



Athabasca Watershed Council (AWC) - Headwaters Technical Working Group Draft Terms of Reference

Mandate

The Athabasca Watershed Council Headwaters Working Group (AWC-HWG) shall work to better understand the state of the Athabasca headwaters and its sub-basins, and through collaboration and engagement with Indigenous Nations, government, industry, land-holders, community and recreation groups, actively work together to identify areas within the headwaters that require restoration, conservation, and stewardship.

The working group will aid in the development and implementation of initiatives that support the health of the Athabasca headwaters while developing a greater understanding of the functions, interactions, impacts and uses of the headwaters region through research, data collection, restoration activities and public engagement. The working group will actively work towards connecting rights-holders and land users to support sustainable use and promote stewardship of the headwaters which will ensure the long-term health of the Athabasca watershed.

General

The AWC-HWG will operate with respect and support for AWC IWMP strategic planning processes and outcomes, and shall support the mission, vision and values of the Athabasca Watershed Council in all of its activities.

Vision: The Athabasca watershed is ecologically healthy, supporting resilient communities and a sustainable economy.

Mission: The Athabasca Watershed Council demonstrates leadership and facilitates informed decision-making in the Athabasca watershed by bringing stakeholders and Indigenous Peoples together to achieve our shared vision.

Values:

- Water and ecological health: a blessing and a gift, essential for the environment, economy, society and the spirit.
- Inclusivity and consensus decision-making: building integrity and trust by respecting all points of view including the cultures, knowledge and communities of Indigenous Peoples.
- Accountability: being responsible, timely, transparent and purpose driven but also allowing for creativity, innovation, and organizational risk taking.

Duties and Responsibilities

The Headwaters Working Group shall:

1. Provide support and recommendations to the AWC staff and board in relation to headwaters restoration, conservation, and other initiatives that will support the health of the watershed, and in accordance with the AWC-IWMP (Integrated Watershed Management Plan) to ensure the AWC can achieve our IWMP goals within the headwaters.
2. Prioritize technical work and assist the AWC in identifying ecologically sensitive and/or degraded/impacted areas within the headwaters region, such as riparian and shoreline areas, stream crossings, fish habitat, and invasive species monitoring and mitigation, among others.
 - a. Identify potential restoration sites;
 - b. Assist on the development of site plans including benchmarking site conditions, and identify requirements such as weed removals, other site prep, number and type of plants required, signage, etc.
3. As needed, help guide the preparation of project proposals, expressions of interest and grant funding applications.
4. Provide direction to projects within an approved scope and budget, and ensure that project deliverables are completed as per required timelines.
5. Support the AWC through acquisition of required information and development of knowledge, and participate in information-sharing with Rights Holders, stakeholders and the general public while respecting intellectual property rights.
6. Advise on linkages and coordination between research, monitoring and modeling needs within the Athabasca headwaters.

Membership

1. The AWC's Headwaters Program Coordinator will manage and organize meetings.
2. The working group shall be composed of individuals who represent a broad spectrum of local interests and diverse backgrounds. The AWC shall attempt to maintain a balance of interests on the working group including members with a background or current involvement in the following areas:
 - Rights-Holders (Indigenous Nations, Elders, Knowledge Carriers)
 - Industry (energy, mining, forestry)
 - Government (municipal, provincial, federal)
 - Recreation (land-users, community groups)
 - Conservation (conservation, environmental, and stewardship organizations)
 - Community (citizen scientists, clubs)
 - Transportation (rail, infrastructure)
 - Education (Post-secondary institutions, researchers)



3. Membership of the working group strives to represent the many diverse and broad segments of the headwaters region. Although there is no capped number of members, the AWC shall monitor participation in order to maintain effective meetings and meaningful engagement.
4. The AWC Headwaters coordinator shall act as the chairperson for each meeting until the working group is established. The working group may select a chairperson at a later date to facilitate meetings moving forward. A note-taker shall be selected, on a voluntary basis, for each meeting.

Terms

1. The working group shall act as a technical advisory body to the Athabasca Watershed Council, its staff, and board, for a minimum period of two years.
2. The working group has no decision-making authority. Final approval and implementation of projects or plans is the responsibility of the Athabasca Watershed Council and its Board of Directors
3. This working group is not authorized to expend funds without the approval of the Athabasca Watershed Council and its Board of Directors.

Procedures

1. The working group will meet once a month or as required and determined by its members.
2. Meetings
 - a. Recommendations and decisions of the working group shall be made by consensus of members in attendance at a meeting.
 - b. The AWC Headwaters coordinator and/or other AWC staff will be present to facilitate the meetings and to provide content.
 - c. Notices of meetings shall be emailed in advance to members in order to provide enough notice for participation
 - d. Meeting agendas will be prepared by the AWC headwaters coordinator and working group members. The agenda is to be distributed to all members of the working group at least three days prior to the meeting date.
3. Meeting procedures shall be conducted in accordance with good and respectful meeting practices and in alignment with the AWC's mission, vision, and values.