



Muskoka

WATERSHED COUNCIL

Minutes

Friday, April 19, 2024

1:00 pm

Council Chambers (District of Muskoka) & Zoom

Present (In-person)

Neil Hutchinson (Acting Chair)

David Parsons

Kevin Trimble

Lance DeCaire

Michael Peppard

Pete LeMoine

Peter Sale

Present (Zoom)

Nancy Alcock

Ann Curley

Peter Johnston

Geoff Ross

John Cooper (@ 2:15 pm)

Joan Frain

Richard Lammers

Chris Cragg (@ 1:45 pm)

Jo-Anne Goodwin

Cathy Oakden

MWC Staff

Rebecca Willison

Guests

Lynn DeCaro

Terry Crews

Rupert Kindersley *

Matt Driscoll (Unique Muskoka) *

Preston Nielsen *

* Attended by Zoom

Welcome

MWC Acting Chair Neil Hutchinson called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm. MWC Director Kevin Trimble provided a Land Acknowledgement.

Confirmation of Minutes

MOTION

Moved by Lance DeCaire, seconded by Kevin Trimble

THAT the Minutes of the Muskoka Watershed Council meeting dated March 22, 2024 be approved.

CARRIED

Business Arising from the Minutes

- None.

Presentation

2023 Muskoka Vital Signs® Report – Lynn DeCaro, Executive Director, Muskoka Community Foundation

Vital Signs® is a community check-up that Community Foundations across Canada participate in to measure the health and vitality of our communities. Vital Signs® Reports identify significant trends in a range of sectors and areas that are critical to quality of life and maintaining smart and caring communities. The Muskoka Community Foundation works with local community partners (including MWC) to identify and incorporate updated information. Where possible the report identifies trends emerging since the release of the 2018 and 2021 report.

Neil noted how similar the Vital Signs report and the Watershed Report Card are, with both documents encouraging action and discussion. Both reports also highlight the connectivity between different components and sectors.

There was some discussion about how to calculate and communicate the value of the natural environment to Muskoka. Peter Johnston talked about a survey by Muskoka Tourism that strongly showed that people come to Muskoka or want to come to Muskoka for the environment.

After answering some questions, Neil thanked Lynn for her informative presentation.

Update on MWC's Integrated Watershed Management Program – Kevin Trimble, MWC Community Roundtable Co-chair

Kevin provided an overview of MWC's efforts to bring Integrated Watershed Management to Muskoka over the past 8 years. He touched on the recent activities, including the formation of the Community Roundtable, the release of the governance study, requests for municipal grants to support IWM, and organizing a municipal conference on IWM.

A draft workplan has been developed with several tasks to work on. The major focus is to bring together all watershed municipalities to develop a governance structure. There are also plans to hold a Muskoka Summit on the Environment event on IWM.

Kevin indicated that more volunteers are needed to assist with implementing the workplan and noted that there are some funds available to put towards this. We need to prioritize the items on the workplan and identify the lead people or groups to implement them.

Peter Johnston has an interest in assisting with the public outreach and education component of the workplan.

Nancy Alcock has offered for the Town of Huntsville to host the inaugural municipal meeting. Kevin has been working with Julie Cayley to bring some of the SSEA councillors to the CRT to speak about their experience with their governance structure.

Peter noted the need to keep the IWM program moving forward and to prepare properly and produce the deliverables that we got funding for. The CRT will prioritize the tasks on the workplan at their next meeting.

Committee Updates

- **Communications Committee** – Pete LeMoine reported that MWC's efforts over the last six months have focussed on articles and social media. Pete is looking for a volunteer to input the posts into Buffer based on info created by a team of volunteers. Pete is also looking for someone to chair the committee. Neil reported that a new series of 18 articles is planned to run through the summer. Several authors have been confirmed, but more are needed from the wider membership. MuskokaRegion.com have indicated that people are reading our articles. Peter acknowledged the effort from Pete and Julia and other members to release the Report Card and the continual promotion of it through articles, etc. Peter noted that another component of outreach and communications is networking with other organizations and the community. Peter put a call out for MWC members that are involved in other organizations to think about how MWC can talk to their organization. A standard presentation will be developed for MWC members to use.
- **Fundraising Committee** – Peter Sale reported that three meetings were held over the past two weeks, one with Lynn DeCaro from the Muskoka Community Foundation, another with Kyra Watters from Well Known Company in Huntsville, and a subsequent committee meeting to discuss what was learned at the two previous meeting. Another member is needed for the Fundraising Committee that has some fundraising experience. The focus will be on grants and the private sector. Peter Johnston suggested retaining a consultant to seek grants for MWC.

Program Updates

- **Algae Monitoring Program** – Peter Sale reported that the annual report is being drafted and will be released soon. A small group met to discuss how to analyze and present the data. There is room for a couple of lake associations to join the program this year. Interested associations can contact algae@muskokawatershed.org for more information. Preliminary analysis of the results are somewhat confusing. He would like to focus on the public awareness component of the program more this year. We need volunteers to speak at AGMs about algae.
- **The Natural Edge Program** – Rebecca Willison reported that interest in the Natural Edge program is increasing. Rebecca will be presenting about the program at the Heat Eat Grow Go workshop tomorrow, and the Muskoka Lakes Association has written an article about natural shorelines and the Natural Edge program for their newsletter. Due to resources, this program gets started a bit later in the summer once more time sensitive programs get up and running.

Partner Updates

- **Township of Lake of Bays** – Councillor Michael Peppard reported that the Township has approved an [environmental grant fund](#).
- **District of Muskoka** – The District is looking at [streamlining the peer review process](#) associated with certain technical studies submitted in support of Planning Act applications.

New Business

- Rebecca Willison noted that it is Earth Day on April 22nd and shared some information related to the awareness day. Neil noted that microplastics are now [being found in arteries](#) according to Georgian Bay Forever. Peter reflected on the state of the earth compared to 1970 on his [blog](#).

- Georgian Bay Forever is premiering their new movie [All Too Clear](#) on May 11th.
- Members of the MWC Board of Directors are meeting with the new CEO of the Federation of Ontario Cottagers Associations (FOCA) at the beginning of May.

Next MWC Meeting

MWC's next meeting is scheduled for Friday, May 24th at 1 pm in the Council Chamber of the District of Muskoka administration building in Bracebridge and on Zoom. The meeting will include three presentations on algae.

Adjournment

Neil Hutchinson adjourned the meeting at 3:05 pm.



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INTEGRATED WATERSHED MANAGEMENT UPDATE AND NEXT STEPS

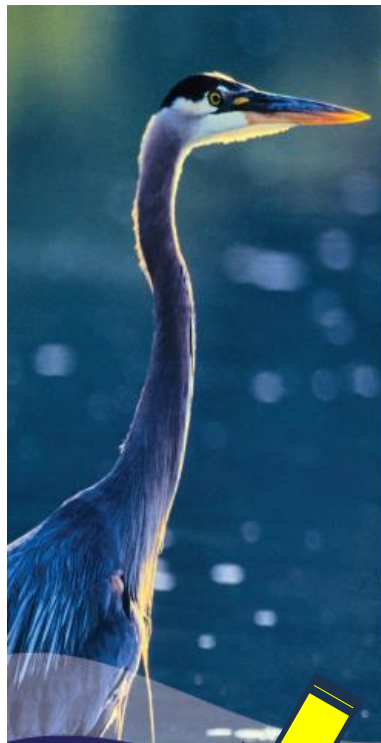
April 19, 2024

MWC Mission is.....

**To empower the community to
protect and enhance watershed
health**



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Why Integrated Watershed Management (IWM)?

IWM is an inclusive approach that examines the entire watershed as a connected system that fosters collaboration among people, organizations, and governments, promoting comprehensive planning that transcends jurisdictional boundaries. It considers environmental, social, and economic aspects to improve watershed health, support sustainable economies, and enhance community well-being while enhancing resilience against climate change and other stressors.

So, What's Happening In Our Watersheds?

Muskoka's watersheds stand at a crucial turning point. While currently healthy, they are gradually degrading in several ways, and our existing management systems seem incapable of halting or reversing this negative trend. We need an integrated, watershed-scale management system capable of dealing with the multiple stresses our iconic environment now faces.

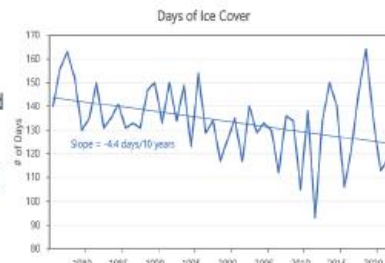
As Our Climate Changes, We're Witnessing Its Effects Firsthand

Significant impacts involve increasing temperatures, increasing road salt in our lakes, and extreme weather events causing flooding and strain on ecosystems, all affecting our biodiversity, economy, and way of life.

In our watershed we have witnessed

The number of severe storms has doubled, going from 3 storms in the 30-year period of 1970-2000 to 6 storms in the 20-year period of 2000-2020. Factors include snow, rapid snowmelt, heavy rain during melting, and significant rainfall within a week

20 fewer days of ice coverage over the last two decades has affected winter activities, tourism, construction, and lake dynamics due to biological shifts, evaporation, and warming.



2023 REPORT CARD

Preserving This Beautiful Environment For The Future Demands Immediate Action. Step Up and Make a Difference Now – Your Efforts Matter!

- Advocate for Integrated Watershed Management (IWM) for healthier watersheds.
- Combat climate change, reduce emissions, and champion sustainability.
- Speak out: Encourage leaders to make tough choices for a healthier environment. Local actions alone can't solve complex issues.
- Engage: Volunteer or support local environmental groups.
- Minimize salt use to protect water.
- Clean boats, remove invasive plants, inspect equipment, and avoid bait dumping.
- Report invasive species, erosion, and algae blooms to authorities.
- Protect shorelines with native plants and use phosphate-free cleaners; avoid fertilizers.
- Log bird sightings on eBird.
- Enroll in the forest tax incentive program for land stewardship.
- Join the Biological Monitoring Program as a Citizen Scientist.
- Support calcium restoration through the Ash Muskoka Program.
- Find more ideas in the "Living in Cottage Country" handbook by Muskoka Watershed Council. Visit www.muskokawatershed.org/resourceshandbook for resources to support your actions.



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MWC STRATEGIC PLAN

MWC'S GOALS

MWC's Strategic Plan defines the actions to accomplish the following three goals:

1. Communication, Stewardship and Awareness
 2. Policy and Advocacy
 3. Enhanced Watershed-Wide Knowledge Base
-



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MWC STRATEGIC PLAN

OBJECTIVE

Planning decisions are based on:

1. Current science as expressed in MWC position papers, and
2. Integrated Watershed Management for the Muskoka River Watershed as a whole. Emphasize the cross municipal boundaries nature of watershed impacts.

- Create a “roadmap” for bringing IWM, as a way of thinking and managing, to the Muskoka Watershed

- Place scientific knowledge in the context of the interconnected parts of the whole Muskoka River Watershed ecosystem

TACTICS

1. **Continue to engage the community via the Community Roundtable, as an MWC sub-committee, tasked to:**
 - Establish a common vision and goals for all sectors with respect to the health of the watershed, economy and community



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EARLY IWM ACTIVITIES

YOUR WATERSHED:
CONNECTING THE DROPS
WWW.MUSKOKAWATERSHED.ORG

APRIL 26, 2019
9 AM - 4:30 PM
ACTIVE LIVING
CENTRE
HUNTSVILLE

TICKETS
PUBLIC:
\$60 (UNTIL APR 15)
\$75 (AFTER APR 15)
STUDENT: \$45


BROUGHT TO YOU BY:


THE DISTRICT OF MUSKOKA

2019 MUSKOKA STEWARDSHIP CONFERENCE

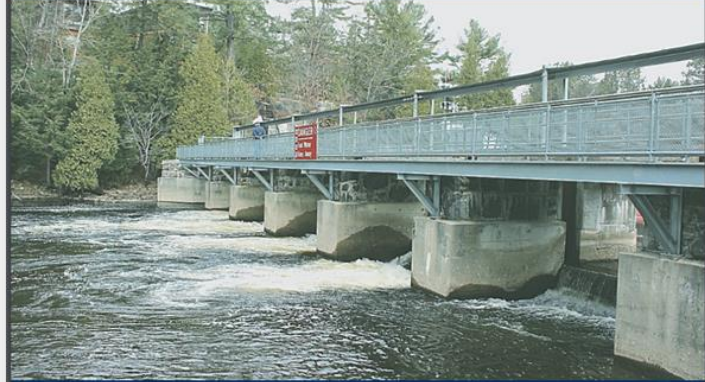



**THE CASE FOR
INTEGRATED
WATERSHED
MANAGEMENT
IN MUSKOKA**
JANUARY 2020

 **Muskoka
WATERSHED COUNCIL**



THE EVOLUTION OF
Water Management
IN THE MUSKOKA RIVER WATERSHED



 By Chris Cragg
November 2020



**Muskoka
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MECP funded (\$5M) IWM projects

Water Management	Natural Features & Policy	Monitoring & Research
Baseline watershed hydrology model	Natural Capital Inventory	Watershed Health Indicators
MRWMP adjustments study	Land Use Policy Review	Water Quality Indicators
Examine local structural mitigation measures	Public Access Inventory	Shoreline Erosion Inventory
Floodplain mapping		Muskoka R. Sedimentation Study (Town of Bracebridge)
Scoping for MRWMP review	Governance Study (MWC)	Forest experimental management (Westwind)
Examine watershed scale flood mitigation options		ASHMuskoka supplemental funding (Friends of the Muskoka Watershed)

12 projects by District of Muskoka

3 projects by non-profits

1 project by local municipality



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MWC Roadmap for Integrated Watershed Management

2023

- Understanding the Information and gaps
- Understand CRT vision
- Establish collaborative process

05

06

2024

Municipal IWM Conference



Watershed Plan

04

2022 - 16 projects (12 by DMM)

03

**2019 MWC Stewardship Conf.
2020 MWAG Report
2020 MWC IWM Report**

02

2018 MWAG Announced

01

Historic Reports

**2006 MRWMP
2017 MWC Discussions**

RECENT ACTIVITIES

- Community Roundtable (2021-2024)
- Governance Study
- Municipal Presentations (2022 & 2023)
- Municipal Grant Applications
- Input to Report Card, Communications and Fundraising committees
- 2024 Municipal IWM Conference
- Two Conference Follow-ups
- Workplan and CRT Terms of Reference



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Collaborative watershed organizations



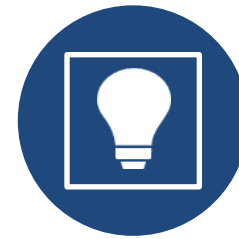
COMPELLING CAUSE /
ISSUES THAT RESONATE



CALL TO ACTION;
ESTABLISHING VISION,
GOALS



ESTABLISHING WAYS TO
COORDINATE AND
COLLABORATE



BUILDING KNOWLEDGE
TOGETHER



ESTABLISHING WAYS TO
MAKE DECISIONS

Road Map to an Integrated Watershed Management Plan

Engagement – stakeholders, public, government

Preparation

Phase 1
Existing
Conditions

Phase 2
Analysis and
Evaluation

Phase 3
Watershed Plan
development

**Implementation
Plan**

**Implementation
Monitoring**

**Governance
Funding
Engagement**

**Scoping
Issues
and
Targets**

Develop
management
alternatives.
Evaluate to
address issues
& targets

Select best
plan.
Finalize
Targets.
Prepare Plan

Who, how
and when?
Policy

Make sure it
gets done.
Monitor.
Review plan
and adjust

Modified from D.M. Downs



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Work Plan

WORK PACKAGE	SUB-TASKS	PROGRESS
GOVERNANCE Lead watershed municipalities, province and other funding, regulatory or decision-making bodies, in development of a governance model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate meetings among the watershed municipalities (e.g., Huntsville) Provide summary of Governance Study and create potential scenarios for LAMs Facilitate presentation by Severn Board Develop plan for next workshops Revisit LAMs which didn't attend Feb conference or have yet to engage 	
IWM MODEL Develop documentation and media on what a watershed strategy could look like and what will be different	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summarize examples and create a model to describe or outline what a watershed plan tailored for the Muskoka watershed might look like or include 	
REPORTS, RECOMMENDATIONS and DATA MANAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare report synthesizing all baseline information, monitoring, gaps, status of watershed management in the MRW and recommendations. Coordinate and assist District staff with existing database inventories from previous projects and current GIS systems Assess current monitoring programs and recommend improvements on coordination, extent and centralized 	



WORK PACKAGE	SUB-TASKS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> repositories for watershed technical <u>data</u> • low ToR or Scoping for a Watershed Plan
INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance Indigenous engagement and inclusion of Traditional Knowledge
MUSKOKA SUMMIT ON THE ENVIRONMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate with organizing <u>committee</u>; • coordinate outreach with community
COMMUNITY SECTOR ENGAGEMENT & FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF CRT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Expand Community Engagement</u> on IWM and bring more sectors (business sectors, NGOs, community groups, etc.) into the <u>conversation</u> • Develop tailored presentations and attend sector meetings to describe IWM and encourage involvement and <u>partnering</u> • Research the vision statements of other NGOs
COMMUNICATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate on, or assist, Communications Committee to develop a <u>strategy</u>; • prepare <u>articles</u>, posts, presentations, event appearances, etc
FUNDRAISING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate on, or assist, the Fundraising Committee with project specific or operational fundraising to advance IWM
INTERNAL EDUCATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop presentation materials to continue educate ourselves on IWM and common values and messaging. • Revisit Aug'23 vision, relative to definitions of "sustainability" and what partner groups want

Work Plan cont'd



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Thank you.

Learn more at
www.muskokawatershed.org