

**International Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed Board
Summary of Discussion for Review**

**Wednesday June 22, 2022
12:00pm – 2:00pm CT (1:00pm-3:00pm ET)**

Virtual Meeting
Chair: Mike Goffin

1. Welcome and Administration

U.S. Member Participants

COL Karl Jansen (Board Co-Chair)
Theresa Haugen
Mike Hirst
Doug Franchot
Pam Tomevi
Shelly Patten
Matt Gouin
Kelly Sjerven
Scott Jutila (Secretary; Engineering Advisor)
Abigail Moore (Secretary; Engineering Advisor)
Rebecca Seal-Soileau (Secretary; Engineering Advisor)

Canadian Member Participants

Mike Goffin (Board Co-Chair)
Todd Sellers
Karen Cederwall
Megan Garner
Matt Myers
Teika Newton
Lucas King
Mark Lee
Wellsley Hamilton (Secretary)

Additional Participants

Maria Jawaid, Environment and Climate Change
Canada

International Joint Commission

Mark Gabriel, US Engineering Advisor
Rob Caldwell, Canadian Engineering Advisor
Lindsay Trottier, Assisting Canadian Engineering Advisor

The Canadian Co-chair, Mike Goffin began the meeting by recognizing the exceptionally challenging situation caused by the flooding this year. He noted a number of membership changes, including: Shelly Patten, from Minnesota Department of Natural Resources was formally appointed to the Board in April, Kiley Shebagegit submitted her resignation from the Board and the Water Levels Committee on May 15th, Karen Cederwall was appointed to the Adaptive Management Committee on May 19th.

The agenda for this meeting and the March 25, 2022 meeting summary were approved. Action items in the action log were noted as complete or in progress.

ACTION: Secretariat to post approved meeting summaries on IRLWWB website.

2. Water Levels Committee Update on Basin High Water Conditions

There has been historic flooding in the watershed after the late April precipitation event. Colonel Jansen, the U.S. Co-Chair of the Water Levels Committee, discussed factors that led to the March 10 decision not to implement the High Flood Risk Rule Curve, including the drought status in most of the region at the time of the decision and the quantity of snowpack and snow water equivalent being similar to 2018 and 2019, which were non-flood years. At the time, NOAA long term forecasts did not indicate abnormal climate conditions. This was presented and discussed during the pre-spring engagement meetings.

Following the March 10th decision, the Water Levels Committee continued to follow the conditions and forecast for the basin. Conditions in the basin evolved significantly with record perception in April, unprecedented in the recorded history of the basin. In May with well above normal precipitation week after week. This kind of extreme event could not have been forecasted. All logs and gates were opened to maximize outflow through the dam at International Falls by May 5th.

Lake of the Woods water levels reached the International Lake of the Woods Control Board activation level of 1061 feet on May 11. The co-chair then summarized current Water Levels Committee efforts including collaboration with the National Weather Service on creating a forecast and observations webpage that is specific to the Rainy River basin. At the time of this meeting Rainy Lake and Namakan Lake level forecasts indicated decreasing water levels, while Lake of the Woods had not crested yet. The Canadian co-chair then went through a presentation of the Water Levels Committee basin tour of Lake of the Woods, Rainy Lake, and Namakan Chain of Lakes in early June.

After the presentation, a Board member brought attention to the growing conversation within the basin on CN Rail planning modifications to the international crossing at Rainer bridge. This area is a natural restriction of flow in the basin and there are growing concerns and uncertainty on the type of modifications proposed and impacts these modifications would have on Rainy River flow through that area. The Board moved an action for the Co-Chairs to write a formal letter to CN Rail inquiring on future plans for the international bridge crossing at Rainer.

ACTION: The Board co-chairs to send a letter to CN Rail inquiring on future planning at the international crossing CN bridge.

3. August Basin Meetings

The Board discussed the timing of the public meeting for the August Basin Meetings. With the high water conditions, it was noted that water levels are likely the primary interest of the public. The Water Levels Committee Co-Chairs stated they were meeting to discuss public engagement strategies post-flood and said there would need to be in-depth analysis done to answer the “what-if” rule curve scenario questions raised by the public on the June basin tour. August 8th, when the current basin meetings are planned, would not be enough time to complete the full analysis, but it would be an opportunity to understand what questions the public would like answered in the post-flood report.

The Board agreed that it was incredibly important that the Board provides space for people to be heard and to communicate the roll of IJC in the watershed. It was noted that although water quantity will be the main point of interest there should still be space to discuss water quality in public engagement.

It was decided that a public meeting will be held the week of August 8, but decisions on the format and content would be decided after the Water Levels Committee meeting the next day to formulate a recommendation on engagement format. It was also noted the Adaptive Management Committee will be hosting a three-hour climate resiliency workshop in Fort Frances the week of the August basin meetings.

ACTION: Water Levels Committee to share recommendation on engagement strategy for August Basin public meeting.

4. Work Planning and Priority Setting

Co-Chair, Mike Goffin, introduced this agenda item. He noted that the Board has indicated to the Commission that workload is a concern several occasions. The Board discussed key priority deliverables for this calendar year.

Engagement by the Water Levels Committee post flood and Exceedance Reporting were noted as two obvious priorities. Implementation of the IJC's Climate Change Framework was also identified as a priority.

The Engagement Committee expressed the impacts COVID-19 had on engagement opportunities. The Engagement Committee asked if there was opportunity to assist the Water Levels Committee in future public engagement, as well as other committees and advisory groups on the Board. Engagement and defining a clearer role for the engagement committee were noted as priority areas the Board could focus on. Lucas King suggested that funding through IWI to have full time staff working on engagement may be something the Board wants to consider, noting the challenges of continuing to ask people to promote engagement and build relationships off what feels like the side of their desks.

The co-chairs of the Aquatic Ecosystem Health Committee expressed the Alerts and Exceedance Report is a priority effort for the committee. The committee will look at Phase II of the Objectives and Alerts efforts and develop recommendations for work prioritization. Committee co-chairs noted that work has started on a proposal to scope out the core monitoring program. It was recognized that the reporting year for the Board now ends in December.

5. Roundtable

- IJC Update

The IJC advisors noted that Trina Rawn has stepped down from the Aquatic Ecosystem Health Committee and interested in recommendations for a replacement.

The IJC advisors brought to the attention of the Board that the Temporary Supplementary Order is set to expire July 1. The Temporary Order authorizes the Water Levels Committee to target levels outside of the Rainy and Namakan Lake rule curves, as needed.

The IJC advisors provided updates on IWI projects. Posters were sent out to First Nations that bathymetry work will be underway. Other portions of the bathymetry work are underway. The Climate Resiliency Workshops are under a scope of work and the next step for the HBAP mining sensitivity project is to develop a scope of work.

- Additional Committee and Advisory Group Updates

The Adaptive Management Committee is working on a statement of work for the near shore bathymetry study on Rainy Lake. The Co-Chairs noted the committee is at an impasse on accessing modeling capacity.

- Other Watershed Issues

Lucas King invited the Board and IJC representatives to attend the Grand Council Treaty 3 Assembly in October.

6. Closing Remarks

Mike Goffin thanked the Board for their participation. The meeting adjourned at 2:00pm CT.

Drafted by: Abigail Moore USACE, Wellsley Hamilton, ECCO, Scott Jutila USACE