



# *Muskoka*

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## WATERSHED COUNCIL

### Minutes

Friday, March 24, 2023

1:00 pm

Pine Room (District of Muskoka) & Zoom

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#### Present (In-person)

Peter Sale (Chair)  
Lance DeCaire  
Peter Johnston  
Geoff Ross

Nancy Alcock  
Andrew Fyfe  
Peter Kelley  
Kevin Trimble

Patricia Arney  
Kathleen Hedley  
Michael Peppard

#### Present (Zoom)

Mario Buszynski  
Jess Lario

Javier Cappella  
David Parsons

Jo-Anne Goodwin  
Sabrina Richards

#### MWC Staff

Rebecca Willison

#### DMM Staff

Christiane Masters

#### Guests

Steve Scholten  
Erika Kolli \*

Forrest Pengra\*

Katrina Krievins \*

\* Attended by Zoom

#### Welcome

MWC Chair Peter Sale called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm. MWC member Peter Johnston provided an Indigenous Land Acknowledgement. Peter clarified the comments he made at the last meeting regarding attendance through Zoom.

#### Confirmation of Minutes

#### MOTION

Moved by Andrew Fyfe, seconded by Peter Johnston

THAT the minutes of the Muskoka Watershed Council meeting dated February 17, 2023, be approved.

**CARRIED**

## **Business Arising from the Minutes**

None.

## **Report from the Board of Directors Meeting**

Chair Sale reported that the Board of Directors met the previous day. The idea to make the Report Card Sub-committee a standing committee of MWC was discussed and it was decided to wait for the strategic plan to be completed before making changes.

With regards to funding, Peter reported that he has not heard back from FedNor but the chances are slim that will MWC receive funding for an intern.

The Board decided to not post MWC's By-law and Policies and Procedures documents on the website, but that they will be made available to members when they join or upon request.

## **Presentation**

[Revising the Fisheries Management Regulations](#) – *Steve Scholten, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry*

The management plan for Fisheries Management Zone 15 (FMZ 15) outlines the status of the fisheries in the zone, describes management objectives, and provides direction for management actions. Since 2016, the MNRF has been working on revising the management plan and an advisory council was formed in 2017 to assist with this. Proposed changes to the fishing regulations in this zone were posted on the Environmental Registry of Ontario in 2022 for comment and a draft management plan has been developed to ensure sustainable fisheries management while helping to protect, preserve, and recover specific fish populations. It is anticipated that the FMZ 15 Management Plan will be finalized and implemented in 2024.

In response to a question about monitoring, Steve responded that there are still active monitoring programs run by the MNRF, including the [Broad-scale Monitoring Program](#). He noted that monitoring is carried out at a regional level now instead of at a district level, with targeted lake-specific monitoring as needed.

Steve explained that introduced species is by far the biggest stressor for native fish populations. Climate change and water quality changes also have an impact.

In response to a question about the relationship between Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) and the MNRF, Steve noted that the relationship hasn't changed much recently. MNRF stopped doing fish habitat regulatory reviews on behalf of DFO in the 1990s, but the province still has a role in fish habitat management (i.e. monitoring, creating habitat) but not on the regulatory side.

Steve noted that the information submitted through the survey on the [Fish ON-Line](#) website is used to provide a measure of fishing effort and catch and suggested that people be encourage to fill out the survey. The Province is also investigating other ways to get data through citizen science apps.

After answering some questions throughout and following his presentation, Steve was thanked by Peter for his informative presentation.

### **Integrated Watershed Management** – *Kevin Trimble and Geoff Ross*

Kevin Trimble reported that there have been some good discussions at the CRT regarding the development of an action plan to prioritize recommendations and next steps that can be taken forward to municipalities. Greg Padulo provided an update at the last CRT meeting on Indigenous engagement and his work with Glenn Cunnington to engage local first nations people involved in environmental management. The CRT has also been discussing how to engage councillors and senior staff at municipalities, particularly those outside of the District of Muskoka, starting with low-level conversations followed by delegations to municipal councils.

Representatives from the CRT have had a few meetings with DMM councillors and staff to discuss how MWC and DMM can work together to develop a watershed management plan. More meetings are planned in the future.

Geoff Ross encouraged all members to read the "[Watershed governance: A selection of case studies for informing integrated watershed management in the Muskoka River watershed](#)" report if they have not done so already. The executive summary, discussion section, and survey answers section provided an excellent overview. He noted that the report provides a clear explanation of IWM and how it can be implemented in Muskoka, including the challenges and opportunities.

The proposed Action Plan is a roadmap to get us into the IWM process. It is a long process and at some point MWC may want to create a watershed management document that municipalities can use as a guide. How can MWC create the political will for IWM in Muskoka?

Kevin invited all interested members of MWC and the public to attend the CRT meetings.

### **Project Updates**

- **2023 Muskoka Watershed Report Card** – Peter Sale reported that the Report Card Sub-committee will be meeting next on March 30<sup>th</sup>. The goal is to release the Report Card in June. He would like more volunteers to help with design and messaging. And will also be looking for help on giving presentations once the Report Card is released. The Report Card will have a greater emphasis on the trends and less focus on the status.
- **Communications** – Rebecca Willison reported that an article was submitted for the boat show edition of The Muskokan but that it wasn't included in the print edition. MWC will have a complimentary ad in the Muskoka Lakes Association Yearbook again this year. The HPS Eco-Fest is taking place again this year on June 3<sup>rd</sup> so MWC will be looking for volunteers to help staff a booth. Other events over the summer will also need volunteers to assist. MWC is also interested in attending lake association AGMs to give presentations on the Report Card, and MWC plans to delegate to all local area municipalities about the Report Card and IWM this summer. Peter Sale would like to revive the Communications Committee as MWC needs to be marketing and selling itself better.

- **Membership Committee Update** – Michael Peppard reported that a membership application form is now up on the [website](#) to be shared with prospective members.
- **Strategic Plan Update** – Geoff Ross reported that comments were received on the preliminary draft of the Strategic Plan but have not been fully processed yet. Comments can still be submitted to [info@muskokawatershed.org](mailto:info@muskokawatershed.org).

### **New Business**

- [reThink Green](#) through [Green Economy North](#) is holding “The Road to Net Zero” event on March 30<sup>th</sup>.

### **Next MWC Meeting**

MWC’s next meeting is scheduled for Friday, April 21st at 1:00 pm in the Pine Room at the District of Muskoka administration building, located at 70 Pine Street in Bracebridge, and through Zoom.

### **Adjournment**

Peter Sale adjourned the meeting at 2:55 pm.