



Minutes

Friday, November 26, 2021

1:00 pm

Zoom Online Meeting

Present

Geoff Ross (Chair)

Chris Cragg

Karen Maxwell

Michael Peppard

Patricia Arney

Allen Edwards

Daryle Moffatt

Cameron von Bratt

John Cooper (@ 2:20 pm)

Pete LeMoine

Kate Monk

Staff

Rebecca Willison

Samantha Hastings

Cassie Emms

Glenn Cunnington

Presenter

Tom Hilditch

COSSARO Chair

Guests

Caleb Timmermann

Cathy Oakden

Welcome

Chair Geoff Ross called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm. He invited Cameron von Bratt to open the meeting with a Land Acknowledgement.

Confirmation of Minutes

MOTION

THAT the minutes of the Muskoka Watershed Council meeting dated October 29, 2021 be approved.

CARRIED (by consent)

Presentation

[Ontario's Species at Risk: How COSSARO assesses and lists species to be protected](#) – Tom Hilditch,
Chair of COSSARO

Glenn Cunnington introduced Tom Hilditch and welcomed him to the MWC meeting.

Mr. Hilditch reviewed the composition and activities of COSSARO and talked about the process for assessing species for inclusion on the list. He noted that there are currently 11 members of COSSARO but no indigenous representatives.

The Office of the Auditor General of Ontario just released a [Value-for-Money Audit on Protecting and Recovering Species at Risk](#) and Mr. Hilditch noted that it is very critical of the Ontario Government's implementation of the Species at Risk Act.

Learn more about COSSARO on the COSSARO website at <http://cossaroagency.ca/>.

Following a question and answer period, Geoff thanked Tom for his excellent presentation.

Project Updates

- **Community Round Table** – Geoff Ross reported that the CRT will be meeting in early December and that Geoff and Kevin have had positive discussions with the Province and DMM to acquire funds to hire external expertise to assist with the CRT.
- **MWC Strategic Plan** – Karen Maxwell reported that the Strategic Plan will be discussed at the Working Group meeting on December 2nd, including taking a closer look at the data collected through the surveys, with a focus on governance, collaborations and partnerships. Additional meetings will be held to discuss communications, education and outreach, and SWOT. She noted that there have been good conversations and recommendations at each meeting. A governance committee has also been formed that is reviewing the draft MWC by-laws.
- **Official Plan Responses** – Karen Maxwell reported that the final document will be taken to the Working Group on December 2nd before being released to the public. The Working Group will also discuss next steps for distribution.
- **MWC Communications** – Cassie Emms reported that MWC articles are now being included on the Parry Sound Metroland website. The final touches are being put on the MWC promotional video for release in January. Cassie is also developing an additional article to appeal to communities within our watersheds but outside of the District of Muskoka boundaries. Patricia Arney suggested that MWC get registered on the TLDSB PeachTree platform to reach out to school children and their families. Kate Monk addressed the challenge of communicating with school children and she suggested promoting outdoor activities to help get the word out about watersheds while alleviating stress and depression, etc.
- **MWC Governance Changes** – Geoff Ross reported that he made a presentation to the District's Community and Planning Services Committee (CPSC) in November about the proposed changes to the MWC governance model. He received several questions from councillors, including one about due process regarding these changes. Samantha Hastings noted that DMM staff have been requested to bring forward a staff report on potential implications to the CPSC. It was agreed that the MWC AGM, normally held in January, would be moved to February or March to provide time for CPSC to discuss this matter before the new governance structure is brought to a vote at the MWC AGM.

Partner Updates

- **Seguin Township** – Councillor Daryle Moffatt reported that things have been slow for the Township's Official Plan review, but that a meeting is planned for January. As co-chair of ICECAP, he is meeting with west Parry Sound CAOs to update them on ICECAP and he plans to have the seventh municipality (Whitestone) on board soon.
- **Township of Muskoka Lakes** – Councillor Allen Edwards reported that many small lakes in the municipality are submitting lake plans for inclusion in the new TML Official Plan. New resort policies for Minett will also be included.
- **RTO 12/Explorers' Edge** – Kate Monk highlighted a new concept being used by RTO12 and Algonquin Park: citizen science = visitor science. Rewilding, as mentioned in Tom's presentation, is becoming a big effort in tourism initiatives. Kate suggested that MWC could develop education programs that can be given through tourism operators. She noted that Explorers' Edge has just hired an economic development person that will be reaching out to indigenous peoples and may have a way to connect MWC with indigenous leaders. She reported that, following the "Business Case for Sustainability" presentation hosted by RTO12, they have six businesses signed up receive sustainable tourism certification as demonstration projects.

New Business

Cameron von Bratt reported that he is involved in a biodiversity and eDNA project partly taking place in our watershed and he would like to present to MWC about the project.

Next MWC Meeting

Friday, January 28th at 1:00 pm through Zoom. It will feature a presentation by Cameron von Bratt on "Freshwater Biodiversity at a Watershed Scale".

Adjournment

Geoff Ross adjourned the meeting at 2:55 pm.