



The Board's Vision: A healthy and diverse aquatic ecosystem for the benefit of present and future generations.

Mackenzie River Basin Board Secretariat

Mackenzie River Basin Board Meeting No. 66

November 25, 2020; 9:00 to 12:00 PST; 10:00 to 13:00 MST; 11:00 to 14:00 CST

Attendees

Nadine Stiller (chair)	Government Member	ECCC
Nicholas Mitchell	Alternate Member	CIRNAC
Carmen de la Chevrotière	Alternate Member	Alberta
Andrew Wilson	Government Member	Alberta
Corrine Porter	Indigenous Member	Yukon
Ted Zimmerman	Government Member	British Columbia
John Fahlman	Government Member	Saskatchewan
Jonah Mitchell	Government Member	PCA
Heather Jirousek	Government Member	Yukon
Chief Cheezie	Indigenous Member	Alberta
Leon Andrew	Indigenous Member	Northwest Territories
Vice Chief Tsannie (Nov 26)	Indigenous Member	Saskatchewan
Nathen Richea	Alternate Member	Northwest Territories
Emma Seward	Alternate Member	Yukon

Secretariat

Paula Siwik	Executive Director	ECCC
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Guests

Mike Renouf	ECCC
Becky Kostka	Alberta
Meghan Beveridge	Northwest Territories
Bradley Summerfield (Nov 25)	ECCC
Brenda Parlee (Nov 25)	University of Alberta
Al Pietroniro (Nov 25)	ECCC
Sharon Reedyk (Nov 26)	ECCC
Lieserl Woods (Nov 26)	ECCC

66.1 Welcome

- Motion to approve the agenda for Nov 25 and 26. (J Fahlman, T Zimmerman, passed)

66.2 Membership (Information; Goal 9)

- No change in membership.

66.3 Minutes of Meeting #65 (Goal 9)

- Meeting 65 minutes have been circulated. Will seek approval of meeting 65 and 66 minutes at the fall meeting.

66.4 SOAER Update (information; Goal 1 and 7) B. Summerfield

- SOAER contract is in last few months (end date of March 2021).
- B. Summerfield presented a summary of the work done over the summer, and some recent decisions and discussion topics from the November 17 meeting.
- B. Summerfield flagged that the MRBB will be asked to do a final review and approve the website in 2021. There are plans for a reflection and evaluation exercise before Phase 2, and committee members suggested one or more workshops to present and discuss the SOAER with interested parties. The JSC would like to enhance some of the IK knowledge aspects.
- C. Porter shared some feedback from the JSC. She noted that committee members are surprised at the level of oversight and effort that has been required to date. She acknowledged that the SOAER is something new, but there has been a lot of work and time put in by committee members to get to this point.
- The committee is working to ensure the consultants stay focussed. The MRBB is building something substantial.
- The staging site will be shared with members.
- N. Stiller provided the history on the SOAER and on the work to braid and put together something unique to the MRBB for new members.

66.5 Water Flow in the Mackenzie River Basin (Goal 4) A. Pietroniro

- Dr. Alain Pietroniro, Executive Director of Canada's National Hydrological Service (NHS), gave a presentation on the modernization of NHS stations and infrastructure, Mackenzie River Basin specific work on modelling and flow prediction, and water levels and flow in the Mackenzie River Basin in 2020.
- Models were used to determine the cause of high water levels on Great Slave Lake. Data suggests that increased precipitation and flows from Peace, Athabasca River, and Lake Athabasca-PAD sub-basins along with increased precipitation in the region around Great Slave Lake resulted in higher inflow and that led to high water levels.
- The NHS, in partnership with the Government of Northwest Territories, is developing a water level dashboard, similar to one already online for Lake Ontario, for Great Slave Lake.
- The results of the models suggest that water release by Bennet Dam in 2020 impacted Great Slave Lake water levels by less than 1 cm.
- A. Pietroniro flagged concerns around the potential large scale impacts of climate change and recommended that an adaptive management approach, similar to that used in the Great Lakes, be considered in the Mackenzie River Basin.
- Great Slave Lake is a slow moving system and it could take a while for lake levels to lower. It will depend on climatic conditions. Better bathymetry data would support the Great Slave Lake outflow model.
- Chief Cheezie: Was the sediment plume in Great Slave Lake dangerous to people or aquatic organisms?
- N. Richea: NWT was out monitoring, a large part is natural, but we will not be able to definitively answer the question until the data comes in from that effort.
- *Update: the GNWT published two news releases (September 2020 and January 2021) about water quality associated with the plume.*

66.6 Tracking Change Update (Information; Goal 5) B. Parlee

- B. Parlee shared an update on the Tracking Change project.
- This is the final year of the 6-year project. The project did get a one-year extension and hopes to host a Knowledge Symposium in 2021. The extension did not come with extra money, simply one extra year to spend the money.
- Three students have been working to translate the results of Tracking Change into school curriculum with the goal of mobilizing the outcomes of Tracking Change into communities. The work has progressed and will be piloted.
- *Update: curriculum is available on the updated Tracking Change website*
- Legacy of Tracking Change: Finances are required to maintain legacy. Possible options include a) maintain the website and revise to ensure access (\$10,000), b) translate the outcomes of Tracking Change to the SOAER (\$50,000 for salary support to edit and translate), c) development of a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC;\$150,000 for development).
- L. Andrew: Indigenous Knowledge holders and scientists working together in time of change is a positive development. Could contribute to helping other nations.
- This will be discussed further with board members.
- Chief Cheezie: suggest the curriculum include a focus on Indigenous Knowledge including water use and travel, cultural importance, and discussions around impacts of industrialization on water.

66.7 Agency Reports and Roundtable (Information; Goal 7)

- N. Stiller shared context for this agenda item for the benefit of newer members. Time is put aside once a year to share written reports or verbal updates. Written reports are posted on the public side of the MRBB website in the “Resources” section.

Yukon

- C. Porter noted that Covid has affected the ability to get work done. Data loggers have been deployed to collect information. Working on a case study with the IISD (International Institute for Sustainable Development) assessing the benefits of Community Based Monitoring programs for communities and agencies.
- H Jirousek shared that Yukon government will start consultation on two bilateral water management agreements; one agreement will update the YK-NWT 2002 agreement, and the second develops an agreement with NWT for a small section of the Liard.
- Water quality and effluent guidelines for quartz mines are in development. The proposed guidelines are currently out for public feedback.
- Water Strategy: Groundwater emerged as a priority. Considering further work into ground water legislation. Have undertaken a Liard groundwater assessment and there are three new hydrometric stations in the Peel basin as part of the Peel Regional Land Use Plan implementation.
- Information on Yukon Water.ca is now on Yukon.ca. New information includes a water well registry map.

Northwest Territories

- L. Andrew observed that last summer was unusual with high water levels. There was a lot of debris and sediment in the river and changes to the waterways. Many changes in wildlife movements, such as muskox, due to changes in weather. Imperial oil still working on decommissioning that site. Winter roads are being built now.
- M. Beveridge shared that the GNWT is preparing for consultation and engagement on the bilateral agreements mentioned by H. Jirousek.
- GNWT is working on the next annual report for the NWT-AB agreement with colleagues from Alberta and will turn attention to drafting a report with BC in the near future.
- Discussions on bilateral agreements with Saskatchewan have resumed. The next meeting is on December 14, 2020.
- The GNWT is starting work on the next version of the five-year Water Strategy Action Plan and anticipate that it will be a six-month process. The NWT Environmental Audit has been released and includes a strong focus on water
<https://www.enr.gov.nt.ca/en/services/nwt-environmental-audit/2020-nwt-environmental-audit>

British Columbia

- T. Zimmerman will share an agency report once the government is sworn in.
Update: report has been shared and is posted on the MRBB website

Alberta

- Chief Cheezie will prepare an update to share at future meetings. He hopes to have the opportunity to discuss monitoring on the Slave River and data gathering systems, and would appreciate updates on activity and initiatives.
- The community hosted a fish camp this summer and awaiting new monitoring data.
- The Alberta agency report be added to record and that questions could be directed to C. de la Chevrotière or A. Wilson.

Saskatchewan

- The province of Saskatchewan is working on bilateral discussions with the governments of NWT and Alberta. Industrial development in the Saskatchewan region of the basin (mining) has slowed.

CIRNAC

- CIRNAC scientific and IK integrity policy to hold knowledge equally and use for decision making is available online
- The work of the northern contaminants monitoring program may be of interest to members
- Climate change adaptation programming is in development. It will assist northern and Indigenous communities with planning and finding alternative fuel sources, investing in infrastructure, and indigenous climate monitoring funding.

Parks

- J. Mitchell noted that there were high water levels in 2020. Some monitoring work was able to continue this summer and work with the guardians and rangers programs

continues. The Wood Buffalo Action Plan Environmental Flows and Hydrology work is ongoing.

ECCC

- The ECCC agency report contains the usual information about water quality stations (included in past reports) and also summaries on water flows in the basin and water modelling research.

66.8 Action Items (Information / Discussion; Goal 8)

- Story map: N. Stiller identified that the story map, originally shared in June 2019, had not yet been approved.
- C. de la Chevrotière noted that Mackenzie Data Stream only covers quality under the protecting the basin section. Suggested that a link to water quantity data be added.
- Chief Cheezie raised concerns about the timing of the motion and support for board work. A. Wilson and C. de la Chevrotière will follow up with Chief Cheezie to explore funding opportunities and have onboarding discussions.
- *Update: P. Siwik sent a request over email to approve the story map on February 25, 2021. Map was approved and is on the MRBB site.*
- Environmental notification: N. Stiller shared that a student will start in January and will work to pull together all notification systems from across the basin.
- 2019-20 Annual Report: P Siwik will share the penultimate draft for comments. Anticipate that the final version will be approved at the spring 2021 meeting.

Adjourn – June 2 and 3, 2021, Edmonton if in person or virtual

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66.10 Update from the Traditional Knowledge and Strengthening Partnerships Steering Committee (Information and Discussion; Goal 5) P. Siwik

- TKSP members have continued to support the SOAER and attended biweekly JSC meetings for much of the summer and fall. Committee members have put in a lot of time and effort.
- TKSP steering committee as a separate committee May 26, October 1 and November 24, 2020.
- At those meetings, the story map, the SOAER, language that should be used in the SOAER (for example Traditional Knowledge and Indigenous Knowledge), and the importance of place names was discussed. Discussions will continue.
- The TKSP committee suggests that a newsletter that profiles the work of the Board, the Indigenous members and directs folks who are interested to the annual report online be developed. This will be a project for the MRBB student.

66.11 Strategic Planning Session (Goal 9) P. Siwik

- Members continue to support all nine goals

- Support was strongest for Goal 5: Support and facilitate the increased participation of Indigenous Peoples in MRBB activities.
- Members generally supported the recommendations that touch on: Studies and investigations (duty b), Secretariat (duty d, n), Finance (duty l, p, m), By-Laws (duty q) and the Global Recommendations.
- A focus on the themes above will primarily support Goal 9: MRBB affairs are administered effectively.
- Members did not generally support the recommendations associated with the Bilateral Water Management Agreements.
- Members see the SOAER and Indigenous Knowledge as priorities for the Board.
- Members support the majority of the recommendations linked to defining the duties and work of the Secretariat.
- Members support additional clarity around finances and decisions linked to contracts.
- Members ranked global recommendations on Strategic Planning, annual work plans, Board self-assessment, record keeping and an orientation session as high priorities.

Breakout Room Discussions - Key Questions

- Q1: Survey results suggest the Board should add a focus on the Secretariat, enhance work and financial planning/reporting, and maintain a focus on the SOAER and Indigenous Knowledge as priority work. Do you agree?
- Q2: The recommendations of the Strategic and Operational Report review do not capture our successes. What key pieces of work do we need to keep? (Refer to supporting document if required)
- Q3: Survey results suggest certain themes are higher priority. Do you agree with the themes that were identified and, of those, is there one/two theme(s) that should be considered over others for attention? (Refer to supporting document if required)
- Q4: The time and resources dedicated by the Board and Board members/jurisdictions towards advancing the SOAER in recent years is notable. Are members willing/able to maintain that level of commitment?
- Q5: Are there other areas not included in the discussion that you would like to raise?

Summary of small group discussions.

Immediate priorities include:

- Take advantage of M. Renouf's time and his experience to advance some work focussed on the Secretariat and administration.
- Confirm importance of the SOAER and connection to communities in the basin
- Consider data gaps and the importance of turning focus that way in the spring
- Affirm importance and value of Indigenous Knowledge
- Secretariat; defining the role, scope and capacity is a priority
- Plan to draft an interim SP based on the prioritized themes.

Goal 1: Evaluate the health of the whole basin

Goal 2: Investigate matters concerning the ecological health of the whole basin

Goal 3: Advocate for the maintenance and improvement of the ecological health of the whole basin

Goal 4. Educate the public, share information, and learn from others about matters concerning the ecological health of the whole basin

Goal 5. Support and facilitate the increased participation of Aboriginal Peoples in MRBB activities

Goal 6. Encourage the development and implementation of bilateral water management agreements

Goal 7. Ministers, Aboriginal leaders and appropriate staff of jurisdictions are informed of and engaged in MRBB activities

Goal 8. Information, knowledge and research are shared among jurisdictions – written reports

Goal 9. MRBB affairs are administered effectively.