



**Board of Directors
Meeting Minutes
September 21, 2023
Athabasca**

Meeting Summary:

The Athabasca Watershed Council (AWC) met in person and online in Athabasca on September 21, 2023. The board approved previous (June) board meeting minutes and shared round table sector updates. The board approved the Q1 (Apr-Jun) staff activities and financial report and heard about other summer highlights such as the July Voyageur Brigade. They also approved an AWC emergency succession plan and discussed an AWC programs and projects framework. Staff noted that 2024 will be the AWC's 15th anniversary year. After a quick lunch, members walked out to the Tawatinaw River where staff provided a demonstration of the X-Stream Science program. The next board meeting will be held November 23, 2023.



Many thanks to Ashley, Caity and Dean for taking photos!

Meeting Attendees:

SEAT	DIRECTOR	ALTERNATE	Quorum
AEP Representative	Abdi Siad Omar		√
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			10
Guests: Kelly Chamzuk, Athabasca County; Dean Litzenberger, AWC member Staff present: Petra Rowell, AWC Executive Director; Ashley Johnson, Science and Outreach Coordinator; Caity Seifert, Project Coordinator; Shayla Watson, ART Intern			

Actions arising from the Sept. 21, 2023 AWC Board meeting:

Action (Lead):	To be completed by:
Ashley post the approved June 2023 board meeting minutes to the website.	Next meeting
Identify and share list of all previous funders with the board and continue the discussion about potential funding sources.	Deferred to Nov.
Add a stakeholder discussion to the next meeting.	Deferred to Nov.
Discuss how Board members can be better AWC ambassadors and what they need to promote the AWC (e.g., slide deck, business cards, sector info sheets).	Deferred to Nov.
Communicate our gratitude to AEPA for new funding, outlining how additional funds are letting us accomplish more.	Ongoing via AB WPAC managers committee.

Call to Order / Treaty Land Acknowledgement – Chair Dan Moore called the meeting to Order at 9:33 am and opened the meeting with a treaty land acknowledgment.

1. Administration:

- a. **Health and safety; quorum** – Petra provided safety and train station logistics and confirmed quorum.
- b. **Approval of Agenda:** Dan asked if there were any changes/additions to the agenda. There were none and the agenda was approved as presented by consensus.
- c. **Approval of Past Meeting Minutes (June 17, 2023):** Petra provided an overview of outstanding action items from the previous meeting:
 - i. Approved February board meeting minutes have been posted to the website.
 - ii. Activities to identify and discuss past supporters and future stakeholders are deferred to the November board meeting.
 - 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 and will be sure to identify at that time what accomplishments additional funding has enabled the AWC to undertake.
- d. Dan asked if there were any corrections to the minutes. Hearing none, the June 17, 2023 meeting minutes were approved by consensus.
- e. **Board and Staff Updates:**
 - i. Dan welcomed our two new board members, Ida Edwards (member at large) and Amanda Buchanan (industry – mining).
 - ii. Petra explained that Scott Ketcheson (Academic, Athabasca University) was unable to attend the AGM but was interested in remaining on the board. She asked for a motion for the board to appoint him as Director until the next election. As his research often takes him into the field, staff will discuss an alternate from Athabasca University with Scott. Brian motioned to appoint Scott Ketcheson as the academic representative on the board until the next formal election at the AGM, with Julie Hink as the seconder. The motion was approved by consensus.
 - iii. Petra noted that Alyssa-Mae Laviolette and Kennedy Deregt-Taschuk have retired from the board of directors. The board thanked these Directors for their time on the board.
 - iv. Petra also introduced Shayla Watson, our new ART Intern who will be continuing with our drinking water and climate change resiliency project.
 - v. The board congratulated Sarah on her recent wedding to Nolan Shortt.

2. Roundtable Introductions and Updates: share news, updates, upcoming events, etc. from your sector

- a. Ida Edwards: As part of a municipal environment committee, toured a watershed project in Stettler, with their wastewater lagoon being pumped through 80 acres of wetlands before entering their creek. Pleased to see both Ducks Unlimited and the Athabasca Watershed Council recently presented to Athabasca's Town Council.
- b. Laura Pekkola: The *Watershed for All* videos are complete on the WPACs end, onto the animation. The goal is to release them in early 2024. Inside Education is starting Water Innovation Days, with one in Calgary and one in Edmonton this pilot year.
- c. Brian Deheer: Philip Meisner (Alberta Wilderness Association) provided a briefing on the McClelland Fen that Brian asked to be distributed to the AWC board of directors (AWA materials on this issue can be found [online](#). Note that you can also view applications to the Alberta Energy Regulator by going to [Notices](#), and in this case, entering 'Fort Hills' in the search function). Lac La Biche Watershed Management Plan implementation committee has been meeting regularly, and will be sending a letter on the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan 10-year review.
- d. Dan Moore: The Alberta Water Council is hosting a sector water conservation, efficiency and productivity plan update session on October 25th. Brian added that both he and Dan are on the Water for Life Action Plan project team, with meetings resuming from a hiatus in October.
- e. Janice Linehan: Northern mining project (related to McClelland Fen) is from Suncor (Fort Hills Region, north of Fort McMurray), and Janice assured the board that if there are questions or need for follow-up on stakeholder and Indigenous engagement, she can provide that. Julie asked about Janice's involvement with tailings, and Janice responded that is a very key area, with presentations/information available for those interested.
- f. Petra: Participated in a federal Crown-Indigenous Working Group session on the framework in the works for tailings pond treatment and release.
- g. Rob Minns: Continues to participate on the ALUS Barrhead-Westlock-Athabasca committee which continues to identify sites for riparian projects, pond levelers, etc.

3. Reports

a. Q1 Activity and Financial Report

- i. Petra provided a brief update touching on the reports circulated prior to the board meeting, going over Q1 (April 1 – June 30) activities and finances. Petra mentioned that if there are any questions on the activity and financial report, she will take them at this time. Abdi mentioned that the government is pleased that the board's focus has been on effecting change in areas that are less monitored such as much of the mid-basin.

b. Summer highlights overview:

- i. **Voyageur Brigade & Athabasca County Presentation:** Petra provided a slide overview of the 2023 Fort Assiniboine Bicentennial Voyageur Canoe Brigade, with other participants adding in their comments. The AWC board gave huge thanks to the Brigade organizing committee, which Dan chaired and folks like Quentin and Theresa Olsen provided a huge amount of time towards. There was also terrific support from all the communities along the way. Kelly Chamzuk then presented an Athabasca County flag signed by many of the participants from the canoe brigade to the AWC for safe keeping. Brian and others brought up the possibility of organizing some day trips in 2024 to get folks out on the water.
- ii. **Staff Highlights:** Petra provided an update on some of the staff's summer activities, before opening the floor to board members to share highlights. Brian mentioned again how much he enjoyed Sarah's presentation to the LLB WMP implementation committee, which has led to a project in the works on Plamondon Creek and Plamondon Bay.

4. New Business

- a. **Introduce and discuss Draft Succession Plan:** The Oldman Watershed Council shared a succession template, which Petra adapted to the Athabasca Watershed Council. Petra provided an overview of what would happen if the ED had to step away for a period of time. The board then discussed the document with several points as follows:
 - i. This document should be a living document
 - ii. It should be reviewed annually.
 - iii. It will hopefully allow us to ease future transitions in staff and board.
 - iv. Clarification that succession planning should be viewed as a procedural document, not policy. It does not require a change to the bylaws.

Ida motioned to adopt the succession plan as presented. Dan seconded, and the plan was approved by consensus.

- b. **Introduce and discuss AWC Programs and Projects Document** (are we doing the right things?): Petra circulated a document with the meeting agenda and mentioned that as we are growing we want to have a framework that guides staff in what opportunities we participate in moving forward. We've identified 8 key areas that staff and board members will ideally be able to speak to, and that all programs and projects should fit under. These 8 areas are as follows:
 - i. Who is the AWC and what do they do?
 - ii. What is a watershed?
 - iii. What is unique about the Athabasca Watershed?
 - iv. What is the health of the Athabasca and what are the issues affecting it?
 - v. What is the AWC doing about it?
 - vi. What are others doing?

- vii. What can you do?
- viii. How will we know we are making progress?

For each of the 8 key areas, Petra has identified ways in which we address them through our 3 main streams of work (governance, education & outreach, and science). Petra presented some of the ways in which staff have been working towards addressing the 8 goals of our watershed management plan, before opening up the floor to questions. Brian mentioned that when we're looking at addressing the 3 goals of WFL, we should also look at the 3 directions (knowledge, partnerships and conservation). Petra addressed that comment through providing an example of some of the ways we do address those 3 directions.

c. Initial discussion about 2024 15 Year Anniversary

Petra noted that 2024 will be the AWC's 15th anniversary and asked for ideas to acknowledge this milestone. Suggestions included the following:

- i. A special anniversary edition of the annual report with professional design and layout.
- ii. Tie the anniversary into other tourism and recreation events? E.g. have an Athabasca watershed passport and prizes to those that get to all sites in 2024? Connect with Chambers of Commerce?
- iii. Photo contest?
- iv. Partner with ALMs for their annual workshop somewhere in the Athabasca.
- v. Series of events throughout the watershed? (e.g., earth day, world water day)
- vi. Jetboat trip from Fort McMurray to Fort Chip?

Staff will think about the ideas above and bring the discussion back to the board in November.

5. Next Steps

- a. **Oct. 12 –13 WPAC Summit:** Petra noted that this event is for directors and staff and is in Drumheller.
 - b. **Nov. 23 board meeting & committee meetings:** in Spruce Grove
 - c. **Feb. 2024 board meeting date/ location:** February 15th, virtual meeting to limit winter travel.
 - d. Proposal to add in an April board meeting so there isn't such a long gap between the last board meeting and the AGM.
 - e. Desire for a board tour of a drinking water facility, pulp or mine mill sometime in the future.
6. **Adjournment:** Dan adjourned the meeting at 12:10pm. In-person attendees then had lunch and enjoyed an afternoon stroll along the riverfront and a demonstration of the X-Stream Science program on the banks of the Tawatinaw River.