

International St. Mary and Milk Rivers Study  
Board Progress Report

September 16

2022

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## Executive Summary

The International St. Mary – Milk Rivers Study was initiated on Nov. 10, 2021 with the appointment of a 6-person, bi-national study board and 6-page Directive to the study board (ISSMRSB). The study had been proposed a few years earlier by the Accredited Officers for the St. Mary and Milk Rivers (AOs). Earlier in 2021, the AOs study plan had been endorsed in a letter from governments to the IJC.

Since then, the Study Board has developed a study workplan that has been approved by the IJC and received comments from the public and the Independent Review Group (IRG) developed by the IJC to provide independent review of the study as it proceeds. The workplan describes a complex governance structure, a variety of advisory groups described by the IJC Directive, plans for Indigenous and public engagement, as well as detailed information about how the study will be conducted.

The Study Board has met on average about two times a month since the board was formed and has begun implementing the workplan including standing up or helping the IJC stand up almost of all of the required advisor and technical groups.

With the help of IJC Communications staff, the Board has been actively engaging the public through in-person meetings, a webinar, and videos and documents on the Board's Web page. The Board needs to complete training to take control of content on its Web page and begin adding other documents for public consumption, including minutes from the Board's meetings.

Indigenous engagement is a key aspect of the study in the original study proposal and the IJC's Directive. The Board has identified Indigenous Engagement Leads who have been actively working on helping identify Indigenous Nations to be part of the Government Forum, Indigenous Advisory Group members, and Indigenous observers to be part of Technical Working Groups. In addition, they've worked with IJC staff to link the Board with Indigenous Peoples by scheduling in-person meetings and a tour of a tribal college.

Six Technical Working Groups (TWGs) have been formed to conduct the studies required for the Board's work. Each TWG has Co-Chairs, members, observers, and advisors. In addition, individual Board members will be assigned to observe each TWG. As described by the workplan, the work of the TWGs will be guided by the study's Technical Leads and the Options Formulation and Evaluation Group.

In the coming months, TWGs will provide more detailed workplans and budget requests. The Board will use this information to provide an updated and much more detailed workplan for the overall study. The Board will continue to ramp up Indigenous and public engagement efforts as the all the various parts of the study begin to move towards meeting the goal of the study.

## Background

The St. Mary and Milk Rivers begin on the eastern flank of the Northern Rocky Mountains in northwestern Montana and flow north and northeast into Alberta. Water in the St. Mary River continues north in the South Saskatchewan River, and eventually discharges into Hudson Bay. The North Fork and main stem of the Milk River flow north into southern Alberta where they join and flow to the east for over 60 miles before eventually turning south and recrossing the International Border into Montana. The Milk River eventually joins the Missouri River which later joins the Mississippi and discharges into the Gulf of Mexico. Irrigation in both these watersheds began over 100 years ago. Early on, US settlers realized the St. Mary River consistently provided a larger and more reliable water supply and they made plans to divert St. Mary River water into the North Fork of the Milk River for use on the Great Plains in eastern Montana, where it was needed most. Canadian settlers made plans to use St. Mary River water for large scale irrigation north of the border. These conflicting intended interests, in using the limited available water, led to inclusion of water apportionment in these watersheds under Article VI of the Boundary Waters Treaty.

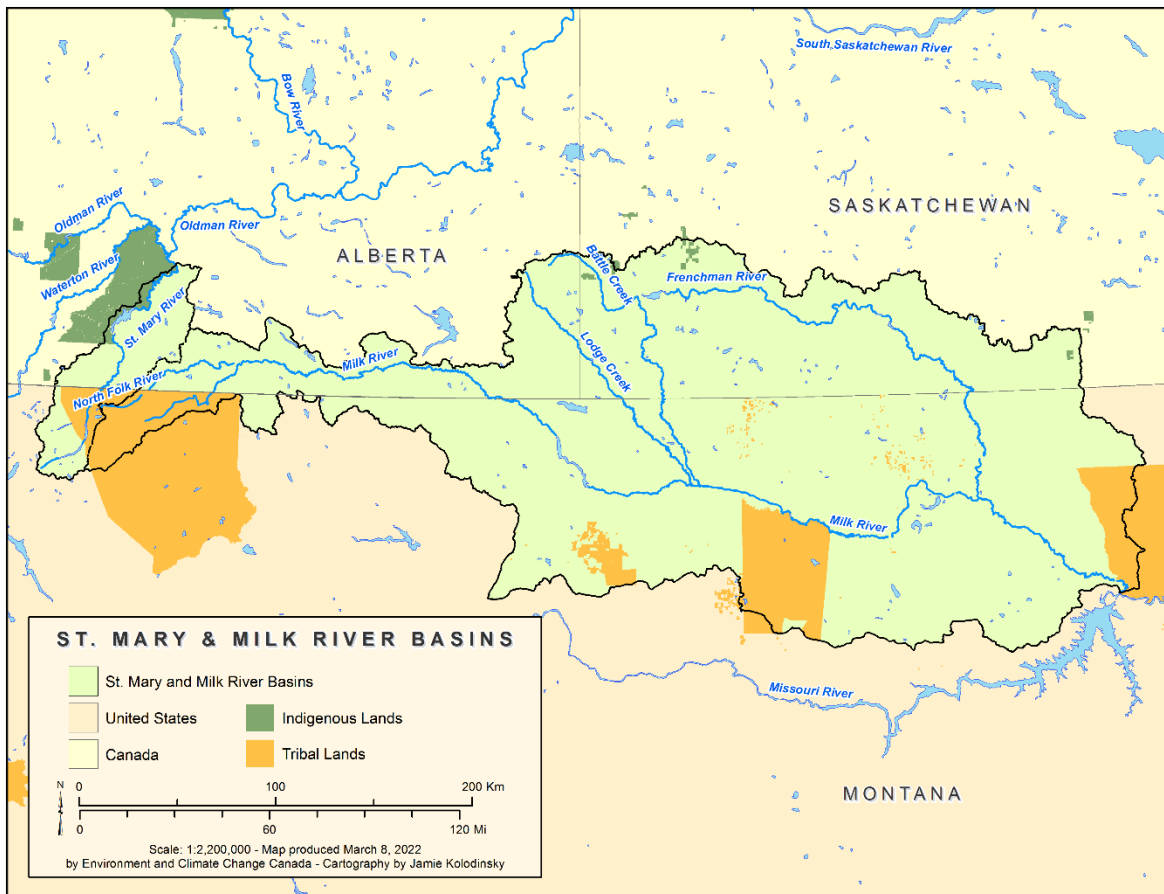


Figure 1. The St. Mary and Milk River basins in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Montana.

Despite the Treaty, disagreements over apportioning water between the US and Canada have continued, particularly as water use, climate, and seasonal water availability have changed over time. The Accredited Officers, designated under the Treaty, work together under the direction of the IJC to apportion water in these watersheds with an eye toward making the most beneficial use of the water. An examination of previous studies was conducted by the Accredited Officers between 2017 and 2019. Potential changes to the current apportionment procedures and infrastructure were identified that might improve each country's ability to use its share of the water and therefore improve beneficial use. The Accredited Officers proposed a study to help identify the best combination of changes to improve beneficial use. In June 2021, governments indicated their support for the IJC to carry-out the AO's proposed-study and report back the results within 4 years. In Nov. 2021, the IJC stood up the International St. Mary and Milk River Study Board to conduct the study. The Study Board consists of 6 members, with the Accredited Officers at the time the study began serving as the study Co-Chairs. The Board began meeting in mid-December and has met about twice a month since then.

A significant component of the study is Indigenous engagement and while the IJC was selecting Board members and working on establishing the Study Board, IJC Commissioners and staff along with the Accredited Officers began engaging the Indigenous Nations in the basins. The IJC and the AOs began designing the various means that would be used to engage the numerous Indigenous people in these basins.

The IJC's November 10, 2021 Directive establishing the Study asked the Study Board to provide the Commission with a workplan by February 19, 2022 and a final report, including all the Board's findings, conclusions, and recommendations by June 13, 2025.

Within the IJC's Directive to the ISMMRSB, the Commission requested that the Study Board submit an annual report the Commission at its Spring semi-annual meeting in a format suitable for public release. However, in advance of the ISMMRSB's first appearance before the Commission in the Spring of 2022, the IJC agreed that the Study Board may submit its annual report in the Fall of 2022, and each fall thereafter. This report fulfills that requirement.

## Study Progress

In the 11 months since the study began, the IJC and the Study Board have developed plans for completing the work assigned under the Directive, including standing up various Advisory Groups, actively engaging in extensive public and Indigenous outreach, and identifying and tasking the technical leadership and experts needed to complete the science and engineering studies needed to inform the Board's work. This is described in a workplan that has been approved by the IJC for release to the public and provided to the Independent Review Group (IRG) for comment. The Board has received, considered and addressed public comments and is in the process of responding to the more detailed comments from the IRG. The progress of the Board on specific parts of the study is described in the following sections.

## 1. Study Governance

The planning of the study and the governance structure is complete. A Study Board comprised of three members from Canada and three members from the United States has been established and is responsible for providing oversight to the study. The Study Board members, with the exception of the Co-Chairs, are independent experts on water resources, water apportionment, irrigation, and ecology, with no previous experience working on issues in the St. Mary and Milk Rivers. Two Study Managers, one from Canada (Beau Hawkings, ECCC) and one from the United States (Josh Valder, USGS), were selected, and are responsible for assisting the Study Board in delivering on its mandate.

## 2. Advisory Groups

The IJC, with assistance from the Study Board, has established a Public Advisory Group (PAG), as directed by the IJC, with members who are interested in and use water in these rivers for a variety of purposes including municipal supply, irrigation, indigenous practices, recreation, etc. The members of the PAG were appointed by the IJC Secretaries, as per the directive.

<b>Members from Canada</b> <i>(Alphabetical order)</i>	
1	<b>Shannon Frank</b> Oldman River Watershed Council, Alberta, Canada
2	<b>Ken Miller</b> Milk River Watershed Council of Canada, Alberta, Canada
3	<b>Roger Pederson</b> Saskatchewan Irrigation Projects Association, SK, Canada
4	<b>Margo Redelback</b> Alberta Irrigation Districts Association, Alberta, Canada
5	<b>Jason Schneider</b> Rural Municipalities of Alberta, Alberta, Canada
6	<b>Audrey Van Son – Turner</b> Milk River Water Users Association, Alberta, Canada
<b>Members from the United States</b> <i>(Alphabetical order)</i>	
7	<b>Greg Jergeson</b> Blaine County Conservation District, Montana, United States
8	<b>Marko Manoukian</b> Phillips County, Montana, United States
9	<b>Bob Nelson</b> Montana Walleyes Unlimited, Montana, United States
10	<b>Jennifer Patrick</b> Milk River Joint Board of Control, Montana, United States

11	<b>Jeff Pattison</b> Milk River Watershed Alliance, Montana, United States
12	<b>David Peterson</b> City of Havre Public Works Department, Montana, United States

Table 1. Membership of the Public Advisory Group to the ISMMRSB

These 12 individuals have received letters from the IJC Secretaries appointing them to the PAG and the PAG has held an initial meeting virtually, with several Board members observing. The PAG is planning another meeting in early October. To date, the PAG has not selected Co-Chairs, but the board does expect that as the PAG meets over the next few months, Co-Chairs will be appointed. Two Study Board members along with the two Study Managers make up the current Communications Committee and serve as the conduit of information between the PAG and the Board. Until and after Co-Chairs are selected, Communication committee members, including IJC communications committee members, will observe PAG meetings and will serve to pass information between the PAG and the Board.

The Study Board was directed by the IJC to establish an Indigenous Advisory Group. Working through Indigenous Engagement Leads (Sheree Watson, US and Clayton Desjarlais, Canada) and IJC staff, the Board has organized a couple of meetings with groups of potential Indigenous individuals, First Nations and Tribes potentially interesting in being represented on an Indigenous Advisory Group. This is in addition to numerous other conversations with 32 potential members of the Group. At this point, the final membership of the Indigenous Advisory Group is still being finalized. Invitation letters for IAG participation were sent out to four Canadian and four U.S. Indigenous contacts in August 2022. An IAG interest meeting (virtual) was held in September 2022 with 3-4 Indigenous members who might be appointed to the group participating for part of the meeting.

In addition to seeking advice from the Public and Indigenous Advisory Groups, the IJC, with the aid of the Board has established a Government Forum to provide feedback to the Board from the Indigenous, State, Provincial, and Federal governments. Members of the Forum have been formally appointed by the Commission along with the Special Liaisons between the Government Forum and the Study Board and Commission.

Within the United States	
<b>Government entity</b>	<b>Representative</b>
Fort Belknap Indian Community	Ms. Kristal Hawley-Fox <i>Water Resource Director</i>
Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation	Ms. Anna Pakenham Stevenson <i>Administrator of the Water Resources Division</i>
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation	Mr. Ryan Newman <i>Area Manager, Montana Area Office</i>

Amskapi Piikani (Blackfeet Nation)	Mr. Gerald ‘Jerry’ Lunak <i>Water Resource Director</i>
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Within Canada	
Government entity	Representative
Alberta Ministry of Environment and Parks	Ms. Carcey Hincz <i>Executive Director of Environmental Knowledge and Prediction</i>
Environment and Climate Change Canada	Dr. Wayne Jenkinson <i>Acting Executive Director for ECCC’s National Hydrological Services</i>
Saskatchewan Water Security Agency	Mr. Jeff Woodward <i>Director of Hydrology and Groundwater Services</i>
Kainai Nation (Blood Tribe)	Mr. Mike Oka <i>Consultation Manager</i>

Special Liaisons to the Forum	
Canada	United States
Dr. Frederick Wrona	Mr. John Tubbs

Table 2. Members of the Government Forum of the ISMMRSB and Special Liaisons to the Forum

The Government Forum has held two virtual meetings, facilitated by the Special Liaisons, and the Special Liaisons have been participating in all the Board’s meetings.

**3. Public Engagement**

As described in the Board’s workplan, a Communications Committee for the study has been established with membership including IJC Communications staff, the two Study Managers and one Board member for each country. This group will guide the Board’s communications efforts going forward. To date, the Board’s communications efforts have been guided by the able IJC Communications staff and their help has been greatly appreciated.

IJC Communications staff worked with the Board to establish the Public Advisory Group which has met once. In addition, the Board has met with Milk River irrigators in both Alberta and Montana in the context of the IJC tour of the basins in June and the Board’s in-person meeting in Havre, MT in July. Both trips offered the Board a chance to tour irrigation infrastructure as well



as have formal and informal interactions with individual irrigators and groups of irrigators. A summary of public engagements includes the following:

- Dinner meeting with Milk River Water Users Association in Cardston, AB, June 2022
- Tour of irrigated farm and meeting with irrigators near Milk River, AB, June 2022
- Lunch with Milk River Joint Board of Control members in Havre and tour of Fresno Reservoir in July 2022
- Invited presentation from U.S. irrigator during Board's meeting in Havre, MT in July 2022
- Provided webinar on work plan in August 2022
- Sought and received public comment on the work plan in August 2022
- Planned in-person town hall meetings in Milk River, AB and Shelby, MT in October 2022

The Board also hosted a webinar to present the workplan for the study to the public, made the workplan available to the public for comment, and has responded directly to each public commentor in writing.

There has been some media coverage of the Board's activities, mostly in Alberta.

#### **4. Indigenous Engagement**

The St. Mary and Milk River watershed is a varied landscape that began as traditional homelands for a diverse group of Indigenous Peoples. As the number of settlers arriving in the area increased in the late 1800s, treaties were signed, territories were ceded, and First Nations and Tribal Nations were ultimately moved onto reservations and reserves created (respectively) by the governments of the United States and Canada. Indigenous Nations having a land base in the watershed and/or historical ties to the basin include six First Nations and two Métis Nation governments in Canada, and six Tribal Nations in the U.S.:

- In Canada
  - Kainai Nation (Blood Tribe);
  - Métis Nation of Alberta (Region 3);
  - Métis Nation - Saskatchewan (Western Region III);
  - Cega'kin Nation (Carry the Kettle Nakoda Nation);
  - Little Pine Cree Nation;
  - Nekaneet First Nation;
  - Sturgeon Lake First Nation; and the
  - Cowessess First Nation
- In the U.S.
  - Amskapi Piikani Blackfeet Tribe, MT;
  - Aaniiih & Nakoda Fort Belknap Indian Community, MT;
  - Assiniboine & Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, MT;
  - Chippewa Cree Indians of the Rocky Boy's Reservation, MT;
  - Montana Little Shell Chippewa Tribe; and the

- Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians of North Dakota

The importance of Indigenous voices, perspective, and knowledge is acknowledged in the Study Directive and continues to guide the Board’s Indigenous engagement efforts, including forming the Indigenous Advisory Group. In our engagement efforts the Board has strived to reflect seven important principles and approaches for working with Indigenous communities including: Respect, Relevance, Relationships, Reciprocity, Redistribution, Relatedness, and Responsibility.

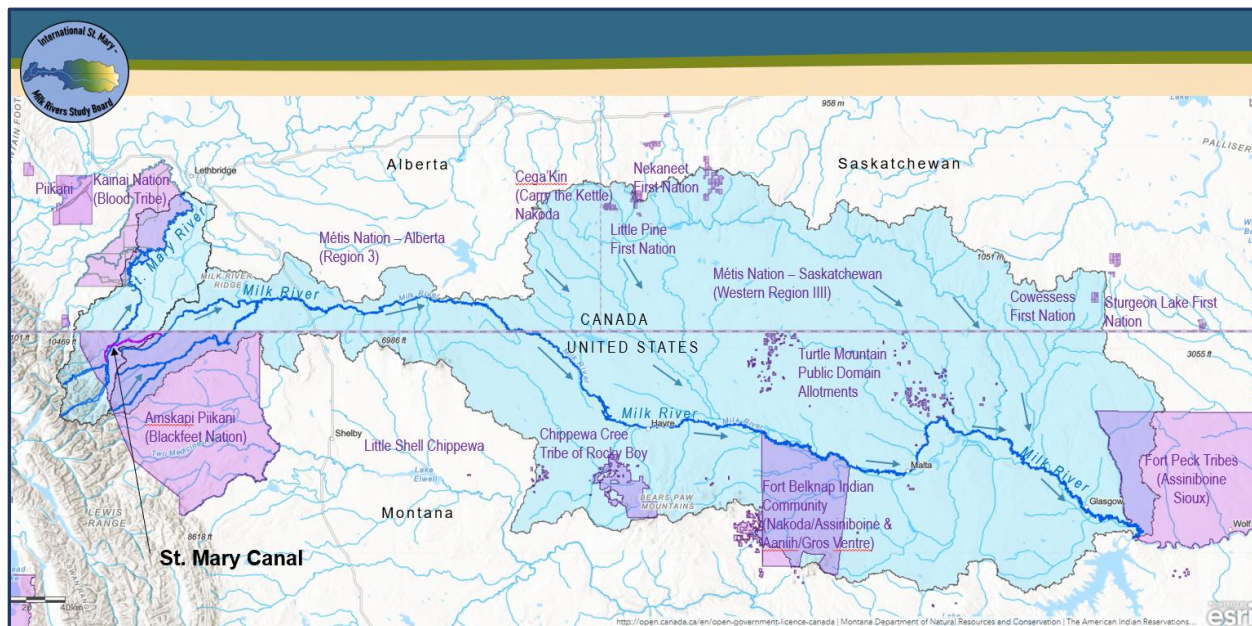


Figure 2. Federally recognized Indigenous Nations and lands (First Nations reserves and Tribal reservations).

In the first year of our engagement work with Indigenous communities we have several lessons learned that will guide the rest of our engagement and outreach strategies. Below is a list of a few key takeaways in our work with Indigenous Nations in the St. Mary and Milk River basin:

- There is a marked diversity among the priorities, needs, and resources of the Indigenous Nations across the basin, including different approaches to the management of lands and water resources. The Kainai Nation (Blood Tribe) in southern Alberta, and the Tribes in Montana whose lands include or border these rivers – and rely on them for municipal supply, economic development, recreation, cultural uses, and/or irrigation farming -- have a more direct interest in the study than those Nations whose lands and interests are more distant. Only 2 of the 6 First Nations on the Canadian side of the border have community sites within the basin; the other lands are under agricultural use or undeveloped. On the U.S. side, the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, although governed from its reservation in North Dakota, has approximately 40,000 acres of public domain allotments within the Milk River basin, for which over 800 water rights have recently (2021) been confirmed by the Montana Water Court.
- In addition, there is a mixture of governance structures and mandates in the U.S. and Canada. For example, since our meetings with 2 U.S. Tribal Nations in late 2021, two

new Tribal Chiefs and Councils have been voted in by Indigenous communities. On the Canadian side of the border, the leadership of 2 First Nations has changed since the beginning of the study, and elections will occur in the other 4 First Nations before the study is concluded.

- Given this diversity of Nations and their respective interests, there is a noted increase in the time required to develop relationships, contact lists, and engage Indigenous people and communities. Communication styles need to be varied, and consistent to engage the right people.
- Most of the Indigenous Nations in these basins are challenged to see a benefit, or reciprocation of their involvement in the study for themselves or their Nation, especially those who have limited resources to engage (i.e., people, funding, in-house expertise).
- One of the lessons learned is that conventional means used by studies to engage specific interest groups – e.g., a formal advisory group -- may not alone be optimal. Instead, engagement should be tailored to fit the interests and priorities of individual Nations and specific goals of the study for advising outcomes, scenarios, and results of the study.
- We are currently surveying and interviewing Indigenous contacts to solicit their individual interests in the study, particularly the topics and activities that are the focus of the study's Technical Working Groups. For example, the Blackfeet Nation of the U.S. has expressed interest in outcomes from the Aquatic Ecosystems Technical Work Group (TWG) and therefore Indigenous reps from Blackfeet will be engaged by interview or focus groups for their input into the outcomes, results, or scenarios from this TWG.
- Overall, the strengths and benefits of Indigenous engagement may be building relationships, trust, legitimacy, and novel avenues or methods of communication which may result in a new model of Indigenous engagement for the study but should also benefit future work. Cultivating enduring relationships with Indigenous Nations in the basin, which transcend the lifespan of the study, is also an important objective of these efforts. This will be particularly critical in the face of a changing climate and increased needs for water in the basin.

### **Chronological Key Points:**

- John Kilpatrick, US AO and Study Co-Chair, and IJC Commissioner Rob Sisson had initial meetings with Blackfeet and Fort Belknap Indian Community Tribal Councils in October and November 2021 (respectively) to provide an overview of the study, and email and phone conversations began between the Kainai Nation and IJC staff in November 2021.
- The study's Indigenous engagement team began meeting in November/December 2021 (Carole Smith, IJC; Diana Moczula, IJC; Norman Barth, IJC; Avni Solanki, IJC; Sheree Watson, USGS)
- Indigenous representatives from the Blackfeet, Kainai, and Fort Belknap Nations were appointed to the Government Forum in February 2022 and first meetings were in May 2022.

- Indigenous Nations of the St. Mary & Milk River basin contact list created (38 Indigenous Council Leaders and water resource managers) in Fall 2022 and emails and the SMMRS overview/fact sheet was shared into early 2022 with all contacts. Key study milestones (initial media release; public comment period for workplan; study webinar) have been routinely communicated to this list.
- Greater than 30 contacts from all 14 Indigenous Nations were invited to the Information Session held June 2022. Eighteen Indigenous representatives attended the session from 9 different Indigenous communities.
- Four Indigenous advisors are participating in 4 Technical Working Groups (TWGs) including Climate and Hydrology, Aquatic Ecosystems, and Socio-Economic.

## 5. Workplan

A major activity and accomplishment of the Board in the past year was the preparation of a detailed workplan describing how the Board will conduct the study. The workplan was provided to the IJC on June 1, 2022 and the Board received comments from IJC on June 24, 2022. These comments were addressed by the Board and a final version was provided to the IJC on July 7, 2022 (document dated 062922). The workplan was made available for public comment from July 28 to August 29, 2022. Five comments were received, none of which required changes to the workplan. All of these comments have been responded to in writing by the Board with letters to the commentors. The workplan was also provided to the Independent Review Group, established by the IJC for this study, for their review. The IRG provided the Board comments on the workplan on August 30, 2022. The Board identified 18 distinct comments from the IRG that it has logged and for which it has drafted a response. The Board’s response has been provided to the IJC Engineering Liaisons for the Study Board for their review. Most of the comments from the IRG asked for details that will be spelled out in future versions of the workplan, but a few were beyond the scope of the study.

## 6. Technical Tasks and Working Groups

As described in the Study Workplan, six TWGs have been established to provide the needed technical studies for the study. Each TWG has Co-Chairs, members, advisors, and observers. The Co-Chairs for each TWG are listed in Table 3.

<b>Technical Working Group</b>	<b>Co-Chair</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Climate and Hydrology	Anil Gupta	Alberta Env. and Parks
	Kathy Chase	USGS
Infrastructure Options	Paul Elser	Alberta Env. and Parks
	Chris Gomer	U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Water Apportionment and Administrative Options	Carmen de la Chevrotière	Alberta Env. and Parks
	Paul Azevedo	Montana Dept. of Nat. Res. and Conservation
Water Management Modeling	Tom Tang	Alberta Env. and Parks

	Larry Dolan	Montana Dept. of Nat. Res. and Conservation (retired)
Socio-Economic Analysis	Bob Halliday	ECCC (retired)
	Susan Gilbertz	Montana State Univ. Billings
Aquatic Ecosystems	Nancy Glozier	ECCC
	Clint Muhlfeld	USGS

Table 3. Technical Working Groups and Co-Chairs for the ISMMRSB.

The TWGs are comprised of scientists and engineers from several Provincial, State, and Federal Agencies, Indigenous members, and consultants. The Board has drafted a list of questions for each TWG to be addressed by their studies. Each TWG has developed its own workplan and associated budget. The workplan includes tables with specific tasks tied to a results-based management framework for the study.

The work of the TWGs is being overseen and guided by the Options Formulation and Evaluation Group led by the Alternate Co-Chairs for the study, Malcolm Conly for Canada and Joanna Thamke for the US, aided by the Technical Leads for the study, Bruce Davison (ECCC) and Cheryl Miller (USGS).

In addition to the work assignments to the TWGs established for the study, the Accredited Officers have also asked their long-standing St. Mary – Milk Rivers Technical Working Group to help out the study by providing historical and background information that they can more easily compile than the Board’s TWGs.

## Budget and Timelines

A general budget and timelines were provided in the Study workplan. The Study Managers have worked with the IJC Engineering Liaison to establish a tracking mechanism for study funding and expenditures. Spending is being tracked for both the Canadian and US sides through a joint workbook, which is periodically visited and discussed by the Study Managers. Further discussion of the study budget and spending with the Board occurs bi-weekly as a standing agenda item during each Study Board meeting. To date, little funding has been spent.

The study budget will be updated with more details in a few months when the TWGs provide additional information to the Board on their specific needs for funding and anticipated timelines. The Study Managers and Co-Chairs will assemble all this information into an updated overall budget and Gantt chart for the study. These details will be included in the next version of the study workplan to be prepared in late fall 2022 or early winter 2023.

## Notable Accomplishments

### 1. Assembling the Team

Working with IJC staff and with the aid of the Commission, the Board has managed to fulfill, with one or two exceptions, all the critical roles described in the workplan, including the advisory groups, with exception noted above. The study has assigned the technical tasks of the study to six Technical Working Groups (TWGs) and also asked the Accredited Officer's St. Mary – Milk Rivers Technical Working Group to help provide background and historical information. Each of the TWGs have Co-Chairs, members, advisors, and observers identified and they have begun planning and conducting their work under the oversight of the study's two Technical Leads, Bruce Davison (ECCC) for Canada and Cheryl Miller (USGS) for the US under the guidance of the Options Formulation and Evaluation Group which includes the Alternate Study Co-Chairs. As evidenced by our ability to tap the best and brightest in both countries to participate in the TWGs, the study is broadly supported by governments and the public in both countries. The Board will be holding a meeting of the TWG Co-Chairs in Calgary October 18-20, 2022 to help coordinate the efforts of the TWGs and give the Board a chance to interact with the TWG Co-Chairs. We hope soon to have finalized workplan and budget requests from each TWG to compile into a much more detailed workplan for the overall study.

## **2. Educating and Equipping the Team**

The Study Board and many of the members of the various groups involved in the study were selected because of their expertise and experience with similar issues in other places. Their abilities and experience hold huge promise for the success of the study, however, for their skills to be applied, it's necessary to ensure the complex history and realities of water apportionment in these watersheds is well understood. We have made great strides in getting team members up to speed, but there is still more work to be done in this area and it must be done carefully, so as to maximize the potential for the teams to work in an unbiased fashion on the study, to address the longstanding issues relating to water apportionment in these watersheds in innovative ways.

## **3. Public Engagement**

The Board has made a substantial start on public engagement with the formation of the PAG and in-person visits in the basins with local stakeholders in both countries, including individual irrigators. The Board was also able to make its workplan available for public comment and provide a webinar describing it. The Board has responded to the public comments received on the workplan. We have also planned for two important public meetings in late October.

## **4. Indigenous Engagement**

Indigenous engagement related to the study began early (before the Board was appointed) and has been robust and energetic, thanks to the efforts of our Indigenous Engagement Leads and IJC staff. We still don't have quite the level of interest and participation in the study from Indigenous Nations and peoples as we might like, but the team is working hard to ensure success



here. Some of this may be related to the limited capacity (available staff) of Indigenous Nations to engage, and/or significant demand on certain individuals' time for other important efforts.

We have nearly completed forming the IAG and we're confident we'll get there soon. The Board feels it's important to get the right people engaged in the IAG and that's just taking some time.

We're pleased the Board had the opportunity to meet with Fort Belknap Indian Community leaders and tour their tribal college and associated Water Center this past summer.

## 5. Data Management

Under the leadership of the study's Technical Leads, a team has been formed to establish a data management policy needed to manage the various data and models being developed by the TWGs to ensure that is available for use by all the TWGs and its preserved and available to the public and possibly the AOs at the end of the study. This effort is well underway and will provide the needed plans and structures at a critical point in the beginning of the TWG's work.

### Summary of Emerging Issues/Challenges

The primary challenge with the effort so far has been identifying the right participants in the Technical Working Groups and the availability of those selected to help out. We've mostly worked through those issues.

A challenge going forward will be keeping the various Technical Working Groups on track to accomplish the work of the Board with minimal overlap and no gaps. However, we feel that the oversight of the OFEG, will ensure priorities and projects remain on track.

The budget and timelines for the study are tight. Detailed and active study management will be required to meet timelines and stay within budget.

A final challenge will be continuing to educate the public and stakeholders concerning the complexities of water apportionment in these watersheds and the options being explored by the Board to add flexibility and resilience in the face of these complexities and climate change. Again, we feel the structure of our engagement groups, and the study itself will lead to success in this area.

### Next Steps

With the workplan for the study written, and most of the moving parts of the study built and in motion, the next steps for the study come down to following through with the plans that have been made, monitoring progress, and providing information to advisory groups, the public, and Indigenous Peoples and receiving feedback for them as the study progresses. A few specific activities along those lines are described below.

## 1. Technical meetings

- TWGs have been formed, developed draft workplans, and are working on gathering the background/foundational information needed to do their work. A significant concern is the need to coordinate their efforts. To help with coordination and get the TWGs more plugged into the overall study effort, the Board is holding a meeting with all TWG Co-Chairs in Calgary in October, which will also be attended by Board members.
- The Options Formulation and Evaluation Groups and the Technical Leads are also frequently meeting with TWG Co-Chairs and members to ensure good coordination between TWGs and good alignment of TWG efforts with the goals/needs of the study.
- TWGs will meet regularly to accomplish their work and a Board member will be assigned to attend and observe the meetings of each TWG to increase information exchange between TWGs and the Board,

## 2. Engagement

- Indigenous Engagement
  - The Indigenous Engagement Leads will continue to work toward finalizing the membership of the IAG.
  - The Board will continue to seek Indigenous members or observers for each TWG to serve as resources to the TWGs and conduits of information back to Indigenous Nations.
  - The Board is also interested in promoting the potential participation of Indigenous students from tribal colleges in the technical studies being conducted by the TWGs
- Public Engagement
  - As mentioned previously, another PAG meeting is planned in October.
  - The Board is also planning in-person Town Hall meetings in Milk River, AB and Shelby, MT in Oct. 2022.
  - The Board will likely plan additional in-person Town Halls in the spring or summer of 2023.

## 3. Information Sharing

- The Board is currently getting training from IJC staff on maintaining its own Web page. Once trained, the Board will begin posting minutes/notes from all Board meetings and a host of other study-related documents on the Board's IJC-hosted Web page.

## 4. Workplan Revision



- In late fall 2022 or early winter 2023, the Board expects to receive detailed workplans from each TWG with more details on how specifically they will accomplish their work, including what approaches/methods/models will be used, who'll do the work, and the planned costs and timelines of the work.
- Upon receipt of more detailed workplans from each TWG, the Board will take the opportunity to update and enhance the overall study workplan to include many of these details as well as address many of the additions suggested by the IRG during their recent review of the current workplan.

## Issues Requiring IJC direction

None at this time.