

**Minutes of the Williams Lake Conservation Company (WLCC)
Annual General Meeting – 16 November 2022 – via Zoom teleconference**

Welcome

The zoom meeting was hosted by WLCC President Murray Coolican, who called the meeting to order and gave a warm welcome to all attendees. Webmaster Philip Howard provided a brief tutorial on zoom controls for raising hands and muting microphones.

Approval of the Agenda

Murray Coolican called for a motion to approve the Agenda which had been posted online and circulated to members. Debbie Hall so moved, and the motion was seconded by Robin Whyte, and approved by all present.

Approval of the Draft Minutes of the 2021 Annual General Meeting

Murray Coolican called for a motion to approve the Draft Minutes of the Annual General Meeting from last year. It was so moved by Melanie Dobson, seconded by Cathy Vaughan, and approved by all present.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Debbie Hall presented the report on the fiscal year running from June 1, 2021 to May 31, 2022. She provided details of the current WLCC bank balance of \$2563.34 as of May 2022, and a review of expenditures and income from membership, donations and an HRM grant. A motion to approve the financial statement was put forward by Melanie Dobson and seconded by Martha Leary. There were no objections, and the Treasurer's Report was approved.

Williams Lake Water Levels and Quality Testing

Melanie Dobson displayed a detailed watershed map to discuss a report on water flows done by Rob Jamieson's students that will be highly useful in understanding both current issues and making projections for the future. She showed a slide and reported on work done by David Patriquin and Charles Bull dealing with construction in the area and concerns about water quality.

Melanie reported on water quality testing in July for Williams and Colpitt lakes. A topographical map showed water flows, and also where sampling has been done to measure salinity and pH each year for the past 20 years. Melanie showed a chart with fecal coliform measurements, which are negligible at the dam end of the lake, and well within safe limits elsewhere.

Another slide showed water quality testing results, with many parameters (ie. potassium levels) showing no change over many years. However she reported that alkalinity has

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undergone a subtle increase from 1980 to 1922 at the Williams Lake Road end of the lake, likely due to road run-off. Maintaining good water flow through the lake is essential to balance pH levels as water moves towards the dam.

Melanie noted the importance of membership dues in funding the testing that allows the WLCC to spot worrying trends. She also exhibited a graph linking low water levels with scant rainfall, and showing how the pattern has worsened in the last 6 years. Rainfall is not the only factor, but is aided by hotter summers, and less snow melt in spring. Another slide showed the date when water levels rebound each year after summer's end. Williams Lake is shallow and responds quickly to drought or rain; fixing the dam will help keep water levels up.

A final set of slides showed the blue-green algae blooms in both Cunard Pond and Williams Lake, and noted the location where they occurred. The algae prefers warm slow-moving water high in nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus, which can come from lawn treatments via storm drains. There is an associated algal toxin which can harm the liver of pets or humans.

A question sparked a discussion on the need to preserve water inflows, and to take a stand against developments that would disrupt them. Melanie pointed out that the dam repairs would keep water levels higher, and so also make the water temperature cooler, discouraging algae. Duckweed has been spotted in Williams Lake, and should be reported if seen.

Murray thanked Melanie for her invaluable 20 years of data on the health of Williams Lake.

Williams Lake Dam

Cathy Vaughan outlined the various meetings the WLCC and its partner organization, the Williams Lake Dam Association (WLDA), have had with NS Lands, and thanked Brendan Maguire for keeping the issue on the legislative floor. She reported on the media campaign that attracts the attention of journalists, with a focus on loss of public access to the lake, and noted that there are two new promotional videos to raise awareness – one on Saving Williams Lake, and the other Protecting the Backlands, a crucial part of the lake's watershed.

Murray expressed the appreciation of the group for all the work by Cathy Vaughan, Margo Kerr and others, including Sanja Trussell's six-year-old son, in keeping the dam issue front and centre.

Sparrows Hawks and Doves Bird Study

Martha Leary reported on the study which has yielded important information on bird species in the Backlands. WLCC partnered with the William Spry Library to schedule four birding walks, two of them in the Shaw Wilderness Park (SWP). The walks introduced people to the joy of birding, but also highlighted that birds in North America are at risk, with numbers reduced by 29%.

Leslie Randall of the WLCC produced an introductory guide to bird watching, with the front devoted to describing the history and geology of the area and the habitats that support a variety of birds. The back provided a map of the main trail through the SWP, showing sixteen species of birds that inhabit four unique ecosystems there. Martha noted that more bird walks are planned, and that HRM funding will mean Leslie can produce a second guide, this time on invasive species in the Backlands. Murray commented that the bird study has encouraged local people to be aware of, and get involved with, the WLCC.

HRM Regional Plan

Kathleen Hall reported on work regarding the second review of the HRM Regional Plan, which is now in Phase 4. The WLCC has made submissions, with a focus on the land zoned Urban Reserve in the Backlands, which will have a direct impact on the Shaw Wilderness Park. In an effort to persuade city planners that this land should not be developed, there will be site visits with Patricia Manuel and David Patriquin to elucidate the ecology of the Backlands, especially the fact that it is fire prone. In Spring 2023 the Staff report will go to Council; in advance of that the public campaign to create awareness will be ramped up.

Nominations and election of the Board for 2022-2023

Robin Whyte moved to accept the current slate of board members (President Murray Coolican, Treasurer Debbie Hall and Secretary Leslie Randall). Martha Leary seconded the motion. As there were no objections, the Board was elected for the coming year.

Question Period and New Business

Murray Coolican solicited any questions from the attendees. Robin Whyte raised the issue of the recent creation of a new parking lot near Hartlen Park in the Governor's Brook subdivision – essentially paving over a wetland. The land appears to not meet the 20 metre riparian setback, and is in the Williams Lake watershed area. Patricia Manuel noted that the municipality would have done the paving, which requires a permit from NS Environment. After discussion it was agreed that Robin Whyte, Patricia Manuel and Melanie Dobson will visit the site and report back. The WLCC will inquire with Pattie Cuttell if a permit was granted and how the process unfolded. Issues to look for include increased run-off with salt content, and the loss of water flows diverted to any storm drains.

Adjournment

Murray Coolican thanked all presenters and zoom participants for their ongoing interest in and support for the WLCC. The meeting was adjourned.