

**Minutes**  
**Winter River - Tracadie Bay Watershed Association**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**

**Grand Tracadie School**  
**January 16, 2014, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.**

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**Present:**

Bruce Smith  
Don Mazer  
John Hughes

Lowell Vessey  
Sarah Wheatley

**1. Welcome**

The meeting was convened with a majority of board members present.

**2. Review of minutes from last board meeting**

The minutes from the November board meeting were read and accepted.

**3. Water extraction issues**

- Don wrote to Craig Walker this week requesting the City water extraction data from 2013.
- DFO area director, Michael Cherry, had written a letter to the City about the low water levels and the impact of water extraction on fisheries/habitat in summer 2012, but we don't seem to have a copy of this letter. Bruce will review this, try to obtain a copy, and we will follow up on further actions involving DFO to work on reducing city water extraction.
- We reviewed the following meetings and notes on the water extraction issue

**a. Meeting #1 - with City and Province**

- The minutes from September 23 meeting with City and Province have been circulating again and we have been editing them for clarity.
- At this meeting, Craig Walker was asked what percentage of the City extraction level was used by industry, and he said he didn't know. We heard that it was at least 30%.

**b. Meeting #2 - with our MLAs**

- First meeting with our MLAs on November 18.

**c. Meeting #3 - with Province and MLAs**

- There was a second meeting involving our MLAs on January 13, 2014. Discussed the notes that Bruce took and clarify everyone's interpretation of things that were said and recorded.
- It was a more productive meeting than the September one, less of an adversarial tone.
- The first order of business at this meeting was to determine whether there would be a net reduction in extraction from WR when Miltonvale become operational. Jim Young stated that there will be an immediate reduction in extraction, of some amount depending on the level of production of new wells. The said there would be significant reduction from Brackley, but the amount depends on the level of production from Milton.
- Jim indicated that no new wells in Suffolk or elsewhere in WR area would be considered until at least after Milton was operational. If there were more wells drilled on the watershed they might be further downstream (there was no consensus from members who attended this meeting of whether this point was clear or not). It can't be much further downstream from Suffolk before the river becomes tidal. The wells would have less effect the further downstream they were placed.
- The City is looking at the possibility of another new well field area in North River.
- There was a mention of the long term possibility of stopping all extraction from the Brackley wells at some point, and using it only as a backup when necessary.

- There would be an immediate reduction from WR, then longer term they might have want to increase extraction levels again to keep up with demand.
- Jim kept returning to the fact that the fate of WR depends on the productivity of Miltonvale.
- Our notes were exchanged with Jim Young, and he subsequently made the following modifications to reflect his position in his comments:
  - There will be a reduction in extraction from Winter River Watershed once the MPW becomes operational: the amount can't be predicted at this time.
  - No new well drilling would be considered in our watershed until MPW was operating: once its production is assessed, the wellfields in Winter River would be reviewed.
  - New well fields closer to the head of tide (Suffolk) could not be ruled out but were unlikely.
  - Once MPW is operational and its sustainable production is assessed, then reductions in extraction from Brackley (and possibly Union) pumping stations would be implemented.
  - A key aim of the MPW is to assist in reduction of water extraction from our watershed.

**d. Follow-up from meeting**

- Suggestion of a committee with all three parties would participate (City, Province, Watershed). Jim Young circulated a proposal for a technical committee which would monitor stream conditions
  - We need to look into the use of "ephemeral" streams in the document regarding this committee. Some parties want to categorize streams such as the Brackley branch of the river as ephemeral, but this seasonal lack of water is only because of over extraction, under normal circumstances it would not be ephemeral.
- Don suggested a broader committee focused on policy, practices and communications committee with different members, and that the representatives include policy makers, not lower level employees
- Bruce suggested having a technical committee which would report to the policy committee.
- We will find a way to use the notes Bruce took as documentation of what happened at the Jan.13 meeting.

**e. Further discussions**

- The government is thinking about long term plans, but we are watching conditions deteriorate in much more immediate timeframes. Our group is focussed on the current ecological implications of extraction on Winter River. We are still in a crisis situation right now and for the short term future until Milton comes online.
- In the medium term (2016?) there will be reductions, but right now we still need to think about finding ways to reduce water extraction. We need to find ways to encourage the city to conserve more, to decrease demand now. The City will probably be addressing conservation in their water plan, which is due in 2015. But when will these plans be implemented? There is still no short term solutions.
- At the ECOPEI AGM earlier this week, Daryl Guignon retired biology prof. from UPEI, says that the dry stream beds on Winter River should also be categorized as a fish kill – whether the fish dies from pesticides or from having no water to live in, they are still dead

**4. Committee Reports**

**a. Field work**

- Last committee meeting was Dec 12, 2013
- Staffing/supervisor – the number of employees is dependent on funding. Planning a change of personnel for supervisor role. We still haven't received all equipment back from last year's supervisor. Also have reporting and financial issues outstanding with that employee. We reviewed options for addressing this situation.
- Created a template for a Worker contract to be used with staff in 2014.
- Discussed focussing work effort on a different area of the river in 2014.
- Still working on system of maps for use in the field. Need to buy these by end of fiscal year and use the money that is set aside for this item.

**b. Communications**

- Newsletter
  - Collect more community stories involving historical activities in the watershed and changes that have been noticed over the years. It is another ways of looking at the impact of stressors on the watershed. Stories from elders would be quite good. Possibly present them in some alternate way such as in a meeting, an online format, etc.
  - Pictures
  - Maybe a new board member or volunteer could take this on as a project.
- The new website is up and running now.

**c. Organizational issues**

- AGM – need to pick a date
- Board members – Cathy is going to step down as a co-chair at the end of this year. Don might not continue as co-chair either. Both will probably stay on the board as regular members, but not for sure.
- Perhaps we should set up a nominating committee to find more volunteers and board members. We need to go looking for more help. We would probably function better as a group if we had more people helping.
- Think about different types of events, to get a greater range of people out to participate
  - Canoe outing day?
  - Smelt fishing?
  - Music?

**5. Treasurer's Report**

- This report was emailed to board members prior to the meeting.
- We currently have approximately \$49,000 in the bank. How much of this needs to be spent by the end of the fiscal year? How much can be carried over into 2014 work?(DM-I'm wondering if we should be reporting these numbers and the carry over in the minutes given how the province might view this practice.)
- We have some money set aside for communications projects.
- Some other watershed groups pay for a bookkeeper, but we don't. This could be a possibility at some point.

**6. Coordinator's Report**

- This report was distributed to board members prior to meeting.
- Recreational fisheries application – applied for person to be paid \$20/hour for 20 weeks. What kind of projects would this person work on if we are successful in this application? The application for the Federal fisheries grant would be major projects, the recreational application is for smaller projects – maybe artificial spawning areas.
- Planning for work for 2014, which permits do we need?
- Officer's Club offered to volunteer on some projects in the pond area.
- Bruce attended Fisheries meeting tonight as well.
- Field work committee will meet again to create a more detailed plan and start permitting process.
- Bruce will send an update on charitable status tomorrow. Some funding sources will only give money to groups that have charitable status.

**7. Snowshoe event**

- Will be held February 15 at 10am, meeting at the trailhead in Suffolk.
- Bruce/Cathy will coordinate with Ramona Doyle (City of Charlottetown). Cathy is away until Feb 8. Bruce is away Feb 12-22.
- John and Luke could lead groups.

**8. Deep Water wells**

- Watershed Alliance workshop on deep water wells for potato irrigation which is a major news issue right now (see Guardian article on the front page today).
- Don distributed letters written by the Alliance on this issue and the Central Queens Branch of the PEI Wildlife Federation letter. A group in Trout River also wrote a letter.
- Does our group have an interest in weighing in on this situation?
- Are these proposed wells similar to the wells that the City has in our area?
- The wells would be in high potato production areas, which already have a lot of water issues.

**9. The next meeting will be February 27.**