:00 as board members arrived.
2. **Welcome**
  - a. **Call to Order Health and safety; quorum:** Petra provided safety and building logistics and confirmed that quorum was met. Many thanks to Alberta Environment for providing the meeting space and to Kathy Svenshek and other Spruce Grove AEPA staff for assisting with IT and other meeting logistics. Thanks also to Appetite Delight (caterer) who provided a hot lunch.
  - b. **Treaty Land Acknowledgment:** Vice President Kendra called the meeting to order at 10:04 am and provided a Treaty Land Acknowledgement.
  - c. **Round Table Introductions and favorite Christmas activity!** A round table of introductions was made.
3. **Administration**
  - a. **Approval of Agenda:** President Dan Moore asked if there were any changes/additions to the agenda. Kendra motioned to add a discussion around communications between municipalities and lake groups. The revised agenda was approved by consensus.
  - a. **Approval of Past Meeting Minutes (September 21, 2023):** Petra provided an overview of outstanding action items from the Sept. meeting:

- i. Approved June board meeting minutes have been posted to the website.
- ii. Activities to identify and discuss past supporters and future stakeholders will be discussed today.
- iii. Activities (e.g., slide deck, sector info sheets) to enable board members to be better AWC ambassadors has been deferred to the winter months.
- iv. Activities to thank the AEPA Minister are ongoing: we hope to meet with her in person this fall/winter (has been deferred to spring) and will be sure to identify at that time what accomplishments additional funding has enabled the AWC to undertake. AEPA has asked us to be prepared to answer the questions “what is our biggest accomplishment, biggest challenge and what can AEPA do to help us?” Dan noted that our biggest accomplishment is getting people together; and our biggest challenge is getting people together! (given the size and sparse population of the watershed, Covid, people’s time and priorities, etc.)

Dan asked if there were any corrections to the minutes. Hearing none, the Sept. 21, 2023 meeting minutes were approved by consensus.

#### 4. Reports and Updates

- a. **Q2 Activity and Financial Report:** Petra first asked if the quarterly reports are working / have enough information for board members; they are. She then provided a second quarter (Q2) activity and financial report (circulated to the board prior to the meeting). She thanked Bighorn Mining / Vista Mines for their donation. She was asked to provide some example of key expenditures to the board; she pointed out some of our larger grants (e.g., WRRP) that are the main sources of expenditures outside of staffing and administration.

Petra noted that we now have more people (staff and volunteers, youth) doing more things including going to more remote places and/or working in water. The board discussed safety protocols. Janice, Dan and several others offered assistance with developing an AWC safety protocol to industry standards. The board also approved the purchase of a satellite phone(s). Staff are also developing volunteer waiver forms.

Petra informed the board that Lac La Biche County has designated Sterling Johnson to replace Lorin Tkachuk as director for the lower basin municipal seat. The board thanked

Lorin for his support over the past year and welcomed Sterling. The Town of Athabasca, an organizational member, has named Ida Edwards as their representative.

Petra noted that Sarah Shortt has moved to Fort McMurray and the AWC has requested office space in the GoA building. Considering the potential delay in receiving that space, board members suggested contacting Wood Buffalo Environmental Association, Suncor, colleges or other organizations in the area that may have available space. Staff are figuring out how to best utilize our hybrid working situation with staff located in / or working from different areas.

Petra also provided the board with some stats on 2024 wildfires in the Athabasca (11,024 km<sup>2</sup> burned or 7% of the watershed), noting that we can anticipate an impact on erosion / sedimentation / water quality downstream of these fires over the next several years. She also provided information on the [Athabasca River Conditions and Use](#) and [Water Shortage Advisories](#).

- b. **Fall Activities:** Staff provided a sneak peak of some of the activities they are working on for the fall, including hosting a Beaver Information Night in Westlock, and preparing for two events in November (at Plamondon and Rochester).

#### 5. **AEPA Update:**

- a. **AEPA Update:** An AEPA update on several water management initiatives provided to the Alberta Water Council in October 2023, was shared with the board in the agenda package. Curtis and Abdi spoke to a number of items in the update. In particular, they noted the current focus on drought throughout much of the province. No management responses have been triggered as of yet, but a number of water shortage advisories have been issued. AEPA will be meeting with the WPACs on December 12<sup>th</sup> to discuss a potential meeting with the minister. A tailings ponds characterization is in the works.
- b. **Discussion on how the AWC can engage in AEPA priorities:** Petra noted that the WPAC managers have discussed the drought situation and are working with the Alberta Water Council to host 'Resilience to Drought' workshops across the province. The 3 northern WPACs are hosting such an event in Grande Prairie on January 31.

#### 6. **Stakeholder Mapping Exercise**

- a. **Who are our stakeholders? What are their interests? Opportunities? How do we inform, engage and exchange:** Petra facilitated this session, providing a definition of stakeholder and asking board members to identify all government, industry, NGO and Indigenous stakeholders/rights-holders as well as stakeholders by geography (whole basin, Upper, Mid and Lower basin) that we might want to inform, engage or exchange information with. We need to understand their interests/priorities/opportunities to collaborate. It was noted that municipalities and other water users are important, but ‘everyday people’ are also a key audience. Petra will continue to build and prioritize this list to inform AWC sector engagement activities.
- b. **Who are past and future supporters?**
  - i. Petra is cleaning out and archiving files and preparing lists for acknowledgement in the 15 Year anniversary report.
- c. **What do board members need to be AWC Ambassadors?** Petra asked board members what tools they need to represent the AWC and its key messages. Items discussed included:
  - i. Slide deck with links to website for more info/ presentations to sector associations (CAPP, AFPA)
  - ii. Visual identity? Vests, business cards
  - iii. Notice of events/ activities in their areas
  - iv. Sector fact sheets

The board was in favour of having access to presentations and key messages for promoting the AWC. Petra presented the idea of creating sector-specific factsheets, which sparked good discussion on our target audience and whether there is a need to develop such specific outreach material.

## 7. CECE Discussion: 2024

- a. **15 Year anniversary special report Table of Contents:** Ashley shared a preliminary table of contents for a ‘special edition’ of our annual report which will highlight our 15<sup>th</sup> year anniversary. No items were suggested for addition, other than the idea of the inclusion of a word cloud in the report.
- b. **Other anniversary activities:** In conjunction with our 15-year celebration, Ashley asked whether the board would like to partner with ALMS for their annual conference in

September 2024, potentially in Hinton. The board approved this activity by consensus; following ALMS receiving board approval, work on conference planning should begin in January 2024.

**Web Updates:** Ashley presented a project proposal from Habit Creations Inc. for updating the AWC website. Requested changes include changing the domain name of our website from awc-wpac.ca to athabascawatershed.ca and using up to \$11,000 of our core budget to cover the cost of the updates. Kendra asked for clarification on the process of choosing Habit for this project; Ashley and Petra stated that they were chosen for our pre-existing working relationship, as well as a reasonable price, compared to a similar quote. The board approved the motion to change the domain name, as well as approving the motion to allocate funding towards this project, by consensus. Once the website is up and running, the board also suggested that a membership survey be done to ask members if we are doing the right things.

## 8. Technical Discussion

### a. SOW update / Process for Moving Forward

Petra noted that staff are working on reviving the SOW Interactive Atlas and have contracted out writing of sub-basin summaries. She also provided a state of the watershed 'concept' that would take a 'report card' approach to the next SOW update (similar to [Mississippi](#) or [Ontario](#) report cards). The board agreed by consensus to the initial broad categories for which metrics will be developed. There was some concern that blame for poor grades would fall to municipalities for issues beyond their control. Petra responded by stating that metrics would be chosen carefully, and be focused on water before it enters any intake pipes.

Petra noted that the AWC needs to have a good discussion about our role in monitoring and research. Currently, we are involved in several studies (East Slopes benthic monitoring, Pembina water quality, U of A under ice water quality model, etc.) but we don't have a clear policy or goals directing activities.

## 9. Round table Sector Updates

### a. Technical Discussion:

- b. Abdi/ Curtis – AEPA is focused on drought, particularly in the south, but also on the current and next budget cycle, anticipating a bigger ask for monitoring dollars.

- c. Shayla – working on a survey to learn more about 13% of the population in the watershed reliant on small public and private drinking water systems.
- d. Kendra – stressed the importance of municipal communication (summer villages and counties) with lake stewardship groups, particularly to inform municipal development plans and land use bylaws that may impact lake health. (Rob and Kendra agreed to discuss more offline.)
- e. Amanda – the summer around Hinton was dominated by fires and a major precipitation event (278 mm in 48 hrs); they are looking at water re-use.
- f. Rob: Continues to participate on the ALUS Barrhead-Westlock-Athabasca committee which continues to identify sites for riparian projects, pond levelers, etc.
- g. Laura: Inside Education’s annual youth conference will be focused on forests and water in 2024. WPAC videos should be ready for release in spring 2024.

#### 10. Next Steps

- a. January 31 – Drought management workshop in Grande Prairie
- b. February 15, 2024 virtual board meeting in the a.m.
- c. April 18 – hybrid meeting in Fort McMurray
- d. June 8 – AGM and board meeting in Whitecourt
- e. Sept TBD – a joint workshop with ALMS in Hinton
- f. Nov. 14 – Board meeting Spruce Grove

11. **Adjournment:** Dan adjourned the meeting at 3:39pm.