

# International Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed Board

## Summary of Discussion

Meeting in person

March 10, 2020 1:30 – 3:00 pm CT

Room S119, Rainy River Community College, International Falls MN USA

---

### 1. Welcome and introductions

As meeting chair, Mike Goffin welcomed everyone and invited participants to introduce themselves. The list of participants is as follows (asterisk identifies remote participants):

#### **U.S. Member Participants**

COL Karl Jansen (Board Co-Chair)  
Nicole Blasing  
Amy Adrihan  
Mike Hirst  
Kelly Sjerven  
\*Jim Stark  
Patty Thielen  
Pam Tomevi  
Scott Jutila (Secretary; Engineering Advisor)

#### **Canadian Member Participants**

Michael Goffin (Board Co-Chair)  
Karen Cederwall  
Greg Chapman  
Chief Brian Perrault  
Trina Rawn  
Todd Sellers  
Carla Torchia  
\*Pamela Finlayson (Interim Secretary)

#### **International Joint Commission**

Mark Gabriel  
Wayne Jenkinson  
Carole Smith  
\*Kevin Bunch

#### **Additional Participants**

Kelli Saunders, International Watershed Coordinator  
Abby Moore, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Rebecca Seal-Soileau, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

### 2. Review of meeting materials

No additions to the agenda were identified, however Mike Goffin noted that Colonel Jansen would share co-chair duties for this meeting. Action items were addressed as completed or as ongoing – outstanding actions are listed below. The summary from the January 2020 teleconference was approved.

Action items advanced since the previous meeting include:

- The AEHC has welcomed a new member: Nicole Kovar from Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.
- AEHC Objectives and Alerts Project Phase II steps shared with the Board, final edits are nearly complete.
- Water Levels Committee set a meeting with Dam Operators on March 10.
- US Secretariat sent request for volunteers to be CAG Co-chairs.
- IJC staff distributed the updated Directive and Terms of Reference to Board members, secretariat, and members of the CAG and IAG.
- Mike Goffin received municipal contacts from Mike Hirst and Kelli Saunders.
- US Secretariat sent IJC materials for Adaptive Management Committee
- Mike Goffin held a multi-agency teleconference with Jim Stark and others regarding Wheeler's Point gauge. Pamela Finlayson will track the team's activities moving forward. Jim noted there was a possibility of USEPA funding and that an international gauge was the best bet.

Membership was reviewed. For the US side, one vacancy has been filled and there is a remaining vacancy for a public member. On the Canadian side, there is a vacancy for a CAG co-chair and a process is underway to appoint a long-term replacement for an interim Board member.

- **ACTION:** Members are encouraged to contact the IJC regarding potential candidates in their networks who may be interested in vacant Board positions.

For the work plan, Pamela reported that last year the work planning process began in July. A draft was prepared and sent to Committee Co-chairs for input and discussed at the August face-to-face meeting and finalized in the fall. Todd noted that some amendments to the work plan may be required to make sure the IWI project submissions match up in the Spring. April is the first call for IWI submissions.

- **ACTION:** Secretariat to start 2020-21 work planning process by sending a blank template to Committee Co-chairs for input after this meeting.
- **ACTION:** Secretariat to prepare and distribute first draft of 2020-21 work plan for discussion at the next Board meeting in June.

For the Annual Board Report, the Secretariat has distributed a draft to co-chairs for their input.

- **ACTION:** complete written annual report for IJC deadline.

For the August 2020 Public Meetings, a venue is needed. The Clarion hotel is not expected to reopen until 2021. Alternatives are: Super 8, Seven Generations or the Rec Centre. KBI is planned for August 6-8.

- **ACTION:** IWI Coordinator to send contact info for Super 8, Seven Generations and Rec Centre to Canadian Secretariat. Venue suggestions from others are also welcome.

For the IJC Spring Semi Annual Meeting in Washington, the Board Appearance is planned for April 21. The Board will use the Forum Update presentation tailored with some minor revisions.

- **ACTION:** Secretariat to make minor revisions to Forum Update presentation, obtain approvals, and send to IJC for April 10 deadline.
- **ACTION:** Pamela to update IRLWWB meeting schedule and redistribute.

### 3. Objectives and Alerts Project Update

No Board action required at present time. Phase II will follow pending the success of Phase I, and IJC approval of Phase II Statement of Work. The Phase II Statement of Work is being drafted. A US contractor is needed, and timing with respect to agencies will be considered.

- **ACTION:** After Forum week, IJC will move ahead with Phase II if no other comments are raised.

### 4. IWI Project Updates

#### Wild Rice Project

The IJC received a project proposal, and accepted it pending requested changes. The proposal and requested changes were sent back to project lead Lucas King. A concern was noted that over the past 4-5 years, it was not possible to pick enough wild rice on Rainy Lake so have needed to purchase a supply from a nearby First Nation. Some wild rice mapping was done in 1986, and the bands also have some

maps that are good information although less detailed than the research maps. Ontario MNRF has some historical files, maps and currently issues permits.

- **ACTION:** IJC will set up a meeting with Lucas regarding this project.
- **ACTION:** Follow up with Ontario MNRF Area Manager.

#### Project WET

This contract was delayed due to a Curriculum Review in Minnesota. This review was completed in December 2019. The Minnesota contact is now available for contract and interested in moving forward. Carole at the IJC is also on board.

- **ACTION:** Engagement Committee to move forward with US contract.

#### AIS Coarse Filter Assessment

A revised Scope of Work for this project has been drafted and is currently under review. It is very similar to the previous version but adds more frequent check-ins with the IJC. The next step is to resubmit it to the IJC. The project could be underway as soon as May 2020.

#### HPAB-SAB-IRLWWB Collaboration on Mining

Relevant to this project, the IJC has asked staff to catalog and map current and past mining operations along the Canada-U.S. border using various sources of information. Once this first step is complete, an IWI project application will be drafted. It was noted that Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission has information about mining in Minnesota.

- **ACTION:** Await outcome of IJC work on mining.

### 5. Water Levels Committee Update

The recent focus of the WLC has been pre-spring conditions. The Committee has met twice and held a public webinar. At the most recent meeting on March 6, the Committee decided not to implement the High Risk Rule Curve. This decision was based on current conditions and a risk of not refilling the lake.

A public meeting is planned for this evening. The property owners association is in agreement with constant monitoring of conditions. A study is underway that focuses on low lake levels and high flows.

### 6. Adaptive Management Committee Update

The first meeting of the AMC is planned for tomorrow morning. Topics may include priorities and appointment of chairs. IJC Commissioners have drafted a Committee Directive and are in the process of establishing membership. There are currently 6-8 members. A Committee work plan must be drafted within 8 months of committee members' appointment.

- **ACTION:** IJC to appoint proposed members to AMC.
- **ACTION:** AMC Committee to complete first work plan within 8 months of members being appointed.

### 7. Aquatic Ecosystem Health Committee Update

Work is underway on monitoring stations. For phosphorus, 3 stations in Lake of the Woods are being updated, and a new station in Rainy is being considered. Other key projects include: Objectives and Alerts project, AIS project, State of the Basin report, and the core monitoring project. The core monitoring project is a joint effort with the IMA and builds on work done by Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. There is also an additional water quality strategic monitoring project proposal being developed jointly with the IMA, and relates to engagement of other agencies.

- **ACTION:** AEHC Co-chairs to update work plan regarding state of the basin and core monitoring, and submit updates to Secretariat.

## 8. Engagement Committee Update

Kelly Sjerven reported that the Engagement Committee is at a time of renewal. Kelly is open to suggestions, information and new ideas for engagement activities or the communications strategy. The Committee is currently seeking a Canadian Co-chair.

- **ACTION:** Wayne will engage with IJC Communications staff regarding new engagement ideas and web training.

## 9. Roundtable

### IAG Update

The IAG voiced concern about potential impact of ice flowing into the upstream side of the dam, such as potential flood concerns and saturation in the bushes. The WLC responded that they would be meeting with dam operators this week.

### IJC Update

The IJC circulated an agenda for the April Semi Annual Meeting that included the Board Appearances. There was no direction available on travel concerns due to Coronavirus but be prepared.

The IJC asked members to submit recommendations for individuals to fill open Board positions. On the US side, recommendations should focus on members of the public who are not affiliated with a government agency and who have an appreciation or knowledge of water management or ecosystem health. A diverse Board membership is encouraged. Present recruitment approach remains personal networking and not advertising.

Commissioners have been engaging First Nations and Tribes. This Board has been noted as an example of one that has strong relationships with First Nations, Tribes and Métis.

### International Watershed Coordinator Update

Kelli Saunders reported that as IWC, she has provided project management support to the Adaptive Management Committee and Phase I of the Objectives and Alerts project. She is also hosting a civic engagement workshop this afternoon to discuss successes and challenges with public engagement. Kelli continues to write columns for the Kenora newspaper and topic ideas are welcome. A story map has been completed that focuses on water quality conditions in the basin, as featured through MPCA's Watershed Restoration and Protection program and Ontario's Broadscale Monitoring Program. A link to

the Story Map is available by request and could also be posted to the Board website. It was noted that the Water Levels Committee also has factsheets that could be offered on the website.

- **ACTION:** Once website training is completed, post story map and WLC fact sheets on Board website.

### **Watershed Concerns and Awareness**

A request was made to add “Watershed Concerns and Awareness” as a standing agenda item for Board meetings.

Concerns identified at this meeting were:

- Private marine docks are being constructed in an area where historical mine tailings are present. There is public concern. It was noted that a permitting process exists, and this was not likely a binational issue.
- Polymet and Twin Metals mine projects. Twin Metals project was submitted in late November/early December time frame.
- Wastewater treatment policy changes in Ontario
- Ice at dams
- **ACTION:** Board Co chairs will work with Secretariat on individual concerns.

### **10. Review of Action Items and Adjournment**

The next Board meeting is planned for June 18, 2020 from 9-11 am CT by teleconference. Action items were reviewed and the meeting was adjourned.

*Drafted by: Pamela Finlayson, ECCC  
With input from: Abby Moore, USACE*