

# International Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed Board

## Summary of Discussion

June 18, 2020 9:00 – 11:00 am CT

Virtual Meeting:

<https://usace.webex.com/usace/j.php?MTID=m50aed8d1611bb644eb7fde01c661fe52>

Toll-free telephone dial-in: 1-888-273-3658

Chair: COL Karl Jansen

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### 1. Welcome and introductions

As meeting chair, COL Karl Jansen welcomed everyone and invited participants to introduce themselves. A special welcome was extended to IJC Commissioners and Observers in attendance. The list of participants is as follows:

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

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

#### **Canadian Member Participants**

Michael Goffin (Board Co-Chair)  
Karen Cederwall  
Erika Klyszejko  
Mark Lee  
Todd Sellers  
Kiley Shebagegit  
Carla Torchia  
Wellsley Hamilton (Secretary)  
Pamela Finlayson (Interim Secretary)

#### **International Joint Commission**

Commissioner Lance Yohe  
Commissioner Robert Sisson  
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  
James Fallon, United States Geological Service  
Joshua Cummings U.S. Department of State  
Alexandra Lavictoire, Lake of the Woods Control  
Board Secretariat

#### **Observers**

Megan Garner, Environment and Climate Change Canada  
Doug Franchot  
Matt Myers

### 2. Review of meeting materials

No additions to the agenda were identified. The summary from the March 2020 meeting was approved.

The Action Log was reviewed. Updates since the past meeting include:

- The IJC contacted the US Secretariat and new Canadian Secretariat regarding next steps for delivery of website training. Status is ongoing. (Item 1)
- The description of the MPCA initiative and role related to water quality objectives was tasked to Nicole Blasing. Status is in progress. (Item 2)

- Nicole Blazing agreed to present an update on the sulfuric acid spill from the Boise Paper Mill in 2017 at the August 2020 Board meeting. Status is ongoing. (Item 3)
  - Todd Sellers contacted Jim Stark regarding his offer to collaborate on the Aquatic Ecosystem Health Report. The next step is to request data from agencies. Status remains in progress. (Item 5)
  - Todd Sellers completed work on the AIS Coarse Filter Project IWI application. The Project is now in the contracting phase. Status remains in progress. (Item 6)
  - The Board Written Annual Report to the IJC is mostly complete in draft form. The US Secretariat is finalizing sections. A complete draft will be circulated to the Board for final review next week. Status remains in progress. (Item 7)
  - The Draft Work Plan for 2020-21 is in progress. The next step is to continue collecting input with the goal of having a draft ready for the August Board meeting. Status remains ongoing. (Item 8)
  - The IJC Advisors have supported two nominations to the Board for the positions of Public Member and CAG Co-Chairs. The Canadian nominee is Matthew Myers, and the U.S. nominee is Doug Franchot. Both attended today's meeting as Observers. The next step is a decision by the IJC on their appointments. Status can be updated to "Tentatively completed, pending IJC decision." (Item 9)
  - Todd Sellers reported that he will report out on the International Multi-Agency Arrangement's AIS Subcommittee awareness exercise at the August 2020 Basin Meetings. Status remains ongoing. (Item 10)
  - The Canadian Secretariat is planning the August 2020 Basin meetings. See Item 4 of this meeting summary for more information. Status remains ongoing. (Item 11)
  - Candidates for CAG leadership have been identified. This item was discussed during the roundtable. See Item 12 of this meeting summary. Status can be updated to complete. (Item 12)
  - Progress has been made on options to replace the Wheeler's Point Gauge. See Item 5 of this meeting summary for more information. Status is ongoing. (Item 14)
  - Mike Hirst will advance the draft IWI document with the goal of having it available for the Fall 2020 submission deadline. Status is ongoing. (Item 15)
  - Lucas King and Wayne Jenkinson are working on edits to the Wild Rice IWI proposal so that work can be adapted to COVID-19 restrictions. Status remains ongoing. (Item 16)
  - An update on project WET was discussed later in the agenda. See Item 11 of this meeting summary. Status is ongoing. (Item 17)
  - Todd Sellers submitted items for the State of the Basin report and core monitoring projects to the Canadian Secretariat for inclusion in the 2020-21 Draft Work plan. Status is completed. (Item 18)
- **ACTION:** Secretariat will post 10 March Minutes to IJC website.

### 3. Board Business

#### Impacts of COVID-19 on Board Members and Business

COL Karl Jansen noted that the IJC annual meeting was postponed and as such the IRLWWB has not made a presentation to the Commission yet this year.

Mike Goffin thanked the IJC and Board for accommodating circumstances due to COVID-19. Mr. Goffin noted that at Environment and Climate Change Canada staff are set up to work from home, however it some things have been slower. Science, field and lab work have been affected a bit more. Return to

work conditions for these workers is being considered a priority. He also noted that Canada has not tabled a federal budget yet.

M. Goffin also welcomed Wellsley Hamilton as the new Canadian Secretariat to the Board.

COL Karl Jansen identified that the US Army Corps of Engineers is continuing to keep essential works like dredging and dam management running throughout the pandemic. Their VPN is up to speed and they are staffed, trained and operating remotely from an administrative perspective. He wished everyone and their families to stay healthy as we all work through the challenges of the pandemic.

#### Board Annual Report for 2019-20

Scott Jutila identified that the Board Annual Report is in draft and with the U.S. Secretariat for completion.

- **ACTION:** U.S. Secretariat to complete draft of the Board Annual Report and share with the Board for review and comment. Subsequent steps are: Board Co-chair approval and submission of final report to the IJC.

#### Status of Draft Board Work Plan for 2020-21

Pamela Finlayson reported that the blank template for 2020-21 was sent to the various co-chairs in late March for input. Some responses have been received, but there was not sufficient information to share a draft of the Work Plan with the Board at this time. Although this had not been communicated to the Secretariat circumstances of COVID-19 may have affected projects or responses. Last fiscal year, the draft Work Plan was available for the August Basin Meetings.

- **ACTION:** Canadian Secretariat to continue collecting input for the draft 2020-21 Work Plan, with the goal of sharing a first draft at the August Board meeting.

#### Future Board Meetings Schedule

The future board meetings schedule was reviewed. Potential changes to August meetings dates and times were discussed in relation to the next agenda item.

### 4. August 2020 Basin Meetings

Wellsley Hamilton reviewed the meeting package attachment and key questions. A group discussion followed, orally on the phone line and in written form via the Webex chat function. Overall, there was no support for hosting any face-to-face meetings in the summer or fall this year. A Board meeting will still take place in August, however the timing will need to be determined, given Co-chair availability. Committees and advisory groups were encouraged to hold their meetings in August.

As it relates to hosting a virtual public meeting, a participant noted that for the week of August 17, most US residents will have returned to their winter residences for the start of the academic year and may have better access to internet. It was also pointed out that in the basin, people may have marginal access to Internet that supports videoconferencing, but their access may improve in September. Traffic in the basin is expected to be lower in September. There was broad consensus to delay the public meeting to September. It was recommended that a note to the public about a virtual meeting in the fall be sent out now to keep everyone informed.

Mr. Goffin noted that since the virtual format is new to this group and has unique challenges, support may be available to improve user experience. The drive-in theatre was suggested as an option to explore.

The Water Level Committee noted that holding a public session is not a requirement under their terms of reference and as a result may want to discuss whether to hold one virtually.

Wayne Jenkinson indicated that the Commission has been made aware that the Board and others are looking for clarity about how to handle the governance related to the Directive of holding an annual of a face-to-face public meeting.

- **ACTION:** Canadian Secretariat to coordinate the Board meeting and provide support for Committees to meet in August.
- **ACTION:** Secretariat to determine date and deliver virtual public meeting in September.
- **ACTION:** Secretariat to start advertising the September Public Meeting date as soon as possible.
- **ACTION:** Canadian Secretariat to follow up on support for delivery of virtual meetings.
- **ACTION:** Secretariat to work with Kelli Saunders to setup agenda for Resource Agencies Meeting.
- **ACTION:** Secretariat to await further direction from IJC to all Boards regarding the use of virtual meetings until face-to-face meetings are possible again.

## 5. Wheeler's Point Gauge

Mike Goffin noted that the issue of replacing the Wheeler's Point Gauge is not new and this reach of the Rainy River requires the use of non-standard techniques. He described a two-gauge proposal using pre-existing 2-D Hydraulic models for the lower Rainy River from ECCC. There is one water level gauge currently operating at Rainy River, CA, which will be targeted as one water level site, with the 2nd installation being selected after on-site reconnaissance. Mr. Goffin noted that this proposal has Canadian support.

James Fallon noted that the US proposes a new Index Velocity Gauge at the Baudette Bridge or the airport. Mr. Fallon wanted to know if the ECCC proposal is a slope-stage setup and if so, whether it would provide real-time data. He reported that a section of the Mississippi River uses a slope-stage setup that provides real-time data. Mr. Fallon noted that the answer to this question was significant to the issue of what the Board and users need.

Mr. Goffin confirmed that the Canadian proposal would give real-time data. There was agreement to move forward with the Canadian proposal.

- **ACTION:** ECCC to support and move forward to implement the 2-gauge proposal. Operational support from USGS is welcomed.
- **ACTION:** ECCC to inform USGS if 2-gauge proposal is a slope-stage system and expected frequency of data it could provide.

## 6. Update on Mining Collaboration Project

Jim Stark referred to the written update in the meeting package. The project leads working on review of transboundary mapping database for the Health Professionals Advisory Board (HPAB) of the International Joint Commission (IJC) selected two basins - Rainy-Lake of the Woods and Lake Superior - as pilots for the next phase of work.

As a result of this pilot, an online product will be created and shared with this Board as a demonstration at which point input from the Board on the following questions is likely to be sought: • Are there known data sources that are missed? • Are there regions that are missed? • What do you want the product to look like? • If there is a cut-off point regarding mine size (when is a mine too small to include), what is that point?

- **ACTION:** Jim Stark to remain as Board liaison on this project.
- **ACTION:** Jim Stark to share information about a future webinar to demonstrate the product, provide the Board with additional information and seek their input.

## 7. IWI Proposals and Project Updates

The Board confirmed that no IWI proposals submitted since March. Pamela Finlayson reminded the Board that IWI projects should also be included in the 2020-21 Work Plan.

### Status of Policy and Structure for IWI Submissions

No update since last meeting.

- **ACTION:** Mike Hirst to have new form and process ready in time for Fall 2020 submissions deadline.

### State of the Basin Report

Todd Sellers plans to submit an IWI proposal for the State of the Basin Report project in the fall.

- **ACTION:** Todd Sellers to submit IWI proposal for State of the Basin Report in Fall 2020, using the new form and process if available.

### Wild Rice Project

Wayne Jenkinson reported that this project originally included in-person meetings with Indigenous communities. These meetings are no longer possible due to COVID-19. Wayne and the project lead, Lucas King, are discussing potential project revisions.

- **ACTION:** Lucas King and Wayne Jenkinson to revise the project and resubmit it when possible.

### AIS Coarse Filter Assessment

Todd Sellers is waiting for the IJC to confirm final details.

### Objectives and Alerts

Todd Sellers identified that this work is ongoing but was delayed due to COVID-19.

## 8. Adaptive Management Committee Update

International Watershed Coordinator Kelli Saunders provided an update for this committee. She noted that in March, a list of nominees had a meeting to discuss the Committee. The committee requires IJC

Commissioner approval for membership. IJC Advisor Wayne Jenkinson noted the appointments should be ready soon.

Kelli Saunders noted that the written update provided in the meeting package described the results of the meetings to date. It includes a list of initial committee priorities for the Board to review, as well as six projects. The IJC Climate Change work is likely to move forward.

A key priority is review of the models developed during the rule curve reviews. The group has been considering the appropriate timing for this work and things the winter months is likely best based on modeller availability. There are other priority projects that can likely be started now, input from the Board is requested. The AMC will likely meet in Summer 2020 following committee member appointments.

- **ACTION:** Board members to review AMC list of priorities and projects, and email comments to Kelli Saunders.

## 9. Water Levels Committee Update

Canadian Committee Co-chair Erika Klyszejko provided an update for the WLC. The WLC met regularly throughout March and April.

The WLC chose not to use the high flood risk rule curve this year. When the decision was made base flow throughout the basin was higher than normal (owing largely to a very wet fall), as was the snow pack, however the winter was less severe than average and forecasted conditions did not indicate it was a high flood risk year.

On March 17, the WLC directed the Companies to target between 25% and 50% of the Rule Curve bands for both Namakan Lake and Rainy Lake as of April 1. By the beginning of April, it was clear that the freshet was early and the WLC directed the companies to resume normal operation and target the mid-band (25%-75%).

Since March, water levels on Rainy and Namakan Lakes have remained within the rule curves. According to the US Drought Monitor Rainy-Namakan basin is currently abnormally dry, with some areas categorized as a moderate drought. All tributaries are on the decline and none are above normal.

You may recall that IJC engaged the National Research Council of Canada to investigate the potential causes of low-water events in the forebay of the PCA mill, particularly during high flow events. We decided to launch this study following incidents in 2019 when water levels exceeded the upper rule curve on Rainy Lake.

The National Research Council (NRC) ran a two-dimensional hydrodynamic model to investigate the relationships between outflow conveyance capacity, dam gate configurations at the Fort Frances-International Falls Dam, and water levels in Rainy Lake and the dam forebay. The study findings identify that opening gates very quickly to increase outflow isn't effective and is likely to contribute to low water level events in the dam forebay.

The NRC's draft report was reviewed by IJC advisors, as well as the WLC and its engineering advisors. NRC has presented the study and findings to the Committee as well as the dam operators (PCA and H2O Power). The WLC expects to receive the final report this week.

- **ACTION:** Erika Klyszejko to send Kelli Saunders a copy of the National Research Council Report for the AMC.

## 10. Aquatic Ecosystem Health Committee Update

Canadian Committee Co-chair Todd Sellers reported that the AEHC has not met yet this fiscal year.

For the AIS coarse filter IWI project proposal, the statement of work has been revised into two phases, the final draft was revised and edited, and an independent cost estimate was provided for the U.S. The next step is to consider vendors.

- **ACTION:** Todd Sellers to continue work on AIS Coarse Filter IWI project.

## 11. Engagement Committee Update

U.S. Committee Co-chair Kelly Sjerven asked about the status of the Canadian Co-chair. She noted that website training from IJC had to be rescheduled due to COVID-19, and that Project WET is moving again.

- **ACTION:** EC U.S. Co-chair to take website training when available from IJC.

## 12. Roundtable

### CAG Update

IJC Advisor Wayne Jenkinson noted that in March the CAG lacked Co-chairs. Since then, Doug Franchot has been nominated for U.S. Co chair and Matt Myers has been nominated as the Canadian Co-chair. Both are also nominated to the Board as public members as required by the Directive and Terms of Reference. The next step is appointment by the IJC, which is forthcoming shortly

Matt and Doug were both present on the call as Observers and briefly introduced themselves.

### IAG Update

None.

### IJC Update

IJC Advisor Jenkinson noted that website training was being arranged for the Secretariat and others.

- **ACTION:** The Secretariat and Engagement Committee Co-chair were asked to identify who needs website training and send the list to IJC staff member Jeff Kart.

IJC Advisor, Mark Gabriel, noted that the contract for IWI Project WET has expired.

- **ACTION:** Mark Gabriel to contact Kelly Sjerven about renewing expired contract for Project WET.

### International Watershed Coordinator Update

Kelli Saunders provided an update on outreach and engagement activities she is involved with. She continues to write articles for the newspaper. The Story Map project is about 75% complete. A recent social media campaign with the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters focused on AIS and was very

successful, receiving over 100,000 impressions on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. This may lead to future work.

There are also plans underway for an “Ask an Expert” webinar series for the public, likely to start in July 2020. Topics may include best management practices, septic systems, algae, etc.

- **ACTION:** All to send ideas about local stories for newspaper articles to Kelli Saunders.

## 10. Review of Action Items and Adjournment

The next Board meeting is planned for the week of August 17, 2020 in a virtual format. More details will follow by email.

*Drafted by: Pamela Finlayson, ECCC*

*With input from: Abby Moore, USACE, Scott Jutila, USACE and Wellsley Hamilton ECCC*