International Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed
Board Meeting

March 11, 2025
9:00am – 10:30am CT (10:00am – 11:30am ET)

Board Meeting
International Falls, MN

Chairperson: Jennifer Vincent

U.S. Member Participants
Karl Jansen (Virtual)
Kelly Sjerven
Amy Adrihan
Mike Hirst
Doug Franchot
Shelly Patten
Pam Tomevi
Jim Stark (Virtual)
Rebecca Seal-Soileau (Virtual, Secretary)
Abby Moore (Virtual, Engineering Advisor)

International Joint Commission
Comm. Lance Yohe (Virtual)
Mark Gabriel
Rob Caldwell
Julien Houle (Virtual)
Kevin Bunch (Virtual)
Jo Werba (Virtual)
Celine Desjardins (Virtual)
Meghan Mills (International Watershed Coordinator)

Canadian Member Participants
Jennifer Vincent
Megan Garner
Brian Kilgour (Virtual)
Teika Newton
Karen Cederwall
Matt Myers
Johann Strube
Rhobi Chacha (Virtual)
Mark Lee (Virtual)
Maria Jawaid (Secretary)
Matt DeWolfe (Engineering Advisor)

Additional Participants
Felicia Minotti (Global Affairs Canada)
Joel Wessman (Global Affairs Canada)
Ryan Maki (Voyaguers National Park)
Daila Delescaille (NWMO)
Michelle Nearing (NWMO)

1. Welcome and Administration

The Canadian Co-chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. The A/ U.S Co-chair offered regrets for being unable to join the meeting in person due to US federal travel constraints. The A/ U.S Co-chair also forwarded regrets from the U.S Board Co-chair, Col. Eric Swenson, who remains deployed until July 2025, leading wildlife relief efforts following the recent California wildfires. Col. Swenson's IJC Board Co-chair appointment expires in the coming months and a new Colonel for the St. Paul District U.S Army Corps of Engineers will be announced shortly. That person will assume the Board Co-chair responsibilities.

2. SPECIAL PRESENTATION: Nuclear Waste Management Organization – Ignace Site Characterization

The Board received a presentation from the Canadian Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) regarding their environmental baseline program for the Ignace-Wabigoon site, which was recently selected as the future location for Canada's Deep Geologic Repository for spent nuclear waste. The program aims to characterize existing baseline conditions for a variety of environmental parameters including air, noise, light, wildlife habitat, soil, surface water, fish, and groundwater. NWMO is currently collecting data for existing conditions within the project area to understand and predict how the project may impact the site. A virtual open house for the environmental baseline monitoring is available at their website (https://nwmoenvironw.ca/index.html).

After the presentation, Board members were invited to ask questions.

- What is being done to monitor groundwater movement?
  Monitoring wells have been set up for shallow water depths and NWMO is doing some characterization of deep groundwater conditions at the repository depth. Studies will be available online.

- What invertebrate community studies are being done?
  NWMO is assessing invertebrates through sediment sampling.

- Where is the site relative to the Rainy-Lake of the Woods Basin? Has the watershed divide been confirmed?
  Rainy-Lake of the Woods is outside of the regional study area; water from the Wabigoon-Ignace site is part of the English River system not the Rainy-Lake of the Woods system. NWMO to provide a map showing the location of the site relative to the watershed divide.

  A Board member noted that the groundwater watershed may not align with the surface water watershed and that NWMO should also be investigating flow paths in the rocks.

- What are the timelines for the baseline study and what monitoring/reporting will be done once the repository site is in place?
  NWMO is continuing with baseline studies in preparation for an impact statement and license application in 2028. When the site is in place, there will be regular monitoring of the area with third party verification and publicly available reports.

- Will the data produced by NWMO be publicly available /open source?
  NWMO is currently considering this. The reports, and the findings will be publicly available and will be explained at virtual open houses.

NWMO confirmed that background radiation levels are also being monitored. Commissioner Yohe noted that that, if/when the repository site is constructed, the Board should continue to invite monitoring and reporting updates from the NWMO.

3. Board Administration

Following the presentation, the Board went through formal introductions for those in the room and online as there were new members and observers. Commissioner Yohe noted that he was unable to

attend in person, but joined the meeting virtually. The remaining items on the agenda were approved by Board members with no additions and it was decided that Board members would have one week to review the January meeting summary and provide comments to the Secretariat.

ACTION: Board members to review the January meeting summary and submit any edits to the Secretariat by March 18, 2025.

4. Board Directive Updates

The IJC advisors provided a summary of their draft edits to the Board's Directive. The edits include a change to the review cycle for water quality objectives from 'time to time' to a 5-year cycle, changes to the Water Levels Committee's membership to include 2 additional Indigenous members, and changes to the Board's workplan cycle from annual to every 3 years. Additionally, the IJC Advisors noted some minor edits to the Directive for clarification and grammar.

The Secretariat provided initial comments to the draft Board Directive, which are currently being reviewed by IJC legal staff. There will be an opportunity for Board members to complete a red flag review of the Directive.

The proposed Directive wording regarding the expansion of the Water Levels Committee membership was questioned. The IJC advisors stated that the proposed draft wording does not specifically refer to any Indigenous community to ensure there is some flexibility with respect to who can occupy those seats.[1]

The IJC Advisors noted that all Board members are invited at minimum to participate as observers on any of the Board's committee meetings. While the Water Levels Committee and the Adaptive Management Committee have members that are appointed by the IJC, both the Engagement Committee and Aquatic Ecosystem Health Committee have open membership.

ACTION: Secretariat to add a 'Board Calendar' to the SharePoint which includes upcoming Board and Committee/Advisory Group meetings.
ACTION: Secretariat to investigate how Board members can be invited to participate in Committee/Advisory Group meetings, if they are not members.

5. Water Levels Committee

The Canadian Co-chair of the WLC stated that the IJC extended the Temporary Order that combines Rainy Lake's High Flood Risk Rule Curve and Standard Rule Curve for the 2025 spring regulation period. To kick-off spring regulation, the WLC held a virtual Pre-Spring Engagement on March 4th 2025 with presentations from the Lake of the Woods Secretariat and the National Weather Service. Basin conditions are drier than normal with the snow water equivalent (Swe) slightly below normal, though deep frost in the ground from cold winter temperatures could impact spring runoff. Seasonal forecasts presented at the engagement indicated a below normal risk for spring flooding and there were no

[1] The Regional Councillor for the Northwestern Ontario Métis Community sent a letter to the IJC at the end of January requesting Métis representation on the WLC and to revise the Indigenous membership nomination process for the WLC. The IJC responded at the end February that they would continue with the 2 Indigenous seats with a 3-year term that would be rotated among all Indigenous communities in the basin, including Métis.

concerns heard from participants at the open discussion period of the engagement. Board members shared that there was positive feedback from the engagement and were interested in the "shared" numbers on the Facebook post and news release. There was a recommendation to record future engagements and post the recordings to the Board website.

The WLC announced its initial spring water level targets on March 10, 2025. The targets for the month of April are the 35-65% band of Rainy Lake's rule curve and the 40-65% band of Namakan Lake's rule curve. The WLC Co-chair reminded Board members that the WLC would be hosting a public meeting the evening of March 11 in the Theater of the Minnesota North College – Rainy River Campus. It was also announced that Matt DeWolfe would be returning to his role as Canadian Engineering Advisor to the WLC.

There was discussion on an IWI proposal for Community Collaborative Rain, Hail & Snow Network (CoCoRaHS) gages that would provide a set number of gages to Indigenous communities in the Souris, Red, and Rainy-Lake of the Woods basins. There was some confusion regarding who could receive the kits, and it was decided that the Board should receive a presentation on the project at a future Board meeting.

ACTION: IJC Communications staff to report the number of times the press release on the Pre-Spring Engagement was shared on social media.
ACTION: Secretariat to coordinate presentation on CoCoRaHS project for future Board meeting.

6. Aquatic Ecosystem Health Committee

The U.S. Co-chair of the Aquatic Ecosystem Health Committee (AEHC) requested the Board provide a letter of support for a proposal to seek funding for Phase II South Shore Barrier Island Study through the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR). Phase I of the project was completed through the IJC's International Watershed Initiative and results from the project were presented at the Board's January 22 Board meeting. Phase II of the project would further investigate what is happening to the islands and determine if there are ways to protect them from further erosion. The project is expensive, so requires external funding beyond the IWI funding to be applied for in the Fall 2025 intake.

It was decided that Board members would have a week to review project details and submit any concerns with the Board endorsing this project to the Secretariat. If no concerns were raised, the Board Co-Chairs would sign a letter of support. The Board recommended that a Canadian component be added to the project when the AEHC seeks Board support to move forward with an IWI proposal in the fall.

The U.S. AEHC Co-Chair then stated that there is another LCCMR proposal for a project to install 3 new water quality buoys, including 1 in Lake of the Woods. The AEHC Co-Chair requested the Board also provide a letter of support for this project, and it was decided that the Board would also have a week to review the letter and submit any concerns with the Board endorsing this project to the Secretariat. Similarly, if there are no concerns raised, the Board Co-Chairs would sign the letter of support.

Finally, the Board discussed the process behind the recent Canadian AEHC Co-Chair appointment. In the IJC's Board member appointment letter to Teika Newton (replacing Todd Sellers after his retirement), it included an appointment as the Canadian Co-Chair to the AEHC. Board members noted this was the first time an appointment letter included a committee Co-Chair designation. Whereas nominations were sought at the last AEHC meeting, not all committee members were present, and the nomination was not

presented to the Board for approval. IJC Advisors acknowledged that future (non WLC/AMC) Committee Co-chair positions would be 'approved' first by the Board, per the Board's Directive.

ACTION: Board members review the letter of endorsement for the Phase II South Shore Barrier Island Project and submit any concerns with the Board endorsing this project to the Secretariat by EOD March 18th.
ACTION: Board members review the letter of endorsement for the installation of 3 water quality buoys and submit any concerns with the Board endorsing this project to the Secretariat by EOD March 18th.

7. LWCB Updates

Megan Garner, International Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed Board (Board/IRLWWB) member and member of the Lake of the Woods Control Board (LWCB), stated that the LWCB would be in Kenora, ON the week of March 16 to determine a spring regulation strategy.

8. IJC Updates

The IJC Advisors provided an overview of the 2025 IJC Spring Semi-Annual Appearances. The Board is scheduled to present to Commissioners on Tuesday, April 29 at 08:30 am EDT followed by an informal discussion with the WLC Co-Chairs.

IJC Advisors announced the official appointments of two new Canadian Board members, Johann Strube and Teika Newton. There is still a vacancy on the Canadian membership and IJC Advisors are working with Grand Council Treaty #3 to fill the vacancy.

ACTION: Secretariat to share 2025 IJC Spring Semi-Annual Appearance information with Board members.

9. Roundtable

During the roundtable portion of the meeting, Shelly Patten informed the Board that she plans to retire and that this would be her last Board meeting. The U.S. A/Co-Chair of the Board expressed gratitude for Shelly's contributions to the Board and wished her well in retirement.

10. Closing Remarks

The meeting closed and Board members were reminded that a meeting with the Industry Advisory Group and Community Advisory Group was scheduled right after this Board meeting.

International Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed
Board Meeting

March 11, 2025
10:45am – 12:00pm CT (11:45am – 1:00pm ET)

Board-CAG-IAG Meeting
International Falls, MN

Chairperson: Karl Jansen

IRLWWB Member Participants
Karl Jansen (Virtual)
Jennifer Vincent
Megan Garner
Brian Kilgour (Virtual)
Teika Newton
Karen Cederwall
Matt Myers
Johann Strube
Rhobi Chacha (Virtual)
Mark Lee (Virtual)
Kelly Sjerven
Amy Adrihan
Mike Hirst
Doug Franchot
Shelly Patten
Pam Tomevi
Jim Stark (Virtual)
Rebecca Seal-Soileau (Virtual, Secretary)
Maria Jawaid (Secretary)
Matt DeWolfe (Engineering Advisor)
Abby Moore (Virtual, Engineering Advisor)

Advisory Group Participants
Paul Anderson (CAG)
Tom Mosindy (CAG)
Brian Jackson (CAG)
Ian Strain (IAG)
Craig Beveroth (CAG)
Diane Schwartz-Williams (CAG)

Additional Participants
Felicia Minotti (GAC)
Joel Wessman (GAC)
Ryan Maki (Voyaguers National Park)
Janette Marsh (EPA)

International Joint Commission
Comm. Lance Yohe (Virtual)
Mark Gabriel
Rob Caldwell
Julien Houle (Virtual)
Kevin Bunch (Virtual)
Jo Werba (Virtual)
Celine Desjardins (Virtual)
Meghan Mills (International Watershed Coordinator)

1. Welcome and Administration

The A/ U.S. Co-Chair welcomed everyone to joint Board and Advisory Groups meeting. This meeting is held annually during the week of the Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed Forum as an opportunity for the Industry Advisory Group (IAG) and Community Advisory Group (CAG) to meet with the Board to discuss ideas, interests, and concerns they have with watershed activities.

2. Community Advisory Group Updates

The Community Advisory Group (CAG) first provided a brief update on the Environmental Emergencies Project, which is being funded through the International Joint Commission (IJC)'s International Watershed Initiative (IWI). This project is an update of the Board's 2019 *Review of Environmental Emergency, Planning, Preparedness and Response in the Boundary Waters of the*

Rainy-Lake of the Woods Drainage Basin report and will confirm the relevancy of the CAG's recommendations in 2021. Currently the project contractors have scoped the agencies and industries that should be involved in the project. The CAG Co-chair thanked Board members for their help putting together a contact list for the project team and for the Secretariat's support in sending letters out to the agencies/industries encouraging their involvement in the project.

There was discussion on the CAG's post-2022 flood recommendation to conduct a feasibility study to investigate the possibility of a diversion or emergency spillway in the Rainy River basin. There is a general understanding within the CAG that a diversion would have downstream impacts and is not a watershed approach to flooding concerns, but this is still an interest within the basin communities. The CAG sees a benefit in doing a feasibility study because it would demonstrate that the Board is addressing community concerns, and it would articulate and document why this type of project would not be feasible for this basin. The CAG Co-chairs proposed that the Board put together an International Watershed Initiative project proposal for someone to investigate the feasibility of a diversion. It was noted that Canadian MP Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay - Rainy River) indicated interest in partnering to fund such a project, although the details about possible funding were not provided.

The Board discussed whether a structural flood protection project falls within the mandate of the Board and the IJC Advisors were actioned to determine if a floodway investigation is within the mandate. The U.S. alternate Co-Chair commented that an IWI project is an unusual path to building a water resources project. On the U.S. side, there is typically a non-federal cost sharing partner that is the starting point for a project/feasibility study.

Board members offered preliminary feasibility constraints including: who would be the main proponent for the project, who would pay for the approvals process, design, construction and ongoing maintenance of the floodway, how the focus community would be determined to evaluate floodway impacts, how the impacts of downstream populations would be evaluated, the amount of land expropriation required, how basin-wide engagement would be carried out, how 'baseline' data would be collected, unclear regulatory approval process and requirements, how the project would achieve 100% jurisdictional buy-in, how indigenous community buy-in would be achieved, etc. In addition, the Board discussed the need for resilience and how non-structural or natural mitigation must be considered before engineered disruptive solutions.

ACTION: IJC Advisors to determine if a floodway investigation falls within the Board's mandate.
ACTION: CAG to submit materials to IJC Advisors re: the flood spillway feasibility concept project

3. Industry Advisory Group Updates

The US IAG Co-Chair stated that the IAG last met in November. At that November meeting, there was discussion on fishing regulations in both Minnesota and Ontario, as well as a presentation on New Gold Inc.'s Rainy River mine.

An IAG member representing First Light stated that there would be some equipment upgrades at the International Falls/Fort Frances dam this year. A Board member asked how old the dam was and its life expectancy. First Light stated that the dam was constructed in the early 1900s and that operators maintain the dams to keep them operable through routine inspections.

Finally, the IAG Co-Chair mentioned that in previous years the IAG meets ahead of the Board-IAG-CAG meeting but was unable to meet this year. The Board decided to investigate meeting needs and

schedule capacity for next year, noting that non-update agenda items should be prioritized for future meetings.

4. Board & IJC Updates

Due to time constraints, it was decided that the Board Secretariat would distribute its update via email to all attendees.

ACTION: Secretariat to distribute the Board update to the CAG and IAG.

5. Closing Remarks

The A/ Board Co-chair closed the meeting.