

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

**Friday March 25, 2022
10:00am – 11:00am CT (11:00am-noon ET)**

Virtual Meeting
Chair: COL Jansen

1. Welcome and Administration

U.S. Member Participants

COL Karl Jansen (Board Co-Chair)
Theresa Haugen
Mike Hirst
Jim Stark
Doug Franchot
Matt Gouin
Scott Jutila (Secretary; Engineering Advisor)
Abigail Moore (Secretary; Engineering Advisor)
Rebecca Seal-Soileau (Secretary; Engineering Advisor)

International Joint Commission

Mark Gabriel, US Engineering Advisor
Rob Caldwell, Canadian Engineering Advisor

Canadian Member Participants

Todd Sellers
Greg Chapman
Karen Cederwall
Megan Garner
Matt Myers
Matt DeWolfe (Engineering Advisor)
Wellsley Hamilton (Secretary)

Additional Participants

Amy Adrihan, Minnesota Pollution Control
Briana Wagner, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Joshua Jones, alternate for Al Pemberton
Carla Torchia, Environment and Climate Change Canada
Shelly Patten, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

The agenda for this meeting and the January 31, 2022 meeting summary were approved. Action items in the action log were noted as complete or in progress with the exception of the annual report which should be completed for Board review by next week. The same draft will also be shared with the Commissioners prior to the Semi-Annual IJC meetings.

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

2. Observations from the March Forum

The 2022 International Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed Forum took place virtually on March 9th and 10th. There were 144 participants, including researchers, resource managers, policy makers, and members of the public. The forum covered a wide range of subjects: including: water governance and Indigenous perspectives, the State of the Basin Report, nutrients & algae, invasive species, and emerging issues and technologies. The proceedings from the forum are available online at lowwsf.com/watershed-forum. Most presentations are also available on the Lake of the Woods Water Sustainability Foundation's webpage for a limited time.

The Board agreed that the Forum bolsters their ability to fulfill their mandate. The CAG members who attended were appreciative of the IJC funding to do so. Presentations and topics of interest were noted, including: the keynote speaker, who presented indigenous perspective on legislature of water, the ongoing evidence of climate change, as demonstrated through duration of ice coverings getting shorter in basin, nutrient loading research, and the impacts of microplastics. It was noted that if the invasive species presentation on spiny water flea impacts was shown to public, prioritizing efforts to address aquatic invasive species would likely garner significant support.

Board member, Karen Cederwall, noted that the Forum is a good way to keep scientists engaged and investigating watershed issues of importance in the basin. She also noted that the forum serves as an opportunity for binational engagement and appreciated the inclusion of Indigenous components as opposed to having them separate and recognized that the forum brings together people from all levels e.g. the public, scientists and policy-makers. The role of the Lake of the Woods Water Sustainability Foundation as a catalyst and coordinator was recognized.

- State of the Basin Report

The State of the Basin Report was to be released during the March Forum. Just prior to this Board meeting it was posted online at <https://www.lowwsf.com/sobr>. In addition to the full technical report a 32-page overview report is available. Access to the report should be cross-posted on the Board's website. Rob Caldwell will send hard copies of the report to those who request one.

ACTION: Secretariat to post State of the Basin Report to the IRLWWB website.

3. Review of Presentation for IJC Semi-Annual

Wellsley Hamilton informed the Board that the Semi-Annual presentation to Commissioners is scheduled for April 6th, 2022 from 2:30-3:30pm Eastern Time in Washington DC. The draft presentation was included in the meeting package for consideration.

IJC Advisor, Rob Caldwell, informed the Board Main theme commissioners are looking to address are successes and challenges with respect to public outreach and engagement.

Board member, Todd Sellers, stated that a key question is whether the Board is thinking about re-establishing in-person basin meetings? He advocated that the Board should start thinking about re-establishing them. At this time, the Board is planning in-person meetings during the week of August 8th, 2022 as noted in the meeting schedule included in the meeting package. The Board identified that they are hoping for more in-person meetings but should consider offering a hybrid option. The logistical support required for a hybrid option was noted.

Col Jansen emphasized that the Board continues to strive for excellence in delivering our mandate, which means we are always looking for ways to improve. The Board has positive outreach moments we should amplify, particularly, given how difficult it has been to engage during the pandemic, these including ongoing dialogue with the CAG, IAG, public engagement at the Watershed Forum and the virtual public meeting. The Colonel encouraged collaboration between the engagement committee and the CAG and IAG

The topic of microplastics that the CAG is interested in may be something to communicate with the public once the Advisory Group learns more.

ACTION: Secretariat to send calendar invitations for IJC Semi-Annual appearance to Board members

ACTION: Board members to send edits to IJC Appearance presentation to Secretariats by next week.

4. Roundtable

- IJC Update

The IJC advisors provided their update during the CAG/IAG meeting with the Board that preceded the Board meeting. Updates on the status of projects were provided. Examples include: the Climate Change Public Engagement Workshop is in the contracting phase; the proposal entitled: "Assessing the vulnerability of waters to Mining in the Rainy Lake of the Woods Watershed" has undergone the first round of review by the IJC's IWI Committee, more specifics on the budget will likely be requested from the project team; the Nearshore Bathymetric Study to improve digital elevation data will continue for another year; and a contract is being developed with the USACE to provide modelling support on an "as-needed" basis.

The IJC Advisors noted that new appointments to the Board and re-appointments have been approved and letters will be sent out shortly.

On October 17, 2021 the Board wrote to the IJC about the 2019 review of environmental emergency planning and preparedness and the report completed by the Board, entitled: "Review of Environmental Emergency Planning, Preparedness and Response in the Boundary Waters of the Rainy-Lake of the Woods Drainage Basin." The review was completed in response to a commitment made at the International Joint Commission's Spring 2018 Semi-Annual meeting following concerns raised by the Community Advisory Group to the Board. The Secretariat received comments from the IJC on the letter and the report; the IJC is currently waiting for the Board to respond to comments.

Canadian Secretary, Wellsley Hamilton, identified that the comments have been discussed with the Co-chairs. This process led to questions about how the Board provides advice to the IJC and the autonomy of the Board to do so. The Secretariat is committed to enhancing collaboration with the IJC advisors to ensure strategic IJC considerations are taken into account before formal Board correspondence is sent to the Commissioners. The discretion the IJC has to share the Board's recommendations in whole or in part with Governments as it sees fit was also noted. She also noted that the strategic window for Governments to consider the recommendations while they finalized revisions to the Canada-U.S. Joint Inland Pollution Contingency Plan Regional Annex III (CANUSCENT), as noted in the letter, has closed. Matt Myers recognized the missed strategic opportunity to influence governments, but also noted that there is never a bad time to advise government about what they should be doing better.

It was noted that the IJC Advisors will be revisiting whether the Commissioners are still interested in undertaking work to scope out the need for a water levels study for Lake of the Woods. An answer should be available during the April Semi-Annual appearance,

- Other watershed issues of concern

The Board inquired about enhancing communications and engagement by providing access to the new IJC SharePoint site. The Secretariat has been testing and setting up the SharePoint site.

ACTION: Secretariat to work with IJC staff to provide access and training to Board members on the new SharePoint site.

5. Closing Remarks

Colonel Jansen thanked the Board for their participation. The meeting adjourned at noon CT.

Drafted by: Abigail Moore USACE, Welsley Hamilton, ECCC, Scott Jutila USACE