



Annual General Meeting

June 14, 2025 Minutes Approved

Whitecourt

Housekeeping Items

The Royal Canadian Legion Branch 44 in Whitecourt was opened to members at 10:30 am with the coffee on and time for networking. A number of Athabasca Watershed Council (AWC) members also joined virtually. Petra Rowell, AWC Executive Director, gave a 2-minute warning to the room at 10:58 am. At 11:00 am, she pointed out health and safety before introducing Dan Moore as the AWC President and meeting Chair.

1. Call to Order, Welcome and Introductions

As Chair, Dan welcomed everyone and called the 2025 AWC's Annual General Meeting to order. He thanked everyone for joining us, both in person and for those online today.

TREATY LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Dan acknowledged that we are meeting today in Whitecourt on the border between Treaty 6 and Treaty 8 Territories. The AWC works across the entire Athabasca watershed, which underlays portions of Treaty 6, Treaty 8 and Treaty 10 territories, home to many First Nation and Métis communities. The AWC respects the histories, languages, and cultures of all Indigenous people, whose presence continues to enrich our vibrant watershed. We make this acknowledgment as an act of Truth and Reconciliation, and in recognition and appreciation of those Indigenous ancestors who came before us and the Indigenous voices who continue to guide our efforts today. A round circle of introductions, both online and in the room, were made.

2. Confirm Quorum, Review and Approve Agenda

Petra confirmed that we had quorum (>10 members present). Dan reminded everyone that we will be making decisions by consensus. Rather than asking for all in favor, he will ask if there are any opposing. Those opposing can raise their hands; or speak to their issue when called on. Dan noted that the meeting agenda was circulated prior to today (with hard copies available in the room), with just a slight adjustment today to ensure we deal with all required decisions before lunch. He asked if there were any additions, deletions, or clarifications. Hearing none, he asked if anyone was opposed to approving the agenda. Seeing, hearing no one opposed, the agenda was approved as presented by consensus.

3. Approve 2024 AGM Minutes

Dan noted the minutes from the 2024 AGM were circulated prior to today (with hard copies available in the room). He asked if there were any errors or omissions. Hearing none, he asked if any were opposed to approving the 2024 AGM minutes. Seeing, hearing none, the minutes were approved as presented by consensus.

4. Guest Presentations

Natalija Vojno, Network Engagement Lead, Our Living Waters

Natalija thanked organizers for providing her with time on the agenda before giving a brief overview of Our Living Waters. This national organization is committed to healthy waters across Canada by 2030, and plan to achieve this ambitious goal by connecting with stakeholders and people already doing work to create healthy watersheds across the country. The AWC looks forward to more discussion about how our two organizations can collaborate. More information about the OLV can be found at <https://ourlivingwaters.ca/>.

Jeff Zhang, Director of Infrastructure Services & Sheldon Schoepp, Manager Protective Services, Woodlands County

Jeff Zhang and Sheldon Schoepp provided an overview of the extent and damage caused by the 2023 high water event, a 1 in 100-year flood, in Woodlands County. They started by highlighting the severity of the flood by contrasting the peak flow of the McLeod River in Whitecourt today (June 14, 2025) at 32 m³/s to the flow rate at the peak of the flood on June 21, 2023 at 1620 m³/s. Within the county, there were 18 locations with damage to infrastructure, with a direct damage estimate of \$1.4 million dollars. Sharing a number of pictures, they also spoke to the emergency response process as the water peaked and then receded. AWC board member Alan Deane also shared his personal experience with the flooding on his property. A question was asked if the County plans to do any proactive flood mitigation works in response to the flood. The county is still working with the province on flood cleanup costs, but no major mitigation works are currently planned. There was also some discussion about the accuracy of flow given that gauge stations don't always capture peak flow and, in this case, the flow gauge station was destroyed by the flood. Hence peak flow was estimated rather than recorded although high water marks were surveyed to help in the estimate. Dan thanked the presenters and Woodlands County for all their work that was done between the flood and the 2023 Fort Assiniboine Voyageur Canoe Brigade which launched 14 voyageur canoes at Whitecourt on July 7, 2023.

5. Election of Directors

Dan asked Petra to act as presiding officer for the election of directors. Petra noted that this year, we don't have any outgoing directors to acknowledge. But we do have a couple of new directors and several directors renewing their terms. As per our bylaws, nomination papers must be received by Administration 7 days prior to the AGM (June 7). No nominations are accepted from the floor.

Petra thanked all the members who put their names forward and reviewed the slate of nominees on the slide. She noted that all 3 municipal seats are generally appointed by the board each fall, after municipalities assign councilors to various committees. However, director appointments made during the year must be ratified at the AGM. The remaining seats are either returning Directors or new nominations. As all seats up for election only received a single nomination, the nominees can be accepted as a single slate and through a motion for acclamation.

This slate of nominees includes:

Seat	Nominee	Representative(s)
Municipal Upper Basin	Woodlands County (appointed April 2025)	Alan Deane
Municipal Middle Basin	Middle Basin Municipal Collaborative (appointed Nov. 2024)	Athabasca County (Rob Minns); Barrhead County (Walter Preugschas)
Municipal Lower Basin	Lac La Biche County (appointed Nov. 2024)	Colette Borgun

Forestry	Alberta Forest Products Association (renew)	Dan Moore
Oil and Gas	Suncor Energy (renew)	Janice Linehan
Agriculture or Industry	Tyrell Nagtegaal (new)	
Mining/Utilities	Bighorn Mining (renew)	Amanda Buchanan
Environment	Brian Deheer (renew)	
Research/Academia	Scott Ketcheson (renew)	
Public-at-large	Ida Edwards (renew)	

Petra asked for a motion to acclaim the slate of nominees as presented. Brian Deheer so motioned, Laura Pekkola seconded. There was no discussion, and none were opposed hence the motion was approved by consensus. Petra returned the Chair to Dan who thanked everyone who put their name forward. He also reminded everyone that there are still 2 board vacancies (Indigenous, Agriculture) and members do not have to be Directors to participate on committees. Anyone interested in volunteering should talk to Petra.

6. 2024-25 Financial Report

Dan introduce the AWC Treasurer, Ida Edwards, who then provided the following report:

Good morning, everyone. I will start the 2024-25 Financial Report by thanking our Executive Director Petra Rowell for maintaining the AWC accounting records and for providing the year-end documents to our accountants. I also thank Kingston Ross Pasnak LLP Chartered Professional Accountants for conducting this year's review and providing the financial statements in time to share with AGM attendees today. I am now going to provide an overview of some of our 2024-25 financial highlights.

Starting on the revenue side, for the fiscal year of 2024-25, our budget continues to grow with total revenues and in-kind support of about \$769,000. We are very grateful that core operational funding of \$320,000 was again provided by Alberta Environment and Protected Areas. This was the 2nd year of a four-year grant agreement. Despite the financial security this provides, as always, we need to diversify our funding so that we are never reliant on only one source. This year we were really pleased to be able to more than match these funds with other grants and in-kind support.

To fund our growing list of projects, we were very fortunate to have received GOA Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program funding, Environment Canada EcoAction Community Initiative funds, a Pembina Pipeline grant, and several smaller grants. Funds from bank interest and donations also increased this year, thanks to the generosity of Kim Sturgess (\$25k) and several municipalities (Lac Ste. Anne, Barrhead and Woodland Counties). All told, these other monies totaled about \$273,000.

In-kind contributions are a big part of our budget. In-kind contributions come from our volunteer board, committees, and working group members as well as the many collaborations we are involved with. It also includes the work of interns provided through the SAIT Integrated Water Management Program and UofA Sustainability Council's ART program. For 2024-25, we conservatively estimated this to be valued at about \$176,000.

Finally, on the revenue side, I also want to note that we are participating in a number of collaborations where we are not the banker, so funds do not show up on our financial statements, but we very much benefit from these funds. This includes:

- Most recently, we were co-applicants on 2 successful NSERC 3-year grants for \$900k in total to support Dr. Bin Xu, NAIT Boreal Research Institute in his peatland reclamation research.*
- We're also participating in 2 other WPAC projects, one with the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance and one with the Oldman Watershed Council, which have raised \$155,000 in grants to date.*
- In 2024-25, we also collaborated with ALMS to host their annual workshop last September, and with the Mighty Peace Watershed Alliance and the Lesser Slave Watershed Council to host the 2nd Water Management in Alberta's Boreal conference. Both of these events were only possible because of a number of government, industry and other event sponsors.*

On the expense side, about 80% of our cash and in-kind support goes towards projects. Staffing is our biggest expense but of course, without our 8 project staff, we would not get as much done! Remaining project funds are generally used to pay for consultants, lab analysis, travel, equipment and supplies and communication materials associated with each project. The remaining 20% of resources goes towards the cost of maintaining our society status, including board and committee meetings, an office, an administrator (Petra) and other items including insurance, accounting, etc.

At the end of the year (i.e., on March 31, 2025) as per the balance sheet, we had remaining savings (not dedicated to grants and project deliverables) of approximately \$100,000. With that quick overview, I will finish by noting that KRP, in undertaking their review, found no significant findings and the financial statements, as presented "accurately reflect AWC position at March 31, 2025".

Ida noted that the draft financial statements prepared by KRP were previously circulated (with hard copies available in the room). She then asked if there were any questions regarding the statements or this verbal report. A question was asked about how Deferred Contributions relate to cash flow with Petra answering that these are generally multi-year grant dollars received in one fiscal year, but not spent until the following year. Because the deliverables are 'outstanding' at year end (to be delivered in next fiscal year), this is shown on the balance sheet as a liability, to offset the cash accounts shown as assets.

With no other questions, Ida made a motion to approve the 2024-25 Financial Statements, and her verbal report as presented. Kendra Gilbert seconded the motion. There was no further discussion, and no one was opposed. Hence, the motion to approve the 2024-25 Financial Statements and report, as presented, was approved by consensus.

Ida noted at the 2024 AGM, the membership asked the Executive Director to review our accounting needs and expenses. Prior to today, Petra reached out to 3 other firms, heard back from two, with rates comparable to the service we are currently receiving from KRP. Thus, given their familiarity with our account and competitive rates, as Treasurer, Ida made a motion that Kingston Ross Pasnak LLP Chartered Professional Accountants (KRP) be retained as the AWC's accountants for the fiscal year 2025-26. Brian Deheer seconded the motion. There was no further discussion and no objections, hence the motion was approved by consensus.

7. LUNCH BREAK

To wrap up the morning, a door prize draw was made before everyone broke for lunch.

8. AWC 2024-25 Projects

As part of the requirement to provide an annual report on activities at the AGM, several staff provided updates on their projects as follows:

- Shayla Watson, Healthy Shorelines Project Coordinator, and Mitchel Wincentaylo, Headwaters Project Coordinator, gave an overview of the Athabasca Healthy Shorelines Initiative. This project has been ongoing for 5 years, with over 5000km of shorelines assessed, and over 4500 plants planted, primarily funded through the Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program grant. Mitch delivered an update on the EcoAction grant, reviewing deliverables and progress including the results of our Lower McLeod Riparian Assessment. Ethan Zapach, Watershed Science Communications Coordinator, discussed his work on videos for the WRRP project, playing one that included interviews and testimonials from landowners on best management practices they have implemented to protect their waterbodies.
- Crystal Kersey, ART intern, provided a presentation on the Athabasca Headwaters, including what we know and don't know about glacier and snowpack contributions to river flows. She noted that precipitation is the largest driver of streamflow. She also shared how climate change will impact glaciers and precipitation patterns in the future.
- Sarah Shortt, Watershed Science Program Manager, and Ashley Johnson, Communications, Education and Community Engagement Manager provided an update on the Headwaters Benthic Invertebrate Sampling program, as well as the X-Stream Science outreach program for high school students that also incorporates benthic invertebrate sampling.
- Caity Zimmermann, Project Coordinator, gave an overview of the Pembina River Water Quality Sampling initiative, now in its 3rd year with significant funding from Pembina Pipelines and guided by the Pembina River Watershed Technical Advisory Group.

The Chair thanked Sarah and the rest of the staff presenters, with several other members commenting that it is great to hear about all the different areas the AWC is working in throughout the watershed.

9. Members' Question and Answer Session

Dan noted that it is a requirement of the bylaws that we include a section for members to ask questions at the AGM. He then invited any questions about today's proceedings or about the work of the AWC. A question was asked about the Freshwater Health Index approach for the State of the Watershed update. Petra gave a summary of the approach. Ida made a comment on Alberta Trails looking for pictures of the Athabasca Landing Trail. Natalija asked a question about the AWC'S collaboration, and Petra discussed some of our collaborations and indicated she looks forward to talking with OLW more about potential future collaborations.

10. Celebration and Recognition!

Dan commented how important it is to acknowledge all the work that volunteers and staff do to make the AWC successful. He then handed it to Petra to acknowledge each staff member for their contributions in 2024-25 (and the staff and room gave a round of applause for Petra's contribution). Dan then noted that the AWC

started a Volunteer of the Year program in 2023. This year, he recognized two outstanding volunteers as follows.

Janice Linehan for her long-term contribution to the AWC. Janice:

- *was part of the Initiators group and a board member since the AWC formed in 2009*
- *has also been a member of the AWC Technical committee since inception, involved in major projects to produce several State of the Watershed reports and the Integrated Watershed Management Plan*
- *promotes the AWC and in return provides us with a connection to the oilsands monitoring committees, CAPP Working Water Group and other Oil and Gas stakeholders; she also sits on the Alberta Water Council*
- *provides significant policy advice to staff on topics such as the Canada Water Agency, tailings management, water availability, etc.*

Ida Edwards has only been on the AWC Board of Directors for a couple of years, but has been very active since joining.

- *As a Councillor for the Town of Athabasca she has kept us connected town events like the Communities in Bloom competition and Canada Day celebrations.*
- *Ida (and her ukulele) was a big part of the 2023 brigade, spending a week on the river as well as helping to organize the landing event in the Town of Athabasca.*
- *A year ago, she took on the additional role of the AWC Treasurer.*
- *She has also been a big part of our healthy shoreline initiative along the Tawatinaw River, showing up for weed pulls and shoreline plantings and working with the Town to get their approval and cooperation for that portion of the river that flows through town.*

11. Closing Comments

Dan provided final comments, thanking everyone for an incredibly busy year! He thanked his fellow board and committee members for providing guidance and support to staff and their activities. He also thanked all of our financial supporters (slide 18), partner organizations (slide 19) and collaborators (slide 20). He then asked if there are any opposed to adjourning the meeting. Hearing none, after a quick door prize draw, the meeting was adjourned at 3:10 pm. Following adjournment, the Board of Directors held a short meeting to confirm officers. Afterwards, several members and staff visited the Whitecourt Boat launch to appreciate the view of the McLeod mouth joining the Athabasca River, as well as the armouring done to stabilize the bank. A nice dinner and evening was enjoyed at the Sagitawah Brewery and the next day, staff enjoyed a beautiful hike through Hard Luck Canyon and Creek, a small tributary of the McLeod River, before heading home.

Appendix 1. Attendees

Elaine Birkigt	Ashley Johnson	Nolan Shortt
Amanda Buchanan	Crystal Kiersey	Sarah Shortt
Alan Deane	Janice Linehan	Abdi Siad-Omar
Brian Deheer	Alison Moeller	Natalija Voyno
Ida Edwards	Dan Moore	Shayla Watson
Kendra Gilbert	Tyrell Nagtegaal	Mitchel Wincentaylo
Julie Hink	Laura Pekkola	Ethan Zapach
Emily Jarema	Petra Rowell	Jeff Zhang
	Sheldon Schoepp	Caity Zimmermann