



November 7, 2010

Meeting Report: Alberta Water Council

Background:

The Crop Sector Working Group applied for membership to the Alberta Water Council (AWC) in September and we were approved as a new member at the October 28 meeting in Calgary. The livestock and irrigation sectors have been long term members but the Council and these sectors felt that the crop sector should be represented on the Board. Neil Boyd is the member and Sharon McKinnon is the alternate. The AWC meets three times per year alternating between Calgary and Edmonton.

The AWC was created in 2004 by the Minister of the Environment to monitor and steward implementation of Alberta's Water for Life Strategy, which has the three goals of:

- Safe, secure drinking water supply
- Healthy aquatic ecosystems
- Reliable, quality water supplies for a sustainable economy

The AWC is a shared governance body with members from four broad categories including government, industry, non-government organizations (NGO's) and Government of Alberta.

Government: large urban (Edmonton and Calgary), small urban (AUMA), rural (AAMDC), and Metis Settlements

Industry: chemical and petrochemical, irrigation, mining, oil and gas, power generation, forestry, livestock and cropping (new)

NGO's: wetlands conservation (Ducks Unlimited), fisheries habitat conservation, lake environment conservation, environmental (Environmental Law Centre, Alberta Wilderness Association, Sierra Club of Canada), Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils

GOA: Ministries of Agriculture, Environment, Health and Wellness, and Sustainable Resource Development, Alberta Water Research Institute

Decisions are made by consensus as they are in the CSWG, the Agri-Environmental Partnership of Alberta and the Clean Air Strategic Alliance.

Key Messages:

- The Board considered two new statements of opportunity that describe potential new projects for the Council to work on. Stakeholders who are affected by, or interested in, a water issue can make a submission to the Council to take on the issue as a project. The Board agreed by consensus to add them to its short list of potential projects.
- With the capacity to take on only one new project, the Board selected (by secret ballot) the Riparian Land Conservation and Management Policy project, which was one of the two new statements of opportunity presented at the meeting. A working group will be struck to develop terms of reference for the project. The crop sector should be part of this team as riparian zones (land bordering on streams, rivers and lakes) exist on much of the agricultural landscape.
- Alberta Environment presented an update on four key action issues:
 - Funding – support and resource Water for Life partnerships including the Alberta Water Council, the Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils (WPAC’s) and the Watershed Stewardship Groups.
 - Integrating watershed management with the Land Use Framework and Cumulative Effects Management system to develop a watershed management planning framework and guide for implementation.
 - Identification of core indicators and reporting tools for state of the watershed reports for WPAC use including surface water quality and quantity, land use/land cover and riparian health, and biodiversity.
 - Establishment of WPAC’s in the Athabasca and Peace watersheds.
- The Bow River Project is an AWC project that is a stakeholder-driven modeling exercise to determine the hydrologic possibilities for re-managing the timing of the annual flow of the Bow River System for the purpose of resolving environmental issues and providing water assurance to municipalities, irrigation districts and other current and future users. A report is due to the government in December.
- The Board approved the definition for non-point source pollution as presented by the NPS Pollution Project Team.