

ALBERTA WATER COUNCIL

MEETING #6

June 23, 2005

Lethbridge Lodge, Lethbridge, Alberta

Summary Report

Key Points:

- Alberta Water Council (AWC) members toured irrigation infrastructure and an on-farm operation as part of continuing efforts to improve their understanding of water management issues in Alberta.
- Council heard an update on the process for developing the Water Research Strategy and how the Council will be engaged.
- Members heard a presentation on Alberta Environment's role in responding to recent flooding events in the province.
- Council provided direction to the Reporting Project Team in revising the implementation review report and the first annual report.
- The Wetlands Policy project team presented its revised terms of reference, which Council approved.
- The Council agreed to hold a strategic planning session, with the goal of developing a three-year business plan to help focus future efforts, including communications and links to Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils (WPACs).
- Council heard a presentation on water use by the oil sands industry, which complemented the May 2005 tour of the Albian Sands Facility and the Muskeg River mine.

Attachments to the Meeting Summary:

1. Attendees
2. Action Item Log
3. Decision Log
4. Meeting Agenda

Summary of Discussion

1. Administration

Bill Berzins convened the meeting at 9:00 am, filling in for Peter Watson who was delayed. He thanked Dave Hill for organizing the irrigation tour and hosting the barbeque on June 22, and thanked the University of Lethbridge; Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development; and Alberta Environment for their support.

- a) **Welcome.** Council members welcomed Gerald Cunningham, the new representative for the Metis Settlements. The Chair also welcomed Les Wetter and Ken Crutchfield, who were sitting in for Jonathan Thompson and Brad Pickering, respectively. The Chair asked members of the Government broad category to meet over lunch to select a member to sit on the executive committee. This broad category agreed that Lisa King would represent them on the executive committee.
- b) **Review of Agenda.** The Chair reviewed the agenda, noting that some items were being shifted. The rearranged agenda was adopted by consensus.
- c) **Approval of Summary Report from May 6, 2005 Meeting.** Terry Sly reviewed the summary report that had been distributed in the pre-meeting package. The summary report was approved by consensus.
- d) **Action Items from May 6, 2005 Meeting.** Terry Sly reviewed the action items from the last meeting and provided an update and status on each one. All actions have been completed or are on the agenda for this meeting, except 4.2. The Council decided that communications activities would be put in abeyance until the strategic planning session to be held in September (as described in agenda item 8).
- e) **Media, Communications and Outreach Activities.** Terry provided a short summary of recent activities. The Fort McMurray paper featured a story about the Council following the May meeting. Several members have made presentations about the Council's work to their own sector as well as conferences with a wider audience. There will be increasing opportunities to meet with WPACs and local groups, which is a good way to raise the AWC's profile. The Council's website has been updated and members were encouraged to visit the site and provide any comments to Terry; the website is at <http://www.waterforlife.gov.ab.ca/awc/index.html>.

Action 6.1: Terry Sly will distribute a copy of the article in the Fort McMurray newspaper, as well as a copy of the article written by Ray Wanuch.

2. Water Research Strategy

Linda Van Gastel reviewed the history of work to develop a provincial water research strategy (copies of her presentation were distributed). A steering committee was established to guide the development of a provincial water research strategy. The key role for research is to provide science-based information and analysis to support decisions, action and effective water management. Linda described the knowledge and research focus areas, and also compared the sub-themes in the 2003 Water Research Report with the three goals in the WFL

strategy to show how they align. The deliverable from this work will be a draft provincial water research strategy for consideration by Council in September 2005.

In response to questions from Council members, Linda noted that:

- Research related to social and economic aspects will be incorporated into the strategy.
- A gap analysis will be done over the summer by a consultant to identify areas where WFL has recommended action that is not yet being researched. Funding is in place for this work, and AWC members will likely be contacted over the summer as part of the consultations to develop a draft strategy.

A member also noted that in light of recent flooding, flood response should also be considered as a factor in achieving the WFL goal of a safe, secure drinking water supply.

Action 6.2: Linda Van Gastel will present a draft provincial water research strategy for consideration by Council at the September 2005 meeting.

3. Drinking Water Program Report

Pat Lang from Alberta Environment provided an overview of existing drinking water performance measures and reviewed efforts underway to develop new measures to deal with emerging issues (copies of his presentation were distributed). The focus of his presentation was on systems that AENV regulates. He noted that the second edition of an environmental public health field manual for private water systems is now available online through Alberta Health and Wellness's website, and that a third edition is being drafted. By next year, better performance measures and data collection will be in place.

In discussion with Council members, it was noted that:

- If people, particularly in rural areas on private systems have concerns about their drinking water, bottled water is one alternative. However, bottled water is considered a food and is under federal food and drug regulations. Standards for tap water do not apply to bottled water and production plants are inspected according to food production facilities.
- In developing indicators, "boil water advisories" were examined, but there are many reasons why such advisories are issued and the decision is up to the medical officer of health. It was decided to focus on how efficient we are at getting the system back into production instead, so boil water orders are not included in the Performance Measure criteria.
- People eat and drink many things so it can be difficult to trace health problems back to one source. What is critical is having a good water source and managing it properly. Many of the small surface water plants do need to do more work relating to disinfection and overall operations. Efforts are underway to provide a better website for people who want information on drinking water issues.
- AENV would be hesitant to name facilities that are not complying with specific performance measurements based on the findings of a recently completed facility assessment study. The department is working closely with those that need help to improve their performance.
- In some areas, including central Alberta, an issue is the amount of drinking water available. Municipalities that have a supply problem are being assisted to find regional cooperative solutions, but it takes several years to put these in place.

- The environmental field manual (published by Alberta Health and Wellness/Regional Health Authorities) provides advice for rural residents on dealing with their private water systems, including things like how often their water should be tested, how to interpret these tests, etc. Regional health authorities can offer advice. Regionalization of water supplies over the next 10 to 25 years could result in as many as 95% of Albertans being served by highly regulated facilities with skilled operators.
- Alberta Environment's facility assessment results will come out in September and will help the AWC address these issues. It would be useful to have a presentation when these results are available. These assessments include only the 535 facilities that are approved by Alberta Environment and funded by Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation, not private systems. Options can be explored for Aboriginal communities with drinking water concerns, including tying them into a regional system and providing additional operator training.

Peter Watson assumed the chair.

4. Water Use Efficiency and Productivity Targets Working Group Update

Dave Hill provided an update on the Water Use Efficiency and Productivity Targets Working Group's activities, referring to his brief written report. The group recognizes the complexity of its work and is considering whether additional committees or sub-groups will be needed to focus on specific tasks. Terms of reference are being drafted and will come to the Council for approval. The working group would also like the AWC to approve a process whereby this group gathers information from Alberta Environment and others and presents it to the Council; this will avoid duplication of effort and the requirement for individuals to make more than one presentation of the same material.

The following comments were made during discussion with Council members:

- The working group will make available its notes and presentations in a timely manner to Council members who want the information. The challenge will be finding the most efficient way to do this – email, private website, etc.
- Some sectors have concerns about the relationship between efficiency, productivity and conservation, and the apparent increase in focus on efficiency and away from conservation. It was suggested the working group consider commissioning some policy research to help sharpen its focus and identify strategic opportunities for early work.

Action 6.3: The Water Use Efficiency and Productivity Targets Working Group will come back to the September AWC meeting with draft terms of reference and recommended priority areas of work for Council to consider.

5. Flood Forecasting and Infrastructure Management

Peter Watson briefed Council members on how Alberta Environment managed and responded to recent flooding events in the province (copies of his presentation were distributed). He noted that the department would be preparing a report to Albertans on the significance of these events and the response.

A number of Council members recognized and thanked the department for their diligent and timely forecasting efforts, website updates and public service announcements, which enabled

residents, municipalities and industries to better prepare for the flooding. Some municipalities and companies in the middle of the flooding suffered significant infrastructure damage that is still being assessed. It was noted that we should also remember that water is a blessing and that some parts of the ecosystem will benefit, even from flood conditions.

Action 6.4: Terry Sly will increase the font size in Peter Watson's presentation and distribute it to Council members by email.

6. Alberta Water Council Reporting Responsibilities

a) Review Report on Implementation of Water for Life Strategy

Ron Pearson provided an overview of the most recent draft of the review report, which was emailed to members prior to the meeting. The Reporting Project Team (RPT) wanted to keep its review at a high level and focus on the supporting relationships among the six elements in the WFL strategy, noting that the Council is looking to ensure that implementation of the strategy is balanced. Initial feedback suggested that the overall perspective needs to be strengthened.

Council members provided the following feedback:

- Consideration should be given to providing more guidance in how AWC recommendations should be implemented, specifically with respect to the recipient and the time frame for action. The RPT noted that some caution may be needed because the policy direction is already clearly set in the WFL strategy, and the Council's project teams will be providing more specific advice to government through their work.
- There is value in identifying a fundamental component for each of the three strategic directions.
- Additional discussion may be needed on flood control and managing water flow.
- The report needs to clearly distinguish between text that is taken from the WFL strategy and text that represents recommendations and material from the Council. It would also help to have consistent titles.
- In some places, it is not clear how much progress has been made, especially on the short-term goals and if in fact they will be achieved in the 2007-08 timeframe. It may not be possible to do a more detailed analysis this year, but it should be part of a future review. The RPT does not believe there is any area where no progress has occurred. AENV is still discovering the best way to report on implementation; if the department can become more precise in its reporting, the AWC can also increase its precision.
- Wording of recommendations needs to be accurate and not mislead readers into thinking there has been no activity when in fact there has been; e.g., the AWC has made research a priority and work is underway, but that may not be the impression readers get. The recommendations under research and knowledge should align with the direction the research team is taking; if this report says that these three areas are Council's research priorities, it could undermine the work of the research team.
- Activities in the WFL strategy were sequenced for a reason, and if the AWC is recommending that some actions be moved forward, these proposals need to be justified (e.g., moving more quickly to establish a WPAC for the Athabasca).
- A paragraph should be added at the beginning of the document to indicate this is the first year of WFL reporting. This first review is at a high level, and more detail will be

provided in future years. This will indicate to readers that Council is aware of the lack of detail and will address this issue in future.

- For the Council's first report, this is probably at about the right level. Accountability is important, and if the AWC makes recommendations, it will be important in the preparation of the second report to have some feedback from AENV on how the department has responded to the first recommendations. This could be referenced in the "perspective" statements.
- Reference should be made to the task group looking at performance indicators; the AWC will have input to this work so there should be a recommendation that says work on performance indicators should be pursued.
- Should recommendations be made in all six areas? The RPT chose to make recommendations on directions as this would make it easier to achieve the outcomes.

Alberta Environment will now be releasing its implementation report later in the year, but it would be good for the Council to complete its review report and have it ready to go. The RPT will meet in the next week or so to revise the draft and will circulate another version to the Council. At that point, comments will come back to the executive and the review report will be finalized.

b) Annual Report

Ron Pearson directed members to the partial draft of the annual report and the proposed plan for completing it. Council members provided the following feedback:

- Achievements should be put in the context of the overall terms of reference and mandate.
- It is at about the right level for an overview document this first year.

Members agreed to provide any editorial or other comments to Terry Sly by June 30.

Action 6.5: The Reporting Project Team will prepare (a) a draft review report, and (b) draft annual report to be finalized at the September 2005 Council meeting.

7. Wetland Policy Development

Ian Rudland reviewed the changes made to the Wetland Policy Team's terms of reference in light of direction from last meeting. The specific changes are that:

- Stakeholders will be consulted at the beginning of the process (fall 2005)
- A legal review of the draft policy and implementation plan will be done in June/July 2006
- The number of Government of Alberta members will be reduced, and the two member departments will ensure they involve other provincial government agencies as well.

Members have been identified for nearly all of the following sectors:

- Mining
- Agriculture
- First Nations
- Federal Government
- Large Urban Government
- Government of Alberta (Environment and Sustainable Resource Development)
- Wetland Conservation NGO
- Environmental NGO

Decision 6.1: The Council agreed by consensus to approve the revised terms of reference for the Wetland Policy Project Team.

8. Executive Report

Dave Hill and Bill Berzins presented the directional thinking by the executive on advancing work in the four key focus areas not related to project team or working group activities. Copies of the materials were distributed.

Stewardship role: The key questions for this area pertain to the level at which the AWC is operating (strategic leadership as opposed to “doing”), and whether the AWC’s activities align with the terms of reference. This area will be further explored during the proposed strategic planning discussion, described below.

Longer-term strategy and set of priorities: The executive recommends that a longer-term strategy be developed, starting with a business plan for the next three years. A workshop held as part of the September meeting would be devoted to business and strategic planning. This would involve developing a common vision, goals, objectives and other elements. Some preliminary work could be done and provided to members ahead of time for feedback.

Supporting work of WPACS: The intent is to identify opportunities for the Council to connect and liaise with WPACs. WPACs could be asked to suggest places where they see the AWC supplementing, complementing or supporting their work. The table in the background materials notes a number of things that could be done by the secretariat and/or AWC members in the short to medium term. The following comments emerged in discussion:

- The three existing WPACs should be contacted for their views before the AWC does its strategic planning in September.
- It is not clear how the WPACs and the AWC fit together and what the respective roles and expectations are.
 - Alberta Environment has developed materials that provide guidance to staff in engaging potential stakeholders to form a WPAC. Alberta Environment agreed to share the framework it has developed for partnering and delivering on the WFL strategy with Council members. Communications need to flow both ways between the AWC and WPACs to ensure an effective and realistic relationship.
- Existing WPACs could provide good guidance to new groups as well as to AENV to help anticipate issues and get new WPACs established. If AENV is working to help new groups form, then what is the AWC’s role?
 - AENV is playing this role, but part of the AWC’s role is to evaluate how well the department is doing. The Council probably doesn’t need to become actively involved in delivering on this item.
- There needs to be consistency across all WPACs.
- WPACs need to know what AENV can provide before they can say what they need from the AWC.
- WPACs need clear guidelines. They also need to know what “state of the basin” reporting is and how to do it.
- It could be timely to have an event in the spring of 2006 that brings together the executives of all the WPACs with the AWC. There could also be a “second table” of WPAC chairs that is invited to attend AWC meetings.

Action 6.6: The secretariat will compile and distribute a package of information to AWC members that includes the Framework for Water Management Planning and the Partnership Framework.

Communications and Marketing: Council needs to consider in its strategic planning how to distinguish itself efficiently and effectively, particularly through its electronic communications and its website. One mechanism is to develop a logo and visual identity. The following comments and observations emerged in discussion:

- Feedback from some sectors suggests that the AWC and WPACs have a low profile among members of the public. A more coordinated approach to communicating what's happening generally on the topic of water would be useful, not just a logo.
- The AWC is not ready yet to build a profile since we don't have a lot of results yet and it takes time. It would be more appropriate to look at a logo and marketing strategy in a year or so. It would be better now to focus on the good work that is happening.
- The AWC should pay more attention to getting political and public support for water management issues in Alberta and help AENV secure support for implementation of the WFL strategy.

This discussion concluded with general agreement that other things, including the strategic planning, need to happen first. The Council needs to get some products out, develop its business plan and have more accomplishments to point to, then look at a communications and marketing plan.

9. Oil Sands Water Use

Judy Smith provided an overview of water use by the oil sands industry, drawing on examples from the Albian Sands project and regional cooperation. Copies of her presentation were distributed. This presentation elaborated on the information provided during the May tour of the Albian Sands facility. Members had an opportunity to ask questions, to which Judy responded.

10. Key Messages and Preparation for the Next Meeting

The next meeting was originally scheduled for September 15, with a tour of hydro facilities on September 14. Due to unforeseen conflicts, these dates had to be changed to later in September. The AWC agreed to forego the tour and hold a strategic planning session on the afternoon (and possibly the evening) of September 19, followed by the regular board meeting on September 20. The meeting will likely be held in the Edmonton area.

Action 6.7: The secretariat will work with the executive to develop an agenda for the September strategic planning session and Council meeting.

The following key points were proposed and accepted:

- Alberta Water Council members toured irrigation infrastructure and an on-farm operation as part of continuing efforts to improve their understanding of water management issues in Alberta.

- Council heard an update on the process for developing the Water Research Strategy and how the Council will be engaged.
- Members heard a presentation on Alberta Environment's role in responding to recent flooding events in the province.
- Council provided direction to the Reporting Project Team in revising the implementation review report and the first annual report.
- The Wetlands Policy project team presented its revised terms of reference, which Council approved.
- The Council agreed to hold a strategic planning session, with the goal of developing a three-year business plan to help focus future efforts, including communications and links to Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils (WPAC).
- Council heard a presentation on water use by the oil sands industry, which complemented the May 2005 tour of the Albian Sands Facility and the Muskeg River mine.

The meeting adjourned at 3:25 pm.

Attachment 1: Meeting #6 Attendees

Council Members

Nick Bayliss, GOA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Health and Wellness)
Bill Berzins, Non-government Organization (Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils)
Tom Daniels, GOA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Economic Development Authority)
Rick Denton, Industry (Forestry)
David Hill, Industry (Irrigation)
Mike Kelly, Industry (Power Generation)
Al Kennedy, Industry (Chemical and Petrochemical)
Lisa King, Government (First Nations)
John Knapp, GOA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development)
Al Maurer, Government (Large Urban)
Larry Nolan, Industry (Livestock)
Ron Pearson, Non-government Organization (Fishery Habitat Conservation)
Richard Quail, Government (Small Urban)
Margaret Reine, Non-government Organization (Environmental)
Judy Smith, Industry (Mining)
Linda Van Gastel, GOA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Science and Research Authority)
Jim Vollmershausen, Government (Environment Canada)
Peter Watson, GOA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Environment)
Jay White, Non-government Organization (Lake Environment Conservation)

Observers:

Ken Crutchfield, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development
Gerry Haekel, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development
Les Wetter, Ducks Unlimited

Non-AWC Presenters:

Pat Lang, Alberta Environment
Ian Rudland, Alberta Environment

Support Staff:

Kate Rich Terry Sly
Ian Rudland Kim Sanderson

Absent with Regrets:

Bob Barss, Government (Rural)
Joe Miller, GOA and Provincial Authorities (Alberta Energy)
Brad Pickering, Province (Alberta Sustainable Resource Development)
Kevin Stashin, Industry (Oil and Gas)
Jonathan Thompson, Non-government Organization (Wetland Habitat Conservation)

Attachment 2: Meeting #6 Action Item Log

Action	Who	By when
6.1: Distribute a copy of the article in the Fort McMurray newspaper, as well as a copy of the article written by Ray Wanuch.	Terry Sly	July 14, 2005
6.2: Present a draft provincial water research strategy for consideration by Council at the September 2005 meeting.	Linda Van Gastel	Sept. 20, 2005
6.3: Come back to the September AWC meeting with draft terms of reference and recommended priority areas of work for Council to consider.	Water Conservation, Efficiency and Productivity Working Group	Sept. 1, 2005
6.4: Increase the font size in Peter Watson's presentation and distribute to Council members by email.	Terry Sly	July 14, 2005
6.5: Prepare (a) a draft review report, and (b) draft annual report to be finalized at the September 2005 Council meeting.	The Reporting Project Team	Sept. 2, 2005
6.6: Compile and distribute a package of information to AWC members that includes the partnership framework for water management planning.	The secretariat	July 14, 2005
6.7: Develop an agenda for the September strategic planning session and Council meeting.	The secretariat and executive	August 15, 2005

Attachment 3: Meeting #6 Decision Log

At this meeting, the Alberta Water Council made the following decision:

Decision 6.1: The Council agreed by consensus to approve the revised terms of reference for the Wetland Policy Project Team.

Attachment 4: Meeting #6 Agenda

Alberta Water Council

Agenda, Meeting #6

June 23, 2005

Lethbridge Lodge Hotel and Conference Centre, Lethbridge

Purpose: Council will hear presentations on and discuss a number of issues including:

- Report from the Reporting Project Team on the development of the Council's Annual Report and Assessment Report on implementation progress of the *Water for Life strategy*
- Report from the Council Executive on advancing the key focus areas for Council
- Updates on the process for development of Water Research Strategy, performance measures for Drinking Water Program, Wetland Policy development and the work of Water Efficiency and Productivity Working Group
- Presentation on the Oil Sands Industry's use and management of water

1. Administration – Chair 20 min

- a) Welcome Gerald Cunningham and observers
- b) Review of current agenda
- c) Approval of Summary Report (May 6, 2005 meeting)
- d) Review of actions from last meeting
- e) Media, Communication and Outreach Activities

2. Water Research Strategy 15 min

Linda Van Gastel will provide an update on the process for moving forward on the development of the water research strategy.

3. Drinking Water Program Report 30 min

Pat Lang will report on existing drinking water program performance measures and review the current thinking on new performance measures to address emerging issues.

4. Water Efficiency and Productivity Working Group 10 min

David Hill will provide a progress report on the working group's activities.

5. Alberta Environment's Role in Flood Response 30 min

Peter Watson will present an overview of Alberta Environment's role in responding to flooding, the role of infrastructure (dams) in mitigating impacts of flooding, and what has happened with flooding over the last couple of weeks.

Coffee Break 15 min

6. Council's Reporting Responsibilities 1 h 10 min

Ron Pearson will review and lead discussion on:

- a) Draft annual report and the process for completing it
- b) Updated draft of Council's first review report on the implementation progress of the *Water for Life strategy*

Lunch (to be provided in the room) 45 min

7. Wetland Policy Development 15 min

Ian Rudland will provide an update on the work of the Project Team.

8. Executive Report 1 hr

The Council Executive will provide a plan to advance the key focus areas for Council as identified at the May meeting.

9. Presentation: Oil Sands 1hr

Judy Smith will provide an overview of water use by the oil sands industry, drawing on examples from the Albian Sands Project and regional cooperation.

10. Other Business 5 min

New items of business or other items for information for Council

11. Key Messages and Preparation for Next Meeting (Chair) 10 min

Confirmation of the key messages from this meeting will be requested. The chair will confirm the next meeting and ensure that any actions required for the next meeting are assigned.

Adjournment