



Muskoka

WATERSHED COUNCIL

Minutes

Friday, October 21, 2022

1:00 pm

Community Room (Muskoka Paramedic Services and Fire Hall) & Zoom

Present (In-person)

Peter Sale (Chair)
Bet Smith

Andrew Fyfe
Kevin Trimble

Michael Peppard

Present (Zoom)

Patricia Arney
Jo-Anne Goodwin

John Cooper
Richard Lammers

Allen Edwards
David Parsons

MWC Staff

Glenn Cunningham

Rebecca Willison

DMM Staff

Christiane Masters

Guests

Forrest Pengra (Seguin Twp) *

Rupert Kindersley *

Caroline Konarzewski

* Attended by Zoom

Welcome

MWC Chair Peter Sale called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm. MWC Director Kevin Trimble provided an Indigenous Land Acknowledgement. Peter noted that Item 2 (Muskoka Watershed Report Card) has been moved to the end of the agenda.

Confirmation of Minutes

MOTION

Moved by Kevin Trimble, seconded by Michael Peppard

THAT the minutes of the Muskoka Watershed Council meeting dated September 23, 2022, be approved.

CARRIED

Project Updates

- **Fundraising Committee** – Peter Sale reported that a Fundraising Committee was stuck at the October Board of Directors meeting and noted how it differs from the Finance Committee. The Fundraising Committee will primarily investigate grant opportunities and other funding sources to

support and expand the work of MWC into the future. Any MWC member or community member can sit on the Committee. Those interested in participating can send an email to info@muskokawatershed.org.

- **Membership Committee** – Michael Peppard reported that the Committee has been making small modifications to the Policies and Procedures to simplify the process for becoming a member of MWC and a draft application form is being developed. Mike noted that there is currently room for more people to join MWC and he encouraged MWC members to recruit from their networks.
- **IWM Community Roundtable** – Kevin Trimble reported that the CRT is nearing completion of the public consultations for the District IWM projects. The CRT will return to looking at its own mandate and the action plan and vision to drive its future activities. The next urgent steps are getting back to the municipalities and recruiting more members. The CRT would like to work with District staff to collaboratively develop recommendations for next steps toward implementing IWM and take a coordinated approach to applying for grants and seeking funding. Kevin invited all MWC members to attend CRT meetings.

Partner Updates

- None

Building the 2023 Muskoka Watershed Report Card

Peter Sale provided a quick review of the 2018 Report Card and then facilitated a group discussion on what the main messages of the 2023 Report Card should be.

Peter noted that there were no clear messages included in the 2018 Muskoka Watershed Report Card although previous report cards each had a message. The report card also doesn't provide an overall summary of the state of the watershed. We need to keep the report card new and different to capture interest, without changing the indicators too much.

Mike noted that the report card doesn't include any warning signs i.e., this is going to happen... Using calcium as an example, he explained how some of the information presented in the report card is counter intuitive i.e., subwatershed-wide, calcium doesn't look like an issue, but on a lake-by-lake basis, many have concentrations too low to support daphnia. The conclusions don't necessarily reflect the reality.

David Parsons would like to see trends over time and agreed with Mike that "here are the changes happening and here are the consequences" should be included in the report card. This would require keeping the indicators as close as possible to the previous report card.

Patricia Arney noted that climate change is an overarching concern that impacts most of the indicators. She would like to take a more dramatic approach in the next report card to report on the effects of climate change. Look at the impacts and explore adaptation.

Andrew Fyfe would like to see the report card have an upfront statement that grabs attention and then a narrative that knits the document together i.e., include a discussion about synergistic effects between indicators.

Richard would like to have a discussion at the Sub-committee about the climate change indicator. He thinks there may be better indicators to use. He has updated modelling from which he can pull out the Muskoka data and rerun for predictions.

Glenn indicated that the Species at Risk indicator will never get better, and things respond slowly so it's difficult to track. We should consider the information coming out of the IWM project and perhaps use the report card as a baseline for current conditions and choose variables to track moving forward i.e trends over time.

Peter highlighted the interconnectedness of all things in the environment, i.e., cumulative effects. Climate change is more than a change in temperature; changes in patterns of precipitation will have a profound effect on the persistence of our wetlands, specifically how can we keep them wet.

Patricia would like more discussion about wetlands, their significance, and the threats from climate change. We also need to consider intermittent streams feeding the wetlands. Is there any data that warmer waters are promoting the proliferation of invasive species? Peter noted that the government is looking at fishing regulations and are concerned about the coldwater fisheries being impacted by warmer temperatures and invasive warm water fish species like bass.

Rupert Kindersley suggested that MWC talk to the Georgian Bay Biosphere about possible species at risk indicators as they do a lot of good work in this area and may have some data that MWC can use.

Bet Smith asked how the report card was distributed in 2018. Rebecca responded that there was an official launch event and hard copies were available at various locations throughout the watershed. Staff and volunteers also attended some events with a display. Bet noted that MWC needs to figure out how to get more people interested in taking action and indicated that there is lots of good information available on the website.

Mike suggested having more than one launch event, including one outside of Muskoka. Bet suggested getting breweries involved.

Mike asked about how benchmarks are determined, and Rebecca answered that it depends on the indicator. Some benchmarks are based on science (i.e., calcium) while others are set by MWC. The background report has a lot of detail about what the benchmarks are and how they were determined.

Peter expressed concern about the phosphorus indicator and how it shows things are good when they really may not be.

Patricia suggested that we look at the work Westwind has been doing regarding beech trees and interior forest for the fragmentation indicator.

Mike suggested including an insert on IWM in the report card to help educate the public. Peter noted that some of our environment has been degraded and we need to highlight ways to keep it from degrading further through IWM.

The Report Card Sub-committee is meeting on Tuesday at 4 pm.

New Business

- Should MWC continue with hybrid meetings? There were hiccups at the meeting today that will be ironed out for the next meeting. Seasonal residents would like hybrid meetings, especially in the winter. The greenhouse gas savings and time savings are substantial.

Next MWC Meeting

Friday, November 18th at 1:00 pm. This will be a hybrid meeting held in the Pine Room at the District of Muskoka administration building (70 Pine Street, Bracebridge) and through Zoom.

Adjournment

Peter Sale adjourned the meeting at 2:35 pm.