

MEETING MINUTES

International Rainy - Lake of the Woods Watershed Board
 February 11th, 2016 Meeting
 Teleconference
 13:00 – 16:30 CST

ATTENDANCE	
PARTICIPANTS	
BOARD MEMBERS	
Michael Goffin (Board Canadian Co-Chair)	Environment and Climate Change Canada
Gail Faveri	Environment and Climate Change Canada
Trina Rawn	Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change
Mark Lee	Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship
Todd Sellers	Local Canadian Member
Nolan Baratono	Local U.S. Member
Suzanne Hanson	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
James Stark	U.S. Geological Survey
Mike Hirst	Lake of the Woods Soil and Water Conservation District
Charlene Mason	Local U.S. Member
James Stark	U.S. Geological Survey
INTERNATIONAL JOINT COMMISSION	
Nick Heisler	Canadian Section
Wayne Jenkinson	Canadian Section
Mark Gabriel	U.S. Section
BOARD ENGINEERING ADVISORS/SECRETARIAT	
Matt DeWolfe (Cdn Engineering Advisor)	Environment and Climate Change Canada
Scott Jutila (U.S. Engineering Advisor/Secretariat)	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Daniel Rokitnicki-Wojcik (Cdn Secretariat)	Environment and Climate Change Canada
OTHER	
Kelli Saunders	International Watershed Coordinator
ABSENTEES	
Colonel Koprowski (Board U.S. Co-Chair)	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Lori Dowling-Hanson	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Shawn Mason	Local U.S. Member
Al Pemberton	Red Lake Department of Natural Resources
Matthew Gouin	Local U.S. Member
Chief Earl Klyne	Seine River First Nation
Greg Chapman	Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry
Kiley Hanson	Local Canadian Member
Dennis Brown	Local Canadian Member
Karen Cederwall	Local Canadian Member

1. Welcoming Remarks and Introductions

Mike Goffin called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone to the IRLWWB winter meeting. Attendees introduced themselves.

2. Review of Meeting Agenda

No changes were identified to the agenda. Status of action items will be addressed in the same fashion as in previous meetings.

3. Aquatic Ecosystem Health Committee

Update on Aquatic Ecosystem Health Committee

The Aquatic Ecosystem Health Committee has indicated that future reports should cover all quantitative aspects of aquatic health (physical, chemical, biological, habitat, and flow indicators). The report, primarily put together by Environment Canada, concentrates on water quality conditions in the basin. In the future, the Committee will work with agencies to cover all bases. It should be noted that this document is a bridge document that covers data from 2012-2014.

In order to ensure a comprehensive dataset for the watershed, the Committee emphasized the importance of the tiered monitoring network and the lake monitoring proposal from the water quality plan of study. Given the time required to ensure that quality assurance has been performed on the data, the Committee stresses the need to submit the report during the fall of each year. This recommendation should be passed along to the IJC, who ultimately makes the decision.

Although hypoxia was documented in Big Traverse Bay in 2015, it's unclear at this time whether these data are supportive of anoxic conditions in this portion of the Lake of the Woods. Additional modeling suggests that we need to proceed cautiously because the model doesn't support the data that was collected in documenting the hypoxia. It should be noted that many inconsistencies within the data are thought to be derived from assumptions based on only one season of data.

Board to Approve draft 2015 Water Quality Report

A draft of the First Annual Water Quality Report is available for review. The process of using Environment Canada and MPCA to put together the water quality report is not the norm. A draft of this report is ultimately the responsibility of the Aquatic Ecosystem Health Committee. This is a bridge document, and isn't necessarily the format that will be used in the future, and currently doesn't encompass all aspects of aquatic ecosystem health. The Committee welcomes any comments or direction from the IJC.

Report recommendations are located on page 11 in the report. The report recommends that, "the broad scope of data received further highlights the need for a more coordinated and focused approach to reporting to meeting the requirements of the IJC. Future considerations should be given to the role of the International Multiagency Arrangement in supporting and participating in the coordination of data requests, data interpretation, and reporting. It is recommended that the board move towards a reporting model that's an IMA -led initiative, which would allow for the IMA to become more formally involved in board activities." This report will be submitted to the IJC prior to the April 2016 meeting.

Action: Review period for report is open until February 24th. Please send comments to Nolan Baraton. Unless major comments are submitted, approval of the report will be on February 24th, 2016.

Board to approve Aquatic Ecosystem Health Committee draft Terms of Reference

The report and the draft terms of reference have been the Committee's primary activity. The terms of reference mandate is to "provide advice and make recommendations to the Rainy/Lake of the Woods Watershed Board and to assist the board with its responsibilities under its directives with respect to water quality and ecosystem health monitoring, reporting, objectives and analytics, and any other activities related to water quality or ecosystem health as assigned by the Board."

The Committee should consist of a minimum of six members, 4 of whom should be Board members (which would include the 2 co-chairs). Committee members will be appointed by the Board, with consideration to recommendations from the Committee. The term will also be determined by the Board, and Committee members would serve at the pleasure of the board. It's important to allow individuals from other agencies (non-board members) to participate on the Committee if expertise is needed for a specific task or for a specific topic.

The Committee has a number of responsibilities. First, they will develop a reporting format and submit it to the Board for approval. They will update the format when necessary. Reporting will be done on an annual basis. The Committee will monitor water quality in the basin, will address issues as they arise, and will report any exceedances to the board. The Committee will keep the board informed of major actions in the basin (e.g. new dam construction, new construction of facilities, etc.). The Committee will also review and recommend objectives, as appropriate. Finally, the Committee will designate working groups and strive to make decisions by consensus.

Action: Board approves Aquatic Ecosystem Health Committee's draft Terms of Reference.

Board to discuss and confirm Aquatic Ecosystem Health Committee membership

It's premature to nominate individuals before the Committee gets established. The Board will let the Committee bring forward a recommendation after they've had the opportunity to discuss and provide rationale as to why this individual's being added. The first step will be to identify Committee co-chairs prior to nominating members.

Action: Todd Sellers and Nolan Baratono will serve as the Canadian and US co-chairs, respectively. Their term wasn't specified.

4. Engagement Committee

Update on Engagement Committee activities

The Committee has been working on a Terms of Reference and Communications Strategy documents. Both documents were sent out to the Committee for review in mid-January 2016. The terms of reference states that there should be quarterly conference calls, with the next call scheduled for early March 2016.

The Strategic Plan slides and explanations are currently posted on the SharePoint site, but the Committee is working toward getting them posted on the IRLWWB website.

Board to approve draft Communications Strategy and draft Terms of Reference

Motion: Nolan Baratono made a motion to approve both the terms of reference and communications strategy documents. **Carried.**

Board to approve Engagement Committee membership

Nolan Baratono isn't able to continue to participate on the Engagement Committee.

Action: Board approves Charlene Mason and Gail Faveri to be co-chairs of committee.

Action: Engagement Committee to find a replacement for Nolan as spokesperson.

4.A Board Committee Structure

The Board has created three committees: the Water Levels Committee, Outreach Engagement Committee, and Aquatic Ecosystem and Health Committee. All of the Board's work should be assigned to one of these committees, as appropriate. The committee will work through a particular task and then report back to the full Board for approval or additional guidance. None of the committees should be making decisions without Board approval, except the Water Levels Committee (which has a mandate to operate independently when necessary).

The Canadian Co-Chair suggested that all Board members self-identify into one of the three committees listed above with the exception of the Water Levels Committee, which has prescribed membership. Members are able to participate on multiple committees if they desire. Committee membership can also be drawn from non-board members. At a minimum, four Board members must be on each committee with a minimum of six members for each committee. Flexibility to reach out to non-Board members to participate on specific committees for specific issues is encouraged; however, no individual is on a committee without Board approval.

Term of office will be determined by the Board. It's also in the Board's best interest to stagger the terms of office so the Board doesn't lose multiple experienced members at once.

5. Water Levels Committee

Update on winter water level conditions

Water conditions were pretty dry leading into fall 2015. An early record rainfall in November 2015 caused base flows to remain high through the freeze-up condition across the basin (between a 1-in-4 year high and greater than a 1-in-20 year high in some areas). Snow totals are reported to be below normal for the winter. The Water Levels Committee will have public meeting at the Watershed Forum in March to provide an update on basin conditions. By that time, there will be additional snow pack data to present.

Update on gate refurbishments (and IWI update on gate conveyance)

This project being undertaken by the companies that own the international dam between Fort Francis and International Falls. The project aims to replace the gates that release flows from the dam, which have been in place since the dam was built in the 1910s. Four of the gates were replaced in the summer/fall of 2015. H2O Power intends (or is planning) to replace six more gates, beginning in early spring of 2016. The Water Levels Committee responded to letter from H2O Power to advise them that, while the Committee doesn't have the authority to specifically dictate whether or not they work on the gates, the Committee cautioned that they perform the work during very dry conditions. Spring rainfall is the main driver for high runoff, which is difficult to predict at this time.

The project funded a few years ago by the IJC for a 2D hydrodynamic model (by the National Research Council) for the Upper Rainy River above the dam is being used to evaluate whether there are specific gates which would minimize the spring runoff risk to the operational function of the structure. Work has been on-going throughout the winter 2016. The final report is expected in May 2016.

Update on 2014 High Water Condition Report recommendations

Issues with the report were brought up during the October 2015 Board appearance with the IJC. The main issue was the public's awareness of the problem of building permanent or even temporary structures below or too close to the high water mark. This effort is outside the scope of the Water Levels Committee, and other agencies are better equipped to address this issue with the public. The report recommends that there should be some effort to coordinate with other agencies that are involved in zoning regulations and building permits to at least have a common hazard level designation. Nobody on

the Water Levels Committee is familiar with which agencies would fall under this category on both sides of the border.

Action: Waiting for IJC commissioners to agree that the Committee or some other body should undertake this action.

6. IRLWWB 2015/16 Annual Report

Board to discuss the draft table of contents and proposed schedule

The Secretariat is in the process of looking for any comments on organization or content. The report is modeled after last year's report. It's recommended that a brief paragraph be inserted on the requested IJC funded activities under identified above under Update on Aquatic Ecosystem Health Committee.

Action: Comments on the annual report need to be received by February 24th. Secretaries (Daniel RW and Scott Jutila) will compile and re-distribute to board by February 26th.

7. Rule Curve Evaluation

Update on evaluation

The Rule Curves Study Board recently received final comments back on the draft study strategy report, made a few modifications, and sent it back to the IJC. They expect the draft study report to be posted by the middle or end of February 2016 for public comment. A Public Advisory Group webinar will take place on Wednesday Feb 17th. The Rule Curve Public Advisory Group will meet the day before the International Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed Forum on March 8 from 1:00-2:00. A workshop will follow the meeting from 2:00 to 4:30 to present and run the Shared Vision Model that's being developed by Bill Werick. The IJC will host a public meeting regarding the Rule Curves Study from 6:30-8 Tuesday, March 8.

8. CAG

Update on CAG activities

Shawn Mason has agreed to serve on Community Advisory Group. The minutes from February 3rd CAG meeting have been distributed. Comments on the minutes should be received by February 18th. Face-to-face meetings will take place in International Falls on March 9th from 10-12; agenda to follow. All of the watershed board members and IJC staff are invited. The CAG is working with Kelli Saunders, International Watershed Program Coordinator, and Mike Laitta, IJC Staff, to put up a storybook board map of the lake associations and related organizations. There is continued interest from CAG members on the Water Quality Plan of Study and the letter that was sent out to the governments about the cumulative effects of mining.

9. IAG

Update on IAG activities

The last meeting was on February 2nd. The next meeting will be at the same time as the CAG meeting at the water quality forum. IAG members also brought up mining issues. The Board made a recommendation to the IJC commissioners that they contact the governments on how to address cumulative trans-boundary environmental issues regarding mining. The letter was sent to the IJC approximately one year ago, and the Commission sent a letter to the governments requesting "a briefing from governments on how the binational cumulative effects of mining will be determined in the Lake of the Woods basin." There has been no response to the latter letter.

Action: Secretariat will re-distribute the letter that the Commission sent to governments to the Board members, CAG, and IAG members.

10. October 2015 IWI Workshop

Present highlights of workshop

The report was circulated at the end of January, 2016. The boards were supportive of the commission's strategic initiatives, efforts towards adaptive management, and expressed interest in developing future communications plans and in learning more about the key tools and approaches that exist in the IJC. The commission will distribute a notice from the workshop in near future.

11. IWI Projects and Proposals

Update on Rainy-Lake of the Woods IWI projects:

Effect of Water Management Regime on Wild Rice (ends Aug. 31/16)

Nothing to report.

Effect of Water Management Regime on Cattail Invasion (ends Aug. 31/16)

Nothing to report. There are problems in getting status report and information requested.

Seine River Temperature (ends March 2016)

The Seine River Temperature project is a five year project that began in 2011, with reported results up to 2015. They show a high correlation between the sturgeon spawn and specific water temperatures, and the first arrival of tiger swallowtail butterflies along the river. Land surveys were completed to tie in bench marks for the three data loggers that were recording the water temperature and water elevations.

There will be a poster on this project at the watershed forum. Results will be published in a peer-reviewed journal. These results, which will most-likely be of interest to the common citizen as well, will also be published in local media.

Update on Rainy-Lake of the Woods IWI proposals:

Stressor Index Pilot Study (starts pending board approval, ends March 2017)

Requested funding on first phase of work, which has been tentatively approved based upon board approval, acceptance of the project, and revision to the work plan. There is the opportunity to complete a high level stressor identification using indicators for the basin. There are two phases: Phase I requests \$7k for process scoping and once that is completed the team will go back to the board to determine whether or not to proceed to Phase II. The project team will be asking the board to approve this project and add it to the board timeline. This technique is currently being implemented by Environment and Climate Change Canada on a larger scale, but it's a coarse tool and is used to determine relative priorities for monitoring. A suggestion was made to use output from HSPF model, which was developed for the TMDL. Having that much physical data will help to focus future efforts.

Action: IWI stressor Index study approved by the board. The Aquatic Ecosystem Health committee will write this into the work plan.

Aquatic Invasive Species proposals

There will not be an AIS-focused IWI proposal going forward at this time. There's good local funding in Minnesota for outreach education, enforcement, and inspections. Canada also has some funding for this effort as well. More opportunities for collaboration may present themselves in the future.

HPAB Contaminants Proposal

The HPAB is not submitting an IWI proposal at this time, but seeking Board approval to meet with board/committee members to develop a proposal to for fall submission. The desire is to start working on items aligned with human health activities in the Water Quality Plan of Study projects 24 & 25. The proposal would include 2 parts: human health reviews of five potential mine-related toxins (would be developed in consultation with the board), and identify a location where bulk transport of petrochemicals poses a risk to human and aquatic ecosystem health - to develop a risk assessment. The US and Canadian co-chairs of the HPAB are suggesting that they attend the forum in March to discuss the project with Board members to help develop a proposal. The Co-chairs would also meet with state, provincial, and local emergency response and environmental protection personnel to get a better understanding of their concerns. It is requested of the board to identify a point of contact for these activities. It should be noted that they're not looking into algal-toxins.

Action: Dan Rokitnicki-Wojcik will be the point of contact for this effort and will be assisted by other board members (Mike Hirst) during Forum.

12. Roundtable

Update on International Watershed Coordination Program

The participants at the Lake Association networking event received the report. Currently working on an interactive map for identifying all the Lake Associations. A survey was sent out to Soil and Water Conservation Districts during the fall of 2015 to get a sense of the programming they do, what their challenges are related to water stewardship, and to start looking at where coordination would be most effective.

The latest edition of watershed newsletter went out on February 11th.

Update on Baudette Bridge Replacement

MN DOT and Ontario Ministry of Transportation are in the early planning process and want to know what role the watershed board wants to have in this process. They've sent info to the board through Scott Jutila and other interested agencies. There's a March 2nd webinar and information will be sent out when more details become available. The general bridge design will have less piers than before. The low chord will be above major flood levels. Water Levels Committee is only concerned with Rainy River closer to the dam, so this isn't a major concern for this committee.

Action: The board will maintain awareness, but won't take a major role in the planning process. Scott Jutila will remain the point of contact.

Board update during the IRLWW Forum

The forum will take place on March 9-10th. A 10-min update from this board will be given at the forum.

Action: Gail will give the presentation and secretariat will help assemble the presentation.

Other

Action: Charlene will send ideas on which documents she'd like to share with CAG to secretariat to make sure they're able to be distributed.

13. Next Board Meeting and IJC Spring Semi-Annual Meeting

Next board meeting is scheduled to be on March 15th (13:00 -15:00 CST). The next on-site meeting will be semi-annual meeting, with details to follow.

14. Review of Action Items and Adjournment

Actions items were reviewed by the Canadian Co-Chair and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 16:30 CST.