

# Muskrat Watershed Council



## MUSKRAT WATERSHED COUNCIL (MWC)

Meeting of the Board of Directors

November 19, 2020

Meeting Minutes

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

The meeting of the Muskrat Watershed Council was called to order at 6:30 pm

#### **Attendance:**

**Present:** Karen Coulas, Rene Coulas, Jeff Reeves, Barbara Green, Debbie MacDonald, Megan Rae, David Thomassin

**Regrets:** Erin Dolan, Andy Laird, Gerry Rook, Thomas Watt, Michael Gulliver, Evelyn St. Amour, Vince Gervais, Karl Lauten, Marie Janick Robitaille, Andrea Bishop, Steve Saunders

**Council Representative Present:** Mike Moore, Township of Whitewater Region

**Council Representative Regrets:** Claus Trost, Township of Laurentian Valley Township:

### **2. Adoption of Agenda**

Jeff approved the agenda, Rene seconded it.

#### **Approval of previous minutes:**

Debbie approved the minutes first, Jeff seconded them.

### **3. Treasurer's Report**

- Please see attached treasurer's report prepared by MWC treasurer, Debbie MacDonald.
- We have received a \$2,500 Cabelas grant - see attached treasurer's report.
- Karen moved that we to go ahead and pay the Watersheds Canada bill for the professional tree planters who planted the last 15,000 trees and plants this fall. All were in agreement.

- Jeff approved the treasurer's report, Megan seconded it.

#### **4. Directors' Reports:**

##### **Agricultural Committee Update – Karen and Rene Coulas**

- Rene has a couple of people lined up for projects if we decide on a project.

##### **Science Committee Update – David Thomassin**

- Dave thanked Jim Lawrence, Julie Sylvestre and especially Megan Rae, who worked together under a very tight deadline to write and submit a grant application for the Great Lakes Local Action Fund.
- The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs has awarded a Place to Grow grant to the Township of Whitewater Region to conduct an agricultural impact surface water study.
- Species at Risk Stewardship Program grant:  
At the last Science Committee meeting, turtle fencing and turtle basking platforms for the Cobden Marsh were discussed. Building these would be good stewardship and good publicity for the MWC. It would also tie in nicely with the berm project in the Cobden marsh, as we would need to create new habitat to replace any that might be destroyed by the berm project. Dave has found a possible provincial grant we could apply for to cover this. He learned about the Species at Risk Stewardship Program grant from MPP John Yakabuskie's grant researcher, who gave Dave a list of possible grants to apply for. It is possible Mr. Yakabuskie's office might be able to help us with the application as they helped us before with the Trillium grant. Dave will ask if they can help with this one. The deadline to apply would likely be April 2021 and the project would take place in summer 2021.
- The next Science Committee meeting will be December 9, 2020 at 1:00 pm.

##### **Communications & Media**

- Best management practices (BMPs): Dave did an agriculture project about BMPs which recommended canvassing farmers door to door and offering BMP consulting for a fee. This might be a project for a possible MWC employee.
- Ontario Agri-Food Research Initiative grant was introduced. This helps eligible organizations fund agri-food research projects.
- The Ontario Agri-Food Research Initiative, under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, offers funding for research that stimulates innovation to support the growth and competitiveness of Ontario's agri-food sector, promote food safety and strengthen rural

communities. Algonquin College has used this funding stream in the past for projects within the Muskrat Watershed.

Two proposed research areas that the MWC could apply for this year include:

a. Research Focus Area: Analysis of BMP Adoption

Research question: What are the social, behavioral and economic barriers to the adoption of Best Management Practices in different production systems (field crops, horticulture and livestock)?

Research problem/gap: Adoption of BMPs and participation in BMP cost share programs is limited to a certain segment of the farm population. More information is needed to understand the barriers to broader uptake. Is it the message, the messengers, market conditions, risk, uncertainty etc.?

Desired outcome: A research publication/report which outlines key barriers, and suggestions for how to overcome these barriers, whether for program design, communications, or other approaches and tools not currently in our government toolbox.

AND/OR

b. Research question: How can landowners who do not participate in Environmental Stewardship programs be engaged to improve the environmental stewardship of their lands?

Research problem/gap: How do we encourage new entrants to agri-environmental programs? What do we know about those who have never or seldom participated in government or other agri-environmental programs? What are the tools, information and communication tactics and strategies to reach producers who have never shown any interest in these programs?

Desired outcome: A better understanding of target audiences, and a strategy to target and increase enrollment in agri-environmental stewardship programs using new approaches.

- Research projects should be completed no later than January 2023.
- Total funds available: \$150,000
- Submission of Intent (general Information and Peer Reviewers sections are completed) is due on Dec 10, 2020
- Fully completed application is due on January 8, 2021

We would need to think of a project and create a project plan if we apply for this grant. Karen suggested OFA members could ask their members to be be

surveyed. Rene commented that BMPs would vary depending on the type of soil. Megan suggested talking to farmers in other parts of Renfrew County, not just in our watershed. The fact that farming practices here lag behind those in southern Ontario could form part of our rationale for applying. Rene suggested we go ahead and apply and find volunteers or students to help later. We might recruit older 4H members as volunteers or apply to Canada Summer Jobs to fund summer students.

- Natural Edge Project  
This three-year project is now finished. We planted 45,000 trees covering 28 US acres. This year's plants were enormous and had big roots that were harder to plant so we paid the professional tree planters we hired 40 cents per plant instead of the usual 30 cents. The only thing left to do for the project is write up a report, which Megan will do.
- We have applied for a Great Lakes Local Action Fund grant to plant 3,000 more trees next fall. This would bring our total to 50,000 trees and shrubs planted.
- Megan spoke about Isabelle Ouimette, a Carleton University student whose final project was to analyze the data the MWC has collected over the last five years. Isabelle put the data into a website. Julie Sylvestre and Megan worked with her. They produced maps which link to the data (Geographic Information System (GIS) maps). The maps show phosphorus and conductivity over several years at all of our sampling points. Megan is working on a way to put these maps on the MWC website.
- Social media:  
Megan encouraged us to "like" and share the MWC FaceBook posts to help spread the word about our activities. Mike suggested that Megan call Ivan who will arrange to have our MWC posts included on the FaceBook page of the Township of Whitewater Region Council.

### **Fundraising Committee Update - Karen**

- On October 23, 2020, Barb, Debbie and Karen attended a session on Fundraising with the National Capital Environmental Nonprofit Network (NCENN). It was organized by Kathryn Norman and Kristina Inrig of NCENN and featured guest speaker, Sam Laprade, a certified fundraising executive and fundraising strategist based in Ottawa. Sam presented many fundraising ideas, such as enhancing your Canada Helps page, engaging donors by asking them to fill in a survey and sending handwritten thank you notes to donors. Many of her suggestions could apply to our MWC fundraising.

### **5. Old Business – Updates**

- Discussed above

### **6. Other/New Business**

- Subsidy for Wages: A discussion followed about wage subsidy grants we could apply for to cover Megan's salary, whose present contract ends in December 2020. Some grants only provide funding for new employees. Karen will meet privately with Megan to discuss possibilities. Rene thanked Megan for all her hard work with the tree planting.
- Call on raw Septic disposal: Both Megan and Karen were contacted recently by local residents with complaints about raw sewage being dumped near a water source and a wetland. A discussion followed about the correct procedure to follow if we are contacted again about such issues.
- Dave suggested we write up a policy on how to deal with such complaints and discuss it with the MWC Council. We could respond that the MWC can provide information about conservation and water quality but if the person has questions about permits etc. they should contact the Ministry of the Environment (MOE).
- Mayor Mike Moore said residents must obtain permission from the MOE before dumping. The Township of Whitewater Region is not informed when this permission is granted and only acts if they receive a complaint.

7. **Next Meeting:** December 17, 2020, at 6:30 pm on Google Meet

8. Adjournment: 8:05 pm

**Minutes recorded by**

\_\_\_\_\_ Barbara Green , Volunteer,  
Muskrat Watershed Council

**Minutes submitted by:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Erin Dolan, Secretary, Muskrat Watershed Council

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

Karen Coulas, Chair, Muskrat Watershed Council