



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. 68

Date: June 2, 2021

9:00 am to 12:30 pm PDST; 10:00 to 1:30 pm MDST; 11:00 to 2:30 CDST

Attendees

Leon Andrew (June 2)	Indigenous Member	Northwest Territories
Corrine Porter	Indigenous Member	Yukon
VC Tsannie	Indigenous Member	Saskatchewan
Jonah Mitchell	Government Member	Parks Canada Agency
Nicholas Mitchell	Alternate Member	CIRNAC
Nadine Stiller	Government Member	ECCC
Patrick Cherneski	Alternate Member	ECCC
Heather Jirousek	Government Member	Yukon
Ted Zimmerman	Government Member	British Columbia
John MacDonald (June 2)	Government Member	Northwest Territories
Nathen Richea	Alternate Member	Northwest Territories
Andrew Wilson	Interim Government Member	Alberta
Carmen de la Chevrotière	Alternate Member	Alberta
John Fahlman	Government Member	Saskatchewan

Secretariat

Paula Siwik MRBB Secretariat

Guests

Bradley Summerfield (June 2)	ECCC
Michael Goffin (June 2)	ECCC
Kelly Munkittrick (June 3)	University of Calgary
Fred Wrona (June 3)	University of Calgary
Brenda Parlee (June 3)	University of Alberta

68.1 Welcome and Agenda

- Motion to approve the agenda for June 2 and 3, 2021. (T. Zimmerman; J. Fahlman; passed)

68.2 Membership (Information) – Goal 9

- Parks Canada Agency staff member has joined the SOAER Committee.

68.3 Minutes of Previous Meetings – (Information/Decision) – Goal 9

- Motion to approve minutes from meeting #65 and meeting #66. (C de la Chevrotière; H Jirousek; passed)

68.4 State of the Aquatic Ecosystem Report (Information/Decision) – Goal 9

- N. Stiller: The MRBB and TKSP committee had been laying the groundwork for this version of the State of the Aquatic Ecosystem Report (SOAER) since 2013. Contract signed to produce this SOAER in May 2019.
- Many hours of work from MRBB members, committee members and MRBB Secretariat to get to this point. The MRBB is very grateful for the information shared in this report.
- Other boards and councils are interested in this product. MRBB and committee members would like to share it.

- B. Summerfield shared a presentation that reviewed the work that culminated in this version of the SOAER, the feedback shared at the small focused SOAER meetings and the plan for the committee to work on a renewal and update cycle for the SOAER.
- Acknowledged the work and commitment of committee members even through COVID.
- Noted that compromise was part of the work. The group was a large committee that included different visions. It was a big project with finite time and resources.

- L. Andrew: The development of the SOAER was a long haul. Interesting and challenging project. The important thing to remember is that people live in the basin and we need to give them information. Things have been changing since 1990. Ice patches in the high mountain disappeared and there have been landslides. Good leaders find a way to move forward.

- VC Tsannie: This was a challenging endeavour and something that has been rarely been done before. Supports the idea of specialized sub-committees for Phase 2 SOAER development. In terms of moving forward, and in light of recent events, what are the calls to action, and how do we build meaningful relationships with Indigenous people in the basin and the lands that Indigenous people occupy. Indigenous knowledges are key in decision-making. How are we closing the gap on inclusion of Traditional and Indigenous knowledges in decisions?
- Meaningful discussions around land and water are developing. Indigenous peoples will be at those tables and involved in those discussions. Partnerships will be developed. Current decisions made by government do not include meaningful discussion and inclusion of Indigenous peoples. Need to be accountability for those decisions.
- Indigenous peoples want to protect the land for future generations. We have to make balanced decisions and consider how to find that balance. Part of that work is to make connections and braid together the work of partnerships.

Encourage members to revisit these ideas and considerations as we move forward.

- Climate Change is a huge threat for the entire basin. Need to continue to strive to fill the data gaps, and work with the peoples throughout the MRB; and improve the presentation and braiding of knowledge. Overall, this SOAER is a good start. The MRBB needs to consider how to make it more meaningful going forward. Continue to come up with solutions together.
- N. Stiller: Thank you for the wise words. Appreciate the shared vision and drive to see this through.
- Members felt that the SOAER would benefit from a final communications review.
- The SOAER is a demonstration on how we can work together and continue to improve.
- The MRBB and committee members should be proud of this impressive work. Appreciate that the concern about references was addressed with the inclusion of the full list on the basin overview page.
- If necessary, MRBB will organize a stand-alone meeting to keep this work on track.
- Proposed launch date of July 15 for the SOAER.
- Motion to notionally approve the launching of the SOAER with the understanding that members will initiate review by communications staff. (J. Mitchell; C Porter; passed)

68.5 Canada Water Agency – Goal 4

- Mr. Mike Goffin, Regional Director General for Ontario Region, gave a presentation on the Canada Water Agency (CWA). Mr. Goffin has been engaged in policy develop and program delivery in areas that include environmental protection, wildlife management, meteorology, water and ecosystem management, intergovernmental affairs and community outreach and engagement. In 2020, Mr. Goffin took on a special assignment as Director General Water Policy within Environment and Climate Change Canada, responsible for creation of the Canada Water Agency.
- Emphasized that this initiative does not intend to change things but asks whether there is there anything a CWA could do to support current work.
- The mandate also includes a focus on “large lakes” which in this context is a term that represents important bodies of water. No decisions on the final mandate of the CWA or when the agency will be created.
- Have engaged with provinces, territories, and national Indigenous groups, and started to engage with provincial and territorial Indigenous organizations. The budget includes \$3.5 million directed toward Indigenous engagement for the next 2 fiscal years.
- This initiative will not encroach on the jurisdiction of others, and will not have legislative or regulatory elements.
- Based on the feedback to date, the team developed a “What we Heard” document that will be shared soon. Themes include reconciliation, regional

considerations and the need to be responsive to regional differences, clarity and coordination around freshwater governance, freshwater coordination, accessibility and usability of freshwater data, and engaging Canadians.

- No timeline for the establishment of the CWA. The agency will be headquartered outside of Ottawa.
- The MRBB is a long-standing co-development board that is breaking new ground in the work to braid Indigenous Knowledge and science in the digital SOAER. The WBNP Action plan has been co-developed with 11 communities. There are good examples in this region of Indigenous participation and co-management.

68.6 Water Quality Task Team (Information) – Goal 7

- The WQTT meets monthly to share information and make progress on mandated work. The WQTT will fund two contracts with support from the AB/NWT bilateral implementation; one contract that will support the development of water quality triggers and objectives, and a second that provides options and advice on data approaches and analysis.
- The committee will reconnect with the TKSP committee in the near future.
- The WQTT intends to draft a letter to ECCC outlining the importance of the ECCC water quality sampling program. This will be shared at the at the fall meeting and, if approved, will be sent from the MRBB to ECCC Science and Technology Branch. A similar letter has been drafted for the PPWB.

68.7 Action Items and Administrative Updates - Goals 8 and 9

- Financial update: Financial forecasts updated as per direction from the May meeting.
- ECCC will initiate the paperwork required for the annual contributions.
- ECCC is embarking on an information management initiative. The timing and scope is still under discussion but may impact MRBB archives.

Mackenzie River Basin Board Meeting No. 68

Date: June 3 2021

9:00 am to 12:30 pm PDST; 10:00 to 1:30 pm MDST; 11:00 to 2:30 CDST

68.8 Welcome

68.9 Traditional Knowledge and Strengthening Partnerships Steering Committee Update – Goal 5

- TKSP members continue to support the SOAER through the Joint Steering Committee and through TKSP specific discussions.
- In May, the TKSP Committee met with members of the AB/NWT BMC Traditional Knowledge Working Group. Members of both groups shared information and identified topics for future discussion. Interest in meeting together again in the future to explore shared interests.

- The TKSP committee reviewed and discussed the Tracking Change proposal. The committee supports the work outlined and recommends that a contract be put in place. The initial contract will include deliverables under items 1, 2 and 4. The contract may be amended to include item 3 at a future time. The Statement of Work and cost will be adjusted to reflect the scope.
- Looking forward, committee members are interested in leading or contributing to an evaluation of the current SOAER, addressing data gaps for the SOAER, and planning for the next SOAER.
- TKSP members plan to draft a newsletter directed to communities in the basin that profiles the work of the Board, the Indigenous Members, and directs people who are interested to the annual report and the SOAER

68.10 Tracking Change (Information and Discussion) – Goal 1 and 5

- B. Parlee: Proposal to better translate Tracking Change for the SOAER included in the meeting package and will be adjusted as mentioned in the TKSP Committee update. Quotes, photos, video and other material will be identified that would fit into the existing structure of the SOAER website.
- Tracking Change Website: journal publications are online at the Tracking Change website. <https://trackingchange.ca/knowledge/publications/>
- Installation in the new Arctic Gallery at the Edmonton Telus World of Science: four youth/elders from the Tracking Change project share insights about social-ecological changes in the basin.
- “Confronting Climate Change on the Big River” (Collaborative project with the Gwich’in Tribal Council and others): mobilizing the modules / curricula produced through Tracking Change as activities for high school students in 11 communities in the Northwest Territories.
- Submission of the New Frontiers in Research Fund Transformation project - \$24 mil over 6 years (focused on biodiversity and Indigenous health-wellbeing www.arramatproject.org)
- Massive Open Online Course (MOOC): The online course on the Mackenzie River Basin, intended to educate a broad public about both ecological and socio-cultural issues in the basin and highlights the role of Indigenous Peoples as stewards, facing a funding gap of \$150 K required for script writing and production.

68.11 Northern Rivers Workshop (Information and Discussion) – Goal 1 and 4

- Dr. Fred Wrona is a Professor and Svare Research Chair in integrated watershed processes at the University of Calgary. His scientific interest and research interests in the Mackenzie River Basin span >30 years assessing the impacts of climate change, resource and industrial development, and the cumulative environmental effects of multiple stressors on river and lake ecosystems.
- Dr. Kelly Munkittrick is the CAIP Research Chair in Ecosystem Health Assessment at the University of Calgary since Dec 2019. Wide variety of work experiences including 11 years as a research scientist with ECCO, 8 years with industry and 17 years at 4 different Universities

- Both were involved with the Northern Rivers Basin Study program in the 1990's. They are here to share initial thinking and planning for an exploration of science and Indigenous Knowledge aquatic indicators that builds upon the results of the Northern Rivers Basin Study.
- This is an opportunity to pull together the people from 25 years ago to look at what was done, what we know now, and bring together a new generation of science and scientists. Build upon past work.
- Considering joint meetings with science and Indigenous Knowledge holders and separate, parallel meetings. Challenge participants to repeat this process in 25 years.
- Currently trying to pull the right people together. Opportunity to highlight the advancements in the basin that have been supported through the MRBB and collaborative work.
- Would like an indication of support from the MRBB.
- This initiative does require funding.
- The MRBB may be able to provide some financial and/or in-kind support but requires a concrete proposal and clear articulation of what is required.

68.12 Interim Strategic Plan and Response to Strategic and Operational Review – Goal 9

- Meeting package includes an interim 2-year strategic plan and a series of supporting documents prepared by Mike Renouf. The supporting documents are shared for review and will be on the agenda for discussion at the fall meeting.
- N. Stiller and P. Siwik shared a presentation that grounded the draft interim strategic plan in the work MRBB members have done to prioritize recommendations from the Strategic and Operational Review and align that work with available resources.
- VC Tsannie: The plan is silent on reconciliation and what the MRBB could be doing to support governments in meeting the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Need to consider this plan in light of the TRC report.
- Indigenous peoples use this land and it is their home. Would like the MRBB to consider a discussion around rights and title to land and water and consider the barriers to Indigenous people, and decisions made on Indigenous land.
- Acknowledge the inherent rights and that they are based in inclusiveness, kindness and passion for the country, and with future generations in mind.
- H. Jirousek introduced the 10 calls to action for natural scientists ([Towards reconciliation: 10 Calls to Action to natural scientists working in Canada \(facetsjournal.com\)](https://www.facetsjournal.com/10.1080/14747480.2015.1052441)). The Yukon government is considering these recommendations and working on a project called First Nations and Water: Support to Enhance Relationships and Understanding of indigenous Ways of Knowing.

- The interim Strategic Plan could start to signal where we go after 2 years. Members could extract value from the SOAER report and look for meaningful ways to apply that knowledge. Need to signal as a board that we want to be more ambitious.
- This is an ambitious plan. The SOAER and the Strategic and Operational Review were a lot of work for the MRBB. The documents articulate the nature of the work ahead of us. There is a risk of tracking what the MRBB cannot do.

68.13 Next Meeting – October 6, 2021 (virtual) and November 3 and 4, 2021 (face to face in Edmonton or virtual; TBD)

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.