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**MUSKRAT WATERSHED COUNCIL (MWC)**

Meeting of the Board of Directors

**Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, September 21 2023 6:30 p.m.**

**In person: Basement of the Whitewater Township Building, 44 Main Street, Cobden ON**

**Online through Google Meet**

meet.google.com/ezd-qitc-btk

**+1 587-978-1050 (PIN 460326449)**

1. **Call to Order and Record of Attendance**

**Attendance:**

**Present:** Karen Coulas, Rene Coulas, Wes Gerrish, Barbara Green, Andy Laird, Debbie MacDonald, Darryl McMahon, Megan Rae, Jeff Reeves, Evelyn St. Amour, Greg Stasyna, Dave Thomassin, Claus Trost, Amanda Walt, Michael Walt, Emily Woodcox

**Regrets:**  Rick Adamson, Anna-Maria Blum, Gerry Rook

**Council Representative Regrets:**

Chris Olmstead, Township of Whitewater Region

The meeting of the Muskrat Watershed Council was called to order at 6:32 p.m.

RESTCo Presentation:

Wes Gerrish and Darryl McMahon, representatives of RESTCo (Remote Energy Security Technologies Cooperative) a small Ottawa-based research and development company, attended our meeting. Darryl made a presentation about an algae gathering technology their company has developed. RESTCo’s technology involves using a specially-designed 40hp 5m pontoon boat with an 11” propeller to skim off and collect floating algal blooms from the lake’s surface. RESTCo says research on the 2011 Lake Erie blooms and in the St. Lawrence River (uOttawa) show that phytoplankton blooms appeared before cyanobacteria blooms, and the phytoplankton blooms may be a driver for cyanobacteria blooms (warming the water, competition for sunlight in the short term, deoxygenating the water body in the long term) RESTCo believes that early and continuing removal of algal blooms will aid in reducing the number and volume of cyanobacteria blooms.

MWC members asked several questions: how to keep small aquatic animals from being collected along with the algae (very small ones like tadpoles might get through the grate in the bottom of the boat, but not frogs and turtles); how to move the collected material from the boat to the disposal site (using a small pickup truck with a liner and a cover over it); what to do with the material (compost it, put it in a biodigester); how to transport the boat to all the lakes in our watershed (they have a trailer); can the boat collect “pea-soup” algal spores floating throughout the water column (no, it only collects floating blooms on the water’s surface); how much algal material can they collect (about 10L in 20 minutes); what kind of pump (macerating); when to collect the algae (as soon as an algal bloom is identified); will the collecting process damage and break open cyanobacteria cells (no, the collection system is very gentle and coarse, it doesn’t damage cyanobacteria cells); how many volunteers are required (a paid person to be in charge of the boat with a rotation of a few volunteers who will go out when they have time. It’s not a full-day, every day operation.)

RESTCo is interested in collaborating with MWC to do a pilot project to test this technology. They would like to know by Christmas if MWC is interested in partnering with them. MWC will discuss this possibility at our next meeting on October 19, 2023. For more information, please visit RESTCo’s website at <http://www.restco.ca>

1. **Adoption of Agenda**

Dave approved the agenda, Debbie seconded it.

**Approval of minutes from August 17, 2023 meeting:**

Rene approved the minutes, Jeff seconded.

1. **Treasurer’s Report** - Debbie

See attached treasurer’s report.

SBCNA Bingo

We have three volunteer dates coming up: October 22, November 19 and December 17, 2023. All shifts are on Sunday afternoons from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. Barb will volunteer with Debbie on October 22, Claus will join Debbie on November 19 and December 17.

Claus clarified that SBCNA Bingo funding can be used for any project as long as you are not paying anyone in your own organization to do the work.

Tax Returns

Debbie has completed and processed the Annual Return Form 4022 for Corporations Canada Not-for Profit. Debbie has also completed and processed the Form T3010 Registered Charity Information Return. The employee T4 will be completed at the end of the year for our summer employee, Megan Rae.

Insurance Renewal

Our Cade insurance premium has been renewed. The premium has increased by $38.38. The total for the 2023-24 insurance is $1,331.64. These amounts will appear in our November 2023 Treasurer’s Report since the bill will be paid after our October meeting.

1. **Directors’ Reports**

**Agricultural Committee** - Karen

Strategic Plan and Bylaws

MWC has updated its strategic plan and bylaws - do we have to submit them to Corporations Canada & Canada Revenue Corporation? Debbie has never been asked for that. We have to keep all our minutes. Debbie had to send in the Baker Tilly report.

Beach Signs

Our beach sign that was posted on a tree near Cobden Beach to explain the aerators we installed is gone. Rene spoke to someone at the beach who didn’t know where it was. The boat cleaning sign is still there. The Health Unit had a sign near ours which is also gone. An employee of the municipality said they took down the Health Unit sign but not MWC’s. A discussion followed as to whether we should replace the sign about the aerators. Dave suggested we could include the information about aerators on the back of the billboard sign we have been hoping to erect for some time. Rene said people would be more apt to look at the billboard if it were at the beach instead of at the boat launch.We have permission from township to put up a billboard. All we need to do it choose the size and location and ask township to give final approval. Rene moved that we decide what we are doing by next spring and allocate $2,500 for a sign. Claus knows who made the signs for the recreational trail and he could get those plans. Rene and Claus will be in charge of designing the sign.

Nesting boxes

Dave said Algonquin College has nesting boxes for bats, ducks and other birds. He will find out what boxes are available. We could help Algonquin College distribute them.

South Nation Conservation Authority

There was a day-long tour at South Nation Conservation Authority about their projects but we heard about it too late to attend. Megan will subscribe to their mailing list so we can keep informed about future events.

**Science Committee** - Dave

Beach Mats

Aerators - Michael said we can shut down the compressors any time. He has been maintaining them regularly. They must be shut down by Dec. 1. We will meet at the beach to remove the mats & buoys on Saturday, October 30 at 1 p.m. Andy will provide his boat . Rene will bring his side by side and we will put the mats on pallets.

Algonquin College

Dave is teaching the community class which is doing several types of projects:

Natural Edge:

This project is in partnership with Watersheds Canada and involves five properties: three on Muskrat Lake and two on Olmstead- Jeffreys Lake. Watersheds Canada will supply the plants. Planting Day is Nov. 3, 2023. Ten people will work on each site all on the same day. There is a sign up form online. Megan will send the form to Barb and Amanda to send out. A link was sent privately to participants. Megan used the last name of each property owner to designate the location.

Agricultural themed project:

This project will involve sampling agricultural soils, an introduction to beekeeping, and best management practices on different farms. The students will also help stabilize some shoreline erosion at Pumphouse Lake with a few plants. Rene is the community partner for this project.

Invasive species project:

This project will take place in five streams, basins or rivers around the watershed, including Lake Dore and Mink Lake. Students will use different sampling methods and work on developing a catalogue to identify different invasive species.

Fish bundles:

On Friday, October 20, 2023 students will make 12 fish bundles for Mink Lake. We will need cinder blocks, marine-quality rope and maybe wire to tie the bundles of branches together. We will be looking for a boat to help with this project. Andy might be able to provide a boat but not a trailer. We could put out a request on FaceBook. Dave will send Amanda the information to post the request. We would be able to reimburse for gas. Dave moved that MWC provide $300 to purchase cinder blocks and rope.

Whitewater Brewery:

Whitewater Brewery will store the effluent from flushing out their system in a holding tank and will release it gradually. They will let let the township know and will release it at an appropriate time. The township is able to handle the waste but not all at the same time.

Your TV

Karen met with Planner Alex Benzie and Mayor Neil Nicholson about setting up a series of visits to other townships to introduce MWC to the new councils, ask for recruitment support and help the councils understand the services we offer and provide. They agreed the tour idea is good but suggested MWC make a video presentation about our projects that could be used by a delegation to reach out to other townships for support. This is beneficial for grants. Your TV said they owed us five free tapings which could help with making the video - their deadline is the end of October. Megan will discuss this more with Your TV on September 26.

**Communications & Media** - Amanda

Community Services Recovery Fund (CSRF)

Since there are strict media rules around communications about this project, please contact Amanda before communicating anything about it.

**Fundraising Committee** - Karen

We are continuing to research future grants MWC could apply for.

1. **Old Business** - Karen

Muskoka Watershed Council: Correction - Alex Benzie/Dave Thomassin

This item was deferred until our November agenda.

Berm projects: We will need to talk more with the township about this.

Billboard Signs - Rene - please see Agriculture above

1. **Other/New Business**

WWT meeting/video - Karen - please see Your TV above.

Presentations:

Megan Rae will make a presentation about MWC to Opeongo High School students on October 20, 2023, and will provide grant training for MWC volunteers that evening.

MWC has arranged for Little Ray’s Nature Centre to make two presentations to the children at Cobden PS on October 27, 2023: one for Kindergarten to grade 4 and one for grades 5 to 8. Little Ray’s is the largest exotic animal rescue in Canada, with one of the most extensive and diverse animal education and outreach programs in North America. Evelyn will introduce Little Ray’s on behalf of MWC.

Taste of the Valley Cobden

We decided not to staff a booth at Taste of the Valley on Oct 14, 2023.

1. **Next Meeting**

Thursday, October 19, 2023, 6:30 p.m.

**In person: Basement of the Whitewater Township Building, 44 Main Street, Cobden**

**Online: Through Google Meet**

meet.google.com/ezd-qitc-btk

**+1 587-978-1050 (PIN 460326449)**

1. Adjournment: 9:05 p.m.

**Minutes recorded and submitted by:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 Barbara Green, Secretary, Muskrat Watershed Council

**Approved by:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 Karen Coulas, Chair, Muskrat Watershed Council

DON’T FORGET TO RENEW YOUR MWC MEMBERSHIP FOR 2023!

COST IS $20 PER MEMBERSHIP

IT’S EASY TO RENEW - JUST SEND AN E-TRANSFER TO:

treasurer@muskratwatershedcouncil.com

(Please put your name and email address in the message box so we can email your tax receipt.)