



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. 76 Summary

#### Day 1: June 7 2023

#### Virtual meeting

11 am to 2:30 pm CDT, 10 am to 1:30 pm MDT, 9 am to 12:30 pm PDT

#### Attendees

Vice Chief Tsannie	Indigenous Member	Saskatchewan
Thon Phommavong	Government Member	Saskatchewan
Leon Andrew (Day 1)	Indigenous Member	Northwest Territories
Julian Kanigan	Government Member	Northwest Territories
Nadine Stiller	Government Member	ECCC
Amelie Janin	Government Member	Yukon
Nick Mitchell	Government Member	CIRNAC
Ted Zimmerman	Government Member	British Columbia
Laurie Wein	Government Member	Parks Canada
Morna Hussey	Government Member	Alberta

#### Secretariat

P. Siwik	MRBB Executive Director	ECCC
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#### Guests

Merrell-Ann Phare (day 1)	CIER
Veronique Hiriart-Baer (day 1)	DG Freshwater Management ECCC
Corrine Porter (day 1)	Dena Kayeh Institute
Ashley Mahaffey (day 1)	University of Calgary
Kelly Munkittrick (day 1)	University of Calgary
Meghan Beveridge	Government of NWT
Kathryn Lukinuk (day 1)	SPB ECCC
Carter Gorzitza (day 1)	SPB ECCC
Bradley Summerfield (day 1)	SPB ECCC
Sarah Bartnik (day 2)	WQTT Chair ECCC
Tracy Howlett (day 2)	TKSP co-chair

#### **76.1 Welcome and Agenda**

- N. Stiller introduced Dr. Veronique Hiriart-Baer, DG Freshwater Management in the Canada Water Agency. The Freshwater Management group is responsible for the program delivery components of the Canada Water Agency and support the work to establish the agency. D. Wolfish has been appointed Acting Assistant Deputy Minister tasked with establishing the Canada Water Agency.
- Budget 2023 included freshwater commitments. They include:

- \$650 M over ten years, starting in 2023-24, to support monitoring, assessment, and restoration work in the Great Lakes, Lake Winnipeg, Lake of the Woods, St. Lawrence River, Fraser River, Saint John River, Mackenzie River, and Lake Simcoe.
  - \$22.6 million over three years, starting in 2023-24, to support better coordination of efforts to protect fresh water across Canada.
  - \$85.1 million over five years, starting in 2023-24, and \$21 million ongoing thereafter to support the creation of a Canada Water Agency, which will be headquartered in Winnipeg.
- Areas of focus currently include Indigenous relations, freshwater policy, governance, and enabling science and essential data.
  - MRBB members took a moment to say farewell to Corrine Porter. Corrine has been an important part of the MRBB for the past 6 years. She was a MRBB member, and an active member of the Traditional Knowledge and Strengthening Partnerships Committee, the State of the Aquatic Ecosystem Report Committee, and the Steering Committee for the Tracking Change project.

## **76.2 Membership**

- Appointment process for the new YK rep is underway.

## **76.3 Updates on recent MRB initiatives**

State of Environment Workshop – A. Mahaffey and K. Munkittrick

- A. Mahaffey reviewed her thesis work to date. She has reviewed 143 “State Of” reports and assigned those reports to the following categories – Indigenous advised, Indigenous informed and collaborative. The Australia SOE report is an example of a national collaborative, co-developed report.
- The March 2023 workshop was set up to ask about approaches community members feel are best practices when including Indigenous Knowledge Systems in State of Environment reporting.
- Workshop participants recommended the following priorities: Indigenous expert assessments, Case studies, Online opinion surveys, Videos, Pictures, Audio recordings (stories), Indigenous art, Indigenous languages, Plain language summaries, Mapping and Interactive mapping.
- The Northern Rivers Basin Study and oil-sands work will be part of a second workshop to explore approaches for aligning Science and Indigenous Expert Assessments, and the development of Indigenous Expert Assessments of environmental condition.
- The two case studies will provide a platform for discussion and the anticipated outcome is the development of a framework.

### **i. Knowledge Sharing Webinars and MRBB video - K. Lukinuk and C. Gorzitza**

- K. Lukinuk and C. Gorzitza shared the results of the Knowledge Sharing Series and MRBB video which were projects funded with Freshwater funding.
- The freshwater funds covered salary for staff to support these initiatives, as well as contracts with a videographer (video) and a consulting firm (knowledge sharing webinars).

- The 2 webinars focused on 1) Permafrost Thaw, Climate, and Monitoring Change in Flow & Sediment Loads and 2) Basin-Scale Hydrological Modeling
- MRBB 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary video: The video portrays the value and importance of the Mackenzie River Basin and the Board.

#### **76.4 SOAER Committee Update on Roadmap – B. Summerfield**

- B. Summerfield last updated the MRBB in June 2022. MRBB members asked the SOAER committee to produce a 5-Year Roadmap.
- SOAER Committee held an in person meeting in November 2022. Objectives of the meeting were 1) for the SOAER Committee to reflect, reconnect and reorient, 2) to collect input to contribute to a Vision for the SOAER, and 3) to gather information required to complete a detailed 5-year SOAER Roadmap.
- SOAER Committee members agreed to:
  - A renewed focus on Indigenous knowledge, through stories and oral knowledge – centered in the online reporting.
  - Emphasis on local priorities and concerns; supports indicator assessment
  - Explore opportunities to include stories in Indigenous languages
  - Assess websites to identify opportunities to increase interactivity and support accessibility of content, improve maps (including their role on the website), and enhance information organization and stewardship (dating, Intellectual Property, tagging, and archival adjustments)
  - Commit to continuously improve grounding in Reconciliation through education, and practice.
- Next steps include development of a process for the committee to plan, prepare, and propose projects from the 5-Year Roadmap to MRBB members, launch a MS Teams for Committee communication and looking into options for project management software.

#### **76.5 Collaborative Leadership Initiative – M.A. Phare, Center for Indigenous Environmental Resources (CIER)**

- M.A. Phare shared an overview of the Collaborative Leadership initiative (CLI).
- [Collaborative Leadership Initiative \(CLI\) - yourcier](#)
- CIER has external funding to bring the CLI to different groups and develop it for new contexts.
- CLI follows a phased process: Phase 1: Build a Foundation, Phase 2: Formalize a Commitment, Phase 3: move from Ideas to Action
- Looking to build on the success of the initiative in Manitoba and identify other locations and groups that are interested in participating in this process. Focused on ways to address conflict and look for opportunities at different scales.

**Adjourn Day 1** – Discussion on Strategic Planning (76.6) and the Roundtable (76.8) were moved to Day 2 and Changes to Annual Report (76.7) was deferred to a future meeting.

### **Draft Agenda, Mackenzie River Basin Board Meeting No. 76**

**Day 2: June 8 2023**

**Virtual Meeting**

11 am to 2:30 pm CDT, 10 am to 1:30 pm MDT, 9 am to 12:30 pm PDT

#### **76.9 Welcome**

## 76.10 Approval of Minutes

- i. Meeting #74

## 76.11 TKSP Committee Update – P. Siwik, T. Howlett and TKSP members

- Last update was June 2022. Since then, the TKSP committee has met (virtually) 3 times for regular business, and 1 time specifically in support of the SOAER.
- Focus has been on developing a work plan to direct energy in coming years.
- TKSP Committee members are also members of the SOAER committee and continue to support that work.
- Priority areas of focus include:
  - Develop statement on Reconciliation
  - Develop statement on Indigenous Knowledge
  - Revise TKSP Committee ToR to embed both
  - Revisit information flow with board, membership, specifically alternates, to address capacity and succession
  - Develop 2-page newsletter/bulletin insert for circulation to MRBB members/communities
  - Membership discussions – continue to actively discuss the idea of alternates. Succession and mentoring are very important to our members.

## 76.12 Water Quality Task Team Update – S. Bartnik

WQTT held the first face-to-face meeting on April 18 & 19, 2023

- Roundtable sharing of new items, such as BC's new guidelines for aluminum, zinc, and nickel, & impression from a recent State of Environment reporting workshop held in Calgary
- Group viewing of Ecology North's video [The Permafrost of the Peel Plateau](#)
- Discussions on water quality reporting & State of Aquatic Environment reporting: Differences between a scanning approach for water quality reporting (detecting if a change is happening over time, basin-wide) & an investigative approach (digging into why a trend is happening in a particular system)
- WQTT sees the importance of determining the "story" of each river in the SOAER. Committee members seek to balance both (1) a data-driven narrative in reporting & (2) people-driven narratives that capture a reader's or the public's attention
- WQTT recommends Mann-Kendall or seasonal Mann-Kendall tests (if data shows seasonality) and the trend methods to be used in bilateral assessments.
- Mann-Kendall is a nonparametric statistical approach; uses ranks so replacing censored data with ½ MDLs will have reduced impact.
- Data will be corrected for flow, and have seasonality established (2 seasons).
- Significance value will not be adjusted for multiple comparisons.
- WQTT members now investigating how to apply this approach for all transboundary sites in MRB and how parameters should be treated (flow data availability, seasonality)
- WQTT made progress on defining water quality triggers and looked at water quality triggers and objectives terminology across jurisdictions. Developing that work into a reference paper on terminology and definitions used by jurisdictions.
- Tentative plan for WQTT meet with TKSP jointly in fall 2024 in Yellowknife.
- Q: Is there an opportunity to bring forward actionable tasks for discussion during the Strategic Planning session?

- A: The task team needs more time to develop certain components. May be able to identify actionable tasks in 6 to 8 months.
- Q: Changes in snowpack and permafrost are limiting access to some communities and there are changes to how long the lakes have ice cover. People are concerned. Are you engaging land owners in this work?
- A: The meeting proposed for fall 2024 would hopefully be a joint meeting with the TKSP committee. Advice on when and how to engage local people is one area for discussion.
- A. Janin: Some of the water quality data are collected by Guardians. Those data are important to the water quality picture in the basin. Note that S. Bartnik has done an excellent job as chair.

#### **76.13 Action Items not Addressed Elsewhere in Meeting 75**

- These items were reviewed at the May meeting. The table has been updated to reflect the topics being discussed today.
- P. Siwik will be looking at this table for items that could be part of the Strategic Planning discussion. If there are items that members would like to see considered in September, reach out to the Secretariat so that material can be developed.

#### **76.14 Secretariat – Resource and Workload**

- P. Siwik shared a snap shot of the work of the Secretariat for discussion.
- The SOAER and TKSP committees require someone to act as chair and there is uncertainty around the WQTT chair.
- The MRBB Secretariat is a staff of one that can be augmented as required with determinant staff.
- MRBB Secretariat may need to advise MRBB members on the prospect of success and hold the MRBB back if required.

#### **76.15 Incident Communication**

- Minister Guilbeault and Minister Savage have committed to setting up a working group. Currently on hold because of the Fort Chipewyan evacuation and the fires that are out of control in the area.
- There is a ToR for this working group that has been shared with Indigenous partners.
- There is an active enforcement file connected to the incident and Indigenous Services Canada is responding with wrap around services and extensive water quality monitoring.
- The environmental emergencies program does coordinate with the government of Alberta and are currently doing an internal review.

#### **76.16 Indigenous Alternate Members: Next Steps**

Indigenous members of the MRBB do not currently have alternates.

- A cursory review of past meeting minutes indicates that alternates for Indigenous members attended meetings and were listed in MRBB member directories between 2002 and 2010. By 2014, the member directory no longer includes Indigenous alternate members.
- The Agreement is clear that MRBB members are appointed. The Agreement also states that MRBB members may designate an alternate. It does not state that alternates are appointed.
- Two Indigenous alternate members have been identified and will be engaged in MRBB work going forward.

- The paperwork to compensate Indigenous alternate members is different and it will help the MRBB Secretariat to know well in advance who plans to attend a meeting.

## **76.6 Strategic Planning Session**

- The document to support in-person travel to the fall meeting is included in the meeting package.
- P. Siwik did a review of companies with Standing Offers for facilitation services and considered companies with experience in the environmental field and in the geography of the basin. P. Siwik has drafted a SOW that she will share with candidates after the meeting.
- P. Siwik will prepare a summary of actions MRBB took to support the goals in the 2021-23 Strategic Plan and include that information in the Meeting 77 package.

## **76.17 Finance**

- i. Draft 2023-24 budget
  - There were no concerns with the draft budget but members did note that supporting projects that arise from the SOAR 5-year road map will start to decrease the surplus.

## **76.8 Roundtable updates – information sharing**

- N. Stiller: Budget 2023 was an exciting step forward for the Canada Water Agency. The Prime Minister reiterated key information from the Budget during his trip to Winnipeg at the end of May.
  - The Canada Water Agency Transition Office is currently working on two key additional commitments that were outlined in the Budget:
  - Introducing legislation by the end of 2023 that will establish the Canada Water Agency as a stand-alone agency under the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.
  - Beginning to work on modernizing the *Canada Water Act* to reflect the changing reality of fresh water in Canada, including the impacts of climate change and the important of Indigenous rights.
  - As mentioned in the PM's speech, more details about the mandate and priorities of the Canada Water Agency will be communicated soon.
- VC Tsannie: Looking forward to the Strategic Planning session as it will be good to share information and best practices.
  - Water levels are low, and the fire season started about a month earlier than usual. We need to adjust to the changing environment and adapt. Leave a good legacy for the young people to follow.
- T. Zimmerman: The government of British Columbia has an ambitious water agenda. Advancing a co-developed water policy framework.
  - Work has begun to develop a structure with Indigenous partners for allocation of water funds. The province has invested \$100 million into a secure fund and the returns on this investment would be directed towards water projects. Still working out the details.
  - B.C. is entering a significant drought season. The supply/demand balance does not look good.

- M. Hussey: Focused on identifying a new Indigenous member for the province of Alberta. A new Minister for Environment and Protected Areas will be announced as part of the new Cabinet.
- T. Phommavong: A lot of time and attention spent on fighting fires and putting plans in place for this fire season.
- A. Janin: Held an elders circle to support the Liard multi-lateral process. Eighteen elders from the Liard basin attended. The group has established a planning committee.
- J. Kanigan: The Northwest Territories are dealing with fire and floods concurrently. Fire teams are reporting that the winds are different this year and that there are unusual and dramatic shifts in very short time periods.
  - Significant shift in levels on Great Slave Lake. Water levels have dropped a lot and there are dead willows on the shoreline. The variability in water levels on Great Slave Lake in recent years is notable.
- L. Wein: Parks Canada have staff in Fort Chip as there are members of the public in Wood Buffalo National Park and support may be required.

## **Adjourn Day 2**

**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.**