

*Draft Minutes for Approval January 2020 Teleconference*

Minutes  
Water North Coalition (WNC)  
Thursday, October 3, 2019  
Grande Prairie, AB

**Attendees**

Bob Marshall – County of Grande Prairie  
Janice Reyda – M.D. of Peace  
Grant Dixon – Advanced Technology Applications (ATAP)  
Dan Rites - Alberta Water and Wastewater Operators Association (AWWOA)  
Adam Norris – Mighty Peace Watershed Alliance  
Antoine Rempp – Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo  
Willis Fitzsimmons – Saddle Hills County  
Murray Kerik – M.D. of Lesser Slave River  
Ian Willier – Big Lakes County  
Duane Lay – City of Cold Lake  
Bob Buckle - City of Cold Lake  
Cal Mosher – Town of Beaverlodge  
Andy Trudeau – M.D. of Smoky River  
Richard Simard – Big Lakes County  
Travis Johnson – Athabasca County  
Robin Guild – M.D. of Opportunity  
Corinna Williams – Northern Sunrise County  
Sterling Johnson – Lac La Biche County  
Jason Stedman – Lac La Biche County  
Khalil Shaikh – Lac La Biche County  
Nicole Obee – Aquatera  
Tamara Wuttunee - Aquatera  
Randy Dupuis – Town of Peace River  
Dana Langer – Town of Peace River  
Albert Poetker – Birch Hills County  
Taylor Rudrum – GSWT Water and Environmental Inc.  
Anna Underwood – Town of Wembley  
Wally Olorenshaw – Town of Rainbow Lake  
Colleen Sklapsky – Town of Grimshaw  
Keith Straub – Town of High Level  
Vern Lymburner – Town of Valleyview  
Chris Turnmire – Town of Wembley  
Kate Potter – Town of Sexsmith

**Administration**

Cody Beirsto, NADC  
Melonie Doucette, NADC Senior Northern Development Officer  
Sheila Sikora, NADC Research Officer

**Presenter**

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Kristen Andersen – Associated Engineering

### **Welcome, Introductions, and Housekeeping:**

Chair Bob Marshall called the meeting to order at 10:02am and introduced Jeff Pieper, Chief Financial Officer of Aquatera who delivered greetings.

Grande Prairie MLA Tracy Allard delivered greetings at 10:04am. MLA Allard stated that the Red Tape reduction committee was relevant to the Water North Coalition, as water rights emerge frequently. She added that there could be more efficiencies with regard to approvals.

### **Review and Adoption of Previous Meeting Minutes and Agenda**

#### **Adoption of Minutes of Birch Hills County, July 25, 2019 meeting**

Moved by Corinna Williams of Northern Sunrise County that the minutes be accepted at 10:05am.

**MOTION CARRIED**

#### **Adoption of the Agenda**

Moved by Janice Reyda of the M.D. of Peace to accept the agenda as presented at 10:06am.

**MOTION CARRIED**

### **Roundtable Introductions**

Bob Marshall asked members at 10:07am to introduce themselves and to give an update on anything new going on in their communities with respect to water and wastewater.

Corinna Williams, Northern Sunrise County – The inter-municipal collaboration framework between Peace River and Northern Sunrise County may result in training water operators in both municipalities for emergency situations.

Taylor Rudrum, GSWT Water and Environmental Inc. – Working on the 60-kilometer water line from Peace River to Dixonville.

Cal Mosher, Town of Beaverlodge – The water plant in Beaverlodge is working well.

Chris Turnmire, Town of Wembley – After 10 years, the Town finally has a regional water line. The tap was turned on August 1.

Dan Rites, Association of Water and Wastewater Operators – The Water Week conference, a must-attend for operators, is in November. AWWOA heard a special presentation from government on water and lead protection (new guidelines).

Antoine Rempp, Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo – There is a hope to see funds for water projects.

Willis Fitzsimmons, Saddle Hills County – The water treatment plant contract in Savanna has been delayed due to weather.

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Ian Willier, Big Lakes County – The County is commissioning a level three facility. The County also took over some water co-ops. There has been a 20% increase in the County's customer base.

Keith Straub, Town of High Level – The Town is completing a tender for a regional water line.

Grant Dixon, Advanced Technology Applications – The Western Canada Water conference in September was successful, and there were good papers.

Tamara Wuttunee, Aquatera – Aquatera gave a tour to members the previous night. If anyone is interested in receiving a tour, let her know.

Vern Lymburner, Town of Valleyview – Water was not a problem this summer. With regard to infrastructure, there were lines and leaks bursting old infrastructure.

Cherie Friesen, Northern Lakes College – No new programming. The College is exploring new delivery and scheduling options.

Travaiz Johnson, Athabasca County – The creek is full. The County is making plans for spring.

Murray Kerik, M.D. of Lesser Slave River – The M.D. worked with the Town of Slave Lake regarding the raw water line. The pressure increased and there was a blow up in the plant. There have been line and plant issues. He is not sure when the issue will be resolved.

Colleen Sklapsky, Town of Grimshaw – The Town worked on a big project with Taylor Rudrum of GSWT Water and Environmental Inc. The project has been finished and the Town is waiting to pave.

Jason Stedman, Lac La Biche County – The County is working on cast iron pipe replacement.

Bob Buckle, City of Cold Lake – The large regional water line from Cold Lake to Bonnyville is 50% complete. Water treatment will double in size.

Janice Reyda, M.D. of Peace – The M.D. is working with the Grimshaw Gravel Aquifer Advisory Association. The M.D. is assisting with implementing the source water protection plan.

Kate Potter, Town of Sexsmith – The Town is about to approve a 10 year plan with Aquatera.

Bob Marshall, County of Grande Prairie – With regard to a lift station in Clairmont, the County is waiting on a grant from the federal government/Water for Life. It is hoped a response will be received sooner rather than later.

Wally Olorenshaw, Town of Rainbow Lake – The Town has completed water meters. The Town is working on main valves and has dredged two lagoon cells.

### **Business arising from previous minutes**

#### **Review of Action List**

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Melanie Doucette of the NADC reviewed the action list:

Under Ongoing items:

- Follow-up with Tanya Hunter with regard to the AEP Advisory Committee. This matter will be discussed in more depth shortly.
- WNC promotional video – The voice-over has been completed, but there is no access to the software to download the video. Until the video with Corinna's voice-over is uploaded, the video with Sheila's voice will remain on the NADC website and WNC Facebook page.
- Follow up with Ministry of Health and Environment and Parks on the status of the bacteriological testing results – contact has been made with Alberta Health but there may be some budget limitations with regard to travel. NADC will follow-up with Alberta Health in the new year.
- Social Media – please like and share the WNC Facebook page and Twitter account.

Under New items:

- New operator training models from Alberta Environment and Parks – Tanya Hunter is the contact for this matter, which will be discussed in more depth later in the meeting.

### **Update on Certification Advisory Committee Letter to AEP**

Bob Marshall stated the letter regarding the WNC position on the Certification Advisory Committee was sent to Alberta Environment and Parks. No further communication has been received. Bob Marshall attended the AFPA conference and spoke with the Deputy Minister of Alberta Environment and Parks. The Deputy Minister stated that the department is reviewing boards and committees. The Deputy Minister could not recall whether the committee will be restructured or not. The Deputy Minister stated she would follow up to provide an answer to the Coalition.

### **Operator Attendance Guidelines Certification Letter**

Bob Marshall stated the operator attendance guidelines certification letter was sent to Tanya Hunter of Alberta Environment and Parks. Tanya has indicated that the Advisory Committee is meeting on October 21 and the matter will be brought forward at that time.

### **New Business and Updates**

#### **Update on Information from Tanya Hunter (AEP) on New Operator Training Models**

Bob Marshall stated that Tanya Hunter had been emailed about the upcoming change for operators to challenge the four Level one exams without the requisite hours of experience. Tanya Hunter indicated that the department is still finalizing the communications for it. January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020 is the target date for these changes. A response will be brought back to the coalition when it is received. It is hoped there will be more information on this matter before the next meeting in January.

Dan Rites pointed out that the operator won't be certified with this process. He stated, however, that municipalities hoping to hire these operators would see that they are committed and they took the time to write. The operators just need hours. Cherie Friesen indicated that people need flexibility when they take the exams (online) before getting their experience. Murray Kerik asked why a certification could

not be conducted in the north. Cherie Friesen stated that Northern Lakes College is improving the testing locally. She noted that the exams have to be proctored in regional colleges such as Portage and Grande Prairie Regional College.

### **WNC Recruitment Update**

Bob Marshall welcomed Antoine Rempp, the new WNC representative from the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. Bob also mentioned that the County of Northern Lights has appointed its utilities supervisor.

### **Social Media**

Bob Marshall stated that the communications committee met and the process document was updated to reflect content that does/does not require approval from the committee. It is hoped that this document will speed up the process.

### **Presentation: Kristen Andersen, Associated Engineering**

Kristen Andersen's presentation illustrated how soil bioengineering methods can provide slope stability and repair soil erosion (toe staking, live staking, wattle fencing). She described options for wetland replacement (i.e. in lieu fee program) and how to calculate the value of replacement areas. Kristen also stressed how building resilience in a watershed protects source water.

### **Q&A:**

Question: What about grant funding? Which website can we find it or which department?

Answer: The Alberta Community Resilience Project, Watershed Restoration and Resilience Program, Fish and Wildlife Habitat Restoration (fines go toward wetland restoration), and the Environment Canada Climate Change website are possibilities. Associated Engineering also runs bioengineering workshops for municipalities and organizations.

Question: What about artificial or floating wetlands?

Answer: They provide a good function. Floating wetlands are a medium for plants to be established. She is looking for as much variability and structure in wetlands.

Question: What about storm water ponds and grass for them – would this be inconsistent with planning? What about trying to control flooding and water/volume of flow?

Answer: The guideline provides advice. The December 2018 directives state that credit can be given for a project that impacted wetlands. The system allows wetlands along storm water ponds and boundaries. There are incentives for developers to do so. The features will provide more functions to slowing down water.

Question: Are developers working with planners on this matter?

Answer: There is more work to be done. The incentive is there. The guideline offers key features to be considered. Research is needed to support development and education.

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Question: What about wetlands classification? Farmers putting wetlands back are an exception to the rule. There is a need to give farmers an incentive to do this, and the incentive needs to be long term.

Answer: The classification is limited for growers. There is also the ALUS program to help. A lot more needs to be done to be efficient.

Question: There is a concern about the province downloading costs to municipalities – to pay farmers to cut trees? Is that how it is going to work?

Answer: Much has not been fleshed out. She would be happy to pass this concern on with the people she is working with.

Question/Comment: The Agriculture Service Boards – it would be important to be working with the right people.

Question: What about working with the provincial and federal governments on environmental permitting?

Answer: Permitting requirements are reduced with bioengineering approaches. There is no need to get permission from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans – as it would be considered restoration. With regard to the Water Act, there is a need to get approvals. Three quarters of the Water Act requires approvals. When a reviewer loves a project, it could help with approvals. Timelines and construction costs could be reduced.

Question: What about private lands? What about homes that are impacted by slope stabilization? When working with the landowner, is there a need for permitting?

Answer: Municipal by-laws would come into play, as would landowner permission.

Question: Do you communicate with other watershed groups?

Answer: Yes, we communicate with them and encourage planning process. We do share information and will continue to do so.

### **Subcommittee Updates**

Before the subcommittees began their working group meetings, Bob Marshall stated that having co/vice-chairs for subcommittees should be considered. Expectations of the co/vice-chair include: chairing at least one teleconference between the face-to-face meetings, meeting with the Coalition chair and other subcommittee co/vice-chairs 1-2 weeks before the face-to-face meeting via teleconference, and reporting to the working group meeting during the face-to-face meetings.

### **Education and Awareness**

The subcommittee discussed using others' templates for deriving the cost of water. The template would be technical – fill in as you go. The subcommittee also suggested using a video similar to the one that the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo made for recruiting people to work as water/wastewater operators in the community. There was a question of whether to utilize water operators to teach children in schools. There was also a suggestion to put information about water conservation and water operators in publications that are prevalent in restaurants and common areas (i.e., Coffee Time). With regard to upcoming presenters, focus on regional water questions (i.e., how to extend water to other places), costs, and new technologies for repairing lines.

### **Recruitment, Training, and Retention**

The subcommittee needs to work with Alberta Environment and Parks on the map overlay as not all operators are listed on the Western Canada Water publication. There is a need to clarify whether the names of operators are needed on the map as including them may be a FOIP issue. The subcommittee is looking for new groups for the Coalition to join on social media. With regard to peer cross training, the subcommittee hopes to hear back from Tanya. AWWOA has many career packages for high school students to help with marketing water/wastewater operator careers. The materials could be revised to have a northern feel. The letter to municipalities regarding the sharing of wastewater operators has not yet been drafted. There is not much in terms of funding opportunities for students with regard to water/wastewater operator positions. Perhaps this gap in funding could be brought to the advocacy committee. Alberta Environment and Parks released their strategic plan, outlining seven key points. One of them requires that operators attain discipline-specific training within two years. The standard first aid training is not enough to attain CEUS for re-certification. The training needs to be specific. This point may have implications for smaller communities. The subcommittee recommends a response to this approach before January 2020.

### **Advocacy**

Subcommittee chair Bob Buckle will contact Fred Wiebe with regard to the issue of diversion licenses. The letter regarding the clarification of policy around inter-basin water transfers was sent to Alberta Environment and Parks about a month ago. There has not yet been a response. The City of Cold Lake will follow-up in a few weeks. The resolution for stable, reliable funding will be drafted by the City of Cold Lake. The aim is to review it in the new year. It will be presented to RMA and AUMA in 2020. The subcommittee also suggested that the Coalition lobby for more commitment from government representatives from Alberta Environment and Parks and Alberta Transportation to attend quarterly WNC meetings. Having the representatives attend will add credibility to the group and may sway municipalities who are wavering on whether to join the Coalition. If councils do not perceive WNC as effective, how does the Coalition communicate such effectiveness? There was a question about whether the Coalition is on track with regard to priorities. There was a suggestion to wait until the budget is tabled to approach government representatives and re-examine priorities.

### **Next Meeting**

#### **Future agenda topics, upcoming presentations, and potential exhibitions discussion**

Bob Marshall requested that someone from the floor be available to chair WNC meetings in the event the WNC Chair or Vice-Chair are unable to attend a WNC meeting. NADC is unable to chair meetings.

Moved by Bob Buckle of the City of Cold Lake at 2:21pm that there be an alternate in attendance to chair WNC meetings if the Vice-Chair or Chair is not in attendance. Keith Straub of the Town of High Level seconded the motion.

**MOTION CARRIED**

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Dan Rites indicated that presentation topics often emerge during Water Week. Another suggestion was to consider issues and challenges communities are facing, and to bring those forward as presentation topics. Members are encouraged to go back to their municipalities and discuss ideas for presenters.

Bob Marshall thanked Aquatera for doing much of the exhibiting for the Coalition. Members are encouraged to help with staffing the booths at events. A key messages document has been created and NADC can send members WNC materials. Members are encouraged to inform NADC of local events they may be attending.

### **Location and date of future meetings**

There was discussion about the possibility of having a teleconference for the January meeting instead of a face-to-face meeting due to weather challenges. The option to do so could be followed up with a survey. There was a concern that technology may not accommodate a big group, and that teleconferences may be problematic. The teleconference would consist mainly of updates and would last approximately half hour to 45 minutes. There was a suggestion to try a teleconference in January.

Moved by Corinna Williams of Northern Sunrise County that the January meeting will be held by teleconference at 2:33 pm.

**MOTION CARRIED**

Bob Marshall stated that NADC Council member Cody Beirsto had suggested that WNC have a meeting to coincide with the Growing the North Conference as Council meets at that time.

### **Adjournment**

Moved by Cal Mosher of the Town of Beaverlodge to adjourn the meeting at 2:38pm.

**MOTION CARRIED**