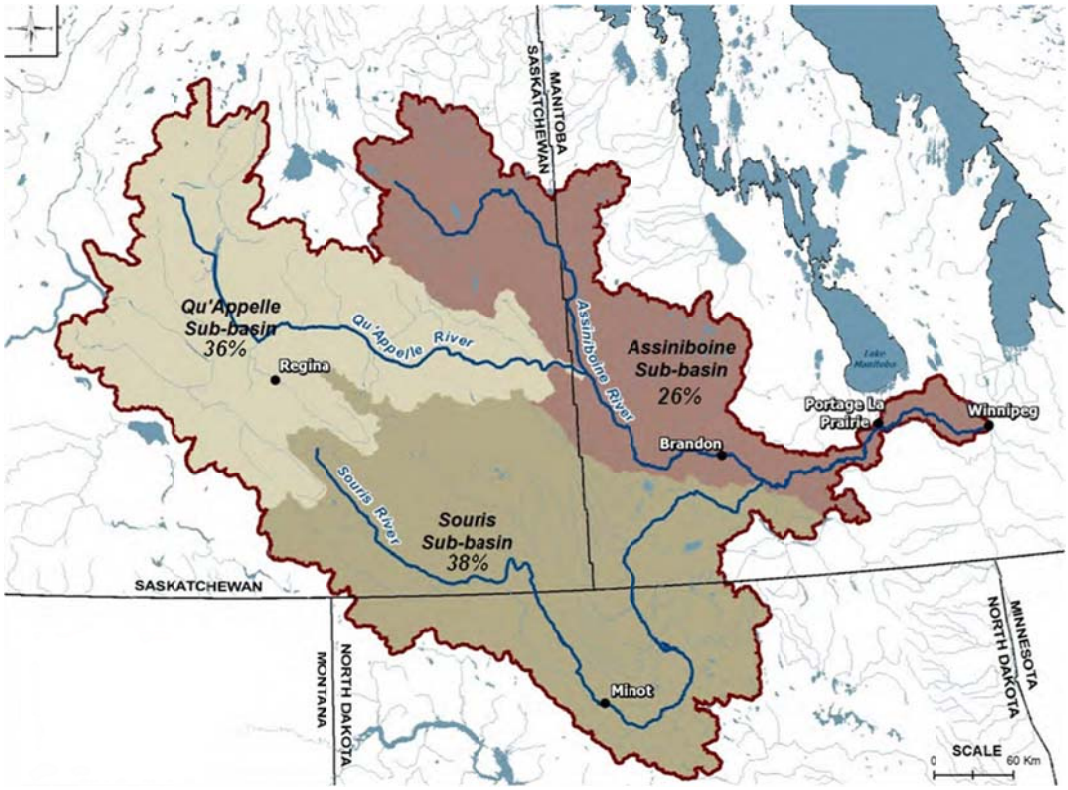
Assiniboine River Basin Initiative
Phase 1 - April 9th, 2014
** Summary Report **



09 April 2014

masterkey
business solutions

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Overview

On December 19th in Brandon, Manitoba, an Assiniboine River Basin (ARB) Planning Committee was formed to examine the management effectiveness of the Assiniboine River Basin. The Planning Committee consisted of senior representatives from agriculture, water/conservation organizations, and local, provincial and state governments from Saskatchewan, North Dakota and Manitoba. It was determined there was a strong need to implement a grassroots workshop on March 26th in Virden, Manitoba to define the needs of key stakeholders in the Assiniboine River Basin and to discuss whether a separate organization could assist in improving the overall management framework for future generations.

The goals of the March workshop were:

1. To engage a committed planning committee that has holistic representation of jurisdictions (SK, ND, MB) and stakeholder organizations - agriculture, water and conservation organizations, and all levels of local, provincial, state and federal government.
2. To create and execute a workshop in the Assiniboine River Basin, inviting all grassroots stakeholders and creating a safe environment for open dialogue to determine whether a separate organization could assist in improving the overall management framework now and for future generations.
3. To attract funding sources through event registration fees, and sponsorships to offset some of the financial requirements of this initiative.
4. To leverage and transform this initiative into a long term organization capable of coordinating sustainable effective watershed management within the Qu'Appelle, Souris and Assiniboine Basins.

Highlights of the workshop planning process include:

- 8 Planning Committee e-conference calls were conducted over a period of 12 weeks.
- An invitation email (or fax) was sent to over 600 invitees.
- Awareness materials included an invite handout, 2 page brochure, sponsorship packages, event and sponsorship signage, a customized handout folder for every participant, and workshop presentations by the featured speakers.
- An engagement process including personal contact with over 100 stakeholders in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and North Dakota via phone, email and face-face meetings.
- Approximately 130 people participated in the workshop.

Funding and Sponsorships

- $13,826 was approved by Manitoba Agriculture Food and Rural Development (MAFRD) via the Growing Forward II "Growing Competitiveness – Agri-Extension" program.
- 20 sponsors were contacted and $4,000 in sponsorships were raised through Keystone Agricultural Producers (KAP), Manitoba Pork Council (MPC), Manitoba Beef Producers (MBP), Manitoba Canola Growers Association (MCGA), Dairy Farmers of Manitoba(DFM), and Andrew Agencies (Virden local business).
- An additional $2,000 was requested by the North Dakota State Water Commission (but due to time limitations did not come through). Interest was expressed in support for the next phase.
- An additional $5,000 was requested from Manitoba Conservation & Water Stewardship (follow up required).

ARB Portal

- A 10 page ARB portal was developed with "one stop shop" information including the ARB

Planning Committee, Projects, Research Information and Papers, Industries and Associations, Watershed Information, Government Information, and Corporate Sponsors.
- An ARB "blog" was also developed and is currently in use.

The workshop featured:
- Greetings from the Mayor of Virden - Jeff McConnell.
- Background and greeting from PIN - Terry Fehr, Chair, Prairie Improvement Network.
- Introduction presentation from Murray Grant, MasterKey Business Solutions.
- Featured speakers Robert Sandford (EPCOR Chair), and Lance Yohe (ex-Director, Red River Basin Commission).
    - 3 breakout sessions (10 tables)—WHY, WHAT, HOW, WHO (details in appendix)
      WHY - Should we work together and use a basin wide approach?
    - WHAT - What are the main issues and what would you like to see happen in the next 25 years? Are you willing to help?
    - HOW - Should we meet again in the fall, what is the agenda, and what planning steps are required? How do we need to prepare to become a basin-like organization?
    - WHO – Should we continue to use a (this) planning committee approach? Who else should be on it?

Key themes identified from breakout sessions were as follows:
- **A Unified Management Structure –** We can address our problems better by working together. We need to take a system wide basin approach as it will allow us to be more proactive, encourage teamwork, enable balanced decision, increase focus on end-end quality, improves communication, invites science, and expands stakeholder base and strength.
- **Build the Stakeholder base -** The watershed impacts individuals, businesses, and organizations across Saskatchewan, North Dakota and Manitoba; challenges exist to coordinate international and interprovincial response. Many stakeholders exist with different interests and delivery timelines.
- **Communication -** There are many projects and activities looking at watershed problems, but the system to share information and define the decision making process is not well understood by all stakeholders in a consistent way. There is a need for an information dissemination and knowledge management system for stakeholders to contribute to and stay informed.
- **Water Quantity** – Excessive water levels in spring devastate property and cause massive infrastructure & environmental damage. Climate change also contributes to flooding as the atmosphere holds more moisture, making it less likely to predict torrential downpours causing flooding. Drought periods lead to restricted economic activity and economic loss. A growing economy throughout the watershed will place more demand upon existing supply.
- **Water Storage and diversion -** Water storage (dams, ponds, marshland, potholes, etc.) across the watershed need to be sufficient to help mitigate major floods and provide resources during droughts. Conflict between economic, environmental and social uses of these retained waters need to be identified and addressed for the benefit of all watershed users. Holding or storing water has a direct positive effect on water quality, preventing movement of fertile soil nutrients through the river systems and ending up in our lakes.
- **Water Quality** – Nutrient loading of rivers and lakes is a result of both urban and rural sources. Farm-based nutrients are being lost due to excess water flow over nutrient-rich soils resulting in economic challenges for farmers as well as contributing to eutrophication of lakes throughout the drainage basin (Lake of the Prairies, the Qu'Appelle Valley Lakes, Rafferty, etc.), and ultimately into Lake Winnipeg.

- **Environmental Challenges –** Wetland conservation, eco-system health and bio-diversity could be protected or improved through applied best management practices and linked revenue identification for land-owners.
- **Required Research** – Significant research is underway that can be accessed, but more emphasis is required on the Assiniboine River Basin as a whole. Science and research based organizations should be invited to participate and advise the Planning Committee.
- **Funding and Leadership** – This is recognized as a significant undertaking by all stakeholders, and a common theme was to identify find new paths to funding sources. It was also agreed by all that an unbiased organization should continue to lead the ARB Initiative in a collaborative fashion as was demonstrated in Phase 1.

The unanimous feedback at the end of the session was:

Continue to use the existing planning committee for Phase 2, with PIN continuing to lead the facilitation and coordination of the Planning Committee towards a workshop in the fall, and consider inviting other interested stakeholder groups.

Of the 98 people that responded to the event survey, the overall satisfaction rating for the workshop was 86% (4.3 out of a possible 5.0).

Recommendations

1. **Communicate Phase 1 workshop success, and the plan going forward**
   a. A workshop report should be drafted and communicated to the Planning Committee, approved, and distributed to all participants and workshop invitees
   b. All workshop materials should be posted on the ARB Portal and communicated to the Planning Committee, workshop participants and invitees.
   c. Further development of the ARB Portal should provide ongoing communications to the Planning Committee and stakeholders on an ongoing basis and up to a workshop in the fall of 2014.
   d. Frequent and ongoing, informative communications should be provided to the Planning Committee and invited participants.
   e. Contact names should continue to be collected (using the contact database developed in Phase2) and used to invite stakeholders to a fall workshop.

2. **Develop a plan for a fall workshop**
   a. A detailed work plan should be developed to achieve a successful workshop in the fall.
   b. The plan should be reviewed and approved by the Planning committee, and communicated to all ARB stakeholders.
   c. The plan should include definition of goals, funding required, work breakdown structure, PIN's role, Planning Committee role, deliverables, funding plan, sponsorships, speakers, location, and agenda.

3. **Continue Developing the Planning Committee Development**
   a. PIN should identify a project leader to define, coordinate, and facilitate the ARB Planning Committee as soon as possible.
   b. The project leader should define any additional staff or resources to execute the plan to a successful workshop in the fall.

c. The project leader, working with the Planning Committee, should lead the process to define an interim governance model for the Planning Committee, including identification of a subcommittee executive team to provide multi-jurisdictional leadership.
d. The Planning Committee should seek representation broad representation from Saskatchewan, North Dakota, and Manitoba in the following areas:
    i. Major industries in the Assiniboine River Basin including but not limited to agriculture, oil and gas, and mining.
    ii. Local government including major cities, towns, municipalities, villages, rural municipalities and counties.
    iii. Water, conservation, and stewardship organizations.
    iv. Provincial and State governments.
    v. Science, technical and research institutions, communities and organizations.

    It is important to note several key organizations that will continue to be sought after for direct participation on the Planning Committee as follows:
    - Government of Saskatchewan – Water Security Agency (WSA)
    - Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM)
    - Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association (SUMA)
    - Saskatchewan Associations of Watersheds (SAW)
    - Note – 2 watershed organizations already participate on the ARB PC
    - North Dakota Water Resource Districts and Counties in the ARB area
    - Note – several counties and WRD's are already represented on the ARB PC
    - ND State Water Commission (although they are already closely connected through Lance Yohe's relationship)

    The Planning Committee will explore additional representation from RM's, counties, cities, and municipalities but before doing so, a governance and management structure will have to be established.

e. Small groups should be considered within the Planning Committee to focus on the future structure of an ARB Organization including but not limited to:
    i. Future board size/scope, representation, governance models, funding options (sponsorships, funding programs, memberships, etc), and technical support from academia or research organizations.
    ii. Articles of incorporation, by-laws, office location, staffing, business plan, operating budget, sustainable cash flow model, etc.
    iii. Subsequent workshops and conferences beyond phase 2.

4. Secure Funding

a. Sponsorships – Continue to build a sponsor target list and pursue aggressively for the support of the fall workshop. Enhance sponsorship value by considering ARB Portal advertising, newsletter spots, radio interview spots, event booths, signage, logos, and workshop recognition via handout advertising.
b. Public Sector Funding Programs – Continue to pursue public sector funding focused at Growing Forward II via Manitoba and Saskatchewan jurisdictions, Sustainable Innovations development Fund, Western Economic Diversification federal programs, and other provincial and federal programs.
c. Foundations – Seven private foundations are identified as having potential funding support. It is recommended the following three be pursued immediately: The Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation, Thomas Sill Foundation, and RBC's Blue Water Fund.

Appendix - Workshop Questions (detailed responses)

1. WHY (25 min breakout, 15 min plenary report)
   i. Could we address our problems better by working together? (Y, N)
   ii. Do you we need a basin wide approach would work? (Y, N)
   iii. And why or why not? (Open answers)
2. WHAT (45 min breakout, 30 min plenary report)
   i. What in your mind are the main issues? (A, B, C)
   ii. What would you like to see happen in the next 25 years? i.e. what should "it" look like? (A, B, C)
   iii. Are you willing to help us get to this vision? (Y, N)
3. HOW (45 min breakout, 30 min plenary report)
   i. Do you think we should meet again in the fall? (Y, N)
   ii. What would we want to accomplish in the fall? List
   iii. What are the next steps to prepare for the fall? List
4. HOW – 2 (30 min breakout, 30 min plenary report)
   i. What "things" do we need to operate as a basin organization? (A, B, C)
5. WHO (30 min open forum)
   i. Should we continue to use the planning committee approach? (Y, N)
   ii. Should we continue to operate with this current planning committee? (Y,N)
   iii. Should it be larger? If so, who else should be on it? (Y,N and list)
6. SUMMATION
   i. Here is what we heard
   ii. Here are the proposed next steps

1a) Could we address our problems better by working together? (Y, N)

- ✓ YES by all 10 tables
- ✓ Comments – a resounding yes by all. Unanimous. We can address our problems by working together

1b) Do you we need to take a basin wide approach? (Y, N)

- ✓ YES by 9 tables
- ✓ 1 table indicated "depends" – on how the group addresses the issues.
- ✓ Decision to proceed forward

1c) Why do you think a basin approach would work?

Each table provided many detailed reasons as to why a basin approach would work. Detailed responses have been collected by PIN staff and are available upon request.

A summary of responses are summarized as follows:

- ✓ Basin Wide (systems) approach is better
- ✓ To be more proactive (not reactive)
- ✓ Encourages team work
- ✓ Enables better "balanced" decisions
- ✓ Quality Focus

- ✓ Improves Communication
- ✓ Cross jurisdiction
- ✓ Invites Science
- ✓ More effective management
- ✓ Expands Stakeholder base and strength

Specific responses for each trend are as follows:

Basin Wide (systems) approach is better - Focus on ARB, physical size, complexity, Water flows travels between jurisdictions, water does not see political boundary, can take system inventory of mother nature and man-made structures. Hard to link cause-effect relationship of many small scale projects. Top down management establishes standards; bottom up means sometimes you cannot see the forest for the trees. The whole can be greater than the sum of the parts.

To be more proactive (not reactive) - Focus on risk mitigation and prevention of damage (instead of reacting to catastrophe).

Encourages team work - We are in this together - by working together we believe we can achieve better results.

Enables better "balanced" decisions - Water quantity and water quality are interrelated. Find the right balance. Balance the different needs of stakeholder groups. Balance the architecture to deal with too much water (floods) or not enough water (droughts). Look at solutions like distributed water management to address both. Balance need to drain land for farming with conservation/ecological needs of environmental sustainability

Quality Focus - Set consistent benchmarks across the basin from source to termination point. Everybody is accountable to maintain quality.

Improves Communication – Improve communication across jurisdictions and between various stakeholders and government in a consistent and frequent manner.

Cross jurisdiction - Water does not know jurisdictional boundaries.

Invite Science - Science is universal and should be applied across jurisdictions in a consistent and transparent manner. Focus on fact based decision making. Provide a focal point for academia to direct their knowledge.

More effective management - Align management tools, less talk and more action, accomplish something tangible but minimize admin costs.

Expands Stakeholder base and strength - There are similar organizations within different jurisdictions. Bring them together to share common issues and solutions. Bring provincial and state governments and stakeholders together - create a safe environment for collaborative problem solving. Expand stakeholder base to include all those affected by water challenges - even those outside the basin but affected by it. Strength in numbers - get local support.

Additional details can be found in a detailed excel spreadsheet containing all flip chart responses.

2a) What in your mind are the main issues?

- ✓ Water Architecture
- ✓ Communication
- ✓ Sustainable Environment
- ✓ Funding
- ✓ Government Alignment
- ✓ Knowledge & Info
- ✓ Land Use
- ✓ Organization & Management
- ✓ Planning to optimize
- ✓ Use Science approach
- ✓ Stakeholders
- ✓ Mother Nature's Challenges
- ✓ Man Made Challenges

- **Water Architecture -** Levels and flooding on lakes and river systems, swamps, man-made structures (dams, diversions) and decision making process to operate, connecting head waters, potholes, etc

- **Communication -** Vast amounts of information, need to improve, not sure who to send info to, not sure where to find info ...

- **Sustainable Environment -** balance economics and environment, environmental decision making, value of eco-systems,

- **Funding -** Who is going to pay, what are the costs, are they justified, what about corporations helping out...

- **Government Alignment -** Is there the political will, inconsistent regulations and policy across jurisdictions, better long term vision and planning, aligning various government bodies to a common goal and results, measurable commitment.

- **Knowledge and Information -** Lake and river info, info on man-made structures, educating people, understanding the issues. Where do I find information? Who do I send info to? Land use conflict. Bank erosion, nutrient leaching. Understanding land use changes.

- **Organization & Management -** Too many stakeholders with different needs, no mission statement or common goals. More action (less talking). Give us hope - aim for a direction and align people. Align industry. Balance priorities. Enforce policies. Lack of basin wide management. Fractured or unclear decision making processes. Accountability and measurement.

- **Planning to optimize -** Investment and return, more reactive than proactive, governance, long term planning, forecasting, integrated flood/drought plan, Risk mitigation.

- **Use Science approach -** Lack of science based policy, fact based decision making, making use of technology to measure and optimize water management.

- **Stakeholders -** Need to include SK government, First Nations, industry - oil and gas, potash, food processing, etc., (ocean and fisheries), RMs, counties, water associations, academia! Not just rural - urban needs to be at the table too.

- **Mother Nature's Challenges -** Floods, flood management, drought, aquifer capacity, watershed protection and sustainability, invasive species, quantity and quality.

- **Man Made Challenges -** Drainage, Storage, Irrigation, water quality, nutrient loading, eutrophication, water quality, pollution, public health, recreation, what crosses the jurisdictional boundaries.

2b) What would you like to see happen in the next 25 years?

(what should "it" look like?)

- ✓ Architecture
- ✓ Communication
- ✓ Conservation & Ecosystem
- ✓ Funding
- ✓ Government
- ✓ Knowledge & Education
- ✓ Management
- ✓ Water Quality
- ✓ Science
- ✓ Stakeholders
- ✓ Water Storage
- ✓ Flood Control
- ✓ Water – Value

- **Architecture** - Storage (distributed), execution, reduce use of portage diversion (nutrient load), water retention, smaller dams.
- **Communication** - Improve communication between jurisdictions and amongst stakeholders, partner with other basin groups, awareness to make water management a higher priority, drive behavior changes.
- **Conservation & Ecosystem** - Land, marshes, nature, forestry, embrace storage, protect the supply, more attention to eco-system, more use of land and bio-systems, collect comprehensive data, include wildlife and fish.
- **Funding** - Find a sustainable funding structure.
- **Government** - Align jurisdictional goals. Federal support (international), involve government directly, influence and support water policy, proper zoning to minimize risk.
- **Knowledge & Education** - Education of younger people, broad education initiatives.
- **Water Management** - Riverbank authority, land buyout, incentives to land owners, integrated water management system, set rules people will follow, accountability, take nature's force into account, adapt to change, common voice / common plan, better coordination, use water efficiently, promote a healthy basin, wiser multi-objective development, execution, long term management, leadership, measure and deliver results, a well managed watershed that meets the demands and needs of residents and leads to a flourishing economy, eliminate political boundaries, proactive not reactive, prevention, CFI would be a good model, deliver

goals, synergy - whole is greater than the sum of the parts, balanced decisions, vision, able to deal with extreme weather, sustainable.

- Water Quality - Quality is critical, look at industry, agriculture, wildlife, environment, recreation. Effluent release, monitoring, nutrient management plans, need funding, reduce pollution, biodiversity, floods impact quality
- Science - Scientific led assessments, more solid science based decisions,
- Stakeholders - Respect differences and commitments within basin, apolitical, farmland / wetland balance, agricultural productivity - global demand, risk of losing farms / farmers, equal say, hear smaller community voices, cottagers voices, help each other, rural and urban, protect infrastructure.
- Water Storage - Storage, controlled release, coordinate existing structures, drainage outflow vs storage,
- Flood Control - Storage, more flood controls, structures, basin strategy for floods, flood mitigation strategy, shift irrigation to surface,
- Water Value - Need to put a value on Water, water is a valuable resource.

2c) Are you willing to help us get to this vision?

- All 10 tables willing to help!

3a) Do you think we should meet again in the fall?

YES - All 10 tables, Meet in the fall, after harvest (after Nov 11th).

3b) What would we want to accomplish in the fall?

- ✓ Architecture
- ✓ Communication - Awareness
- ✓ Funding
- ✓ Government
- ✓ Knowledge
- ✓ Management
- ✓ Science
- ✓ Stakeholders
- ✓ Structure

- Architecture - Land issues, watershed details, dams, overview of hydrology.
- Communication & Awareness - develop communication and awareenss materials, create public awareness
- Funding - Pursue sponsors, establish an interim funding structure, explore eco-action GF2, attract new funding sources, fundraising, membership.
- Government - Attract deeper involvement from government, include Sask government, federal, first nations, ND state.
- Knowledge - Provide more background knowledge on ARB, what is it, what are the issues, provide this workshop information to those who could not make it. Define informational needs.

- **Management** - Planning Committee to define and communicate short term objectives, lay out the outcomes expected form the workshop, solicit input. Define the direction and structure of the planning committee. Set goals, make it manageable, define needs and communicate, organizational needs, look at it top down and bottom up (grassroots), define structure options / pros and cons, purpose, define leadership strategy, priorities, needs, mission statement, goals and objectives.
- **Science** - bringing a science symposium to the fall meeting to inform stakeholders, research other basin orgs.
- **Stakeholders** - Ensure broad and deep representation across the ARB, active engagement, identify new planning committee members, make sure the right groups are represented, don't forget lake Manitoba, first nations, meet other basin boards, have other basin orgs present, include urban (city government), industry - oil and gas, potash, food processing, mining, forestry, etc. Define everyone's roles.
- **Structure** - Make sure the right orgs are represented on the planning committee, consider RRBC template, options, best fit model, not robbing existing smaller orgs, one stop shop for water management, what other structures are in place, governance and board of directors, ask - do we truly need another org, can we make use of an existing one?

3c) What are the next steps to prepare for the fall?

- ✓ Architecture
- ✓ Communication
- ✓ Funding
- ✓ Government
- ✓ Knowledge
- ✓ Management
- ✓ Planning Committee
- ✓ Stakeholders
- ✓ Structure

- **Architecture** - Define ARB topography, geography, hydrology.
- **Communication** - Grassroots communications--there's the PIN website which can be used for this. Communications plan, share today's results, find a way to keep in touch, bring the message back to constituencies.
- **Funding** - Identify funding sources, programs, consider membership fees, sponsors, secure funding.
- **Government** - Explain government organizations and their role, attract Sask government to become involved, ND, First Nations.
- **Knowledge** - Data collection plan, where do we find the info we need, how do we share it, provide summary info on watershed, identify topics of interest, overview of the basin hydrology, land use.
- **Management** - Define the problem statement, bring forward ideas and solutions, work from a plan, prioritize issues, activities, keep the momentum going, maintain continuity with today's group, short term focus, long term vision, incentives, identify a lead org, develop a leadership role and model, should PIN continue to lead this? Develop a collective mission statement, draft a plan, define where we are headed.
- **Planning Committee** - Develop additional presentations / discussions. Prepare a summary report of today and communicate to stakeholders. Need the planning committee to continue their role to get to the fall workshop. Consider a smaller secretariat group within the planning committee, consider sub-committees, ensure / increase technical depth within the planning

committee, pick the brains of others with experience (other basin groups) to help move this forward. Set a date, define a location - consider Sask to get them on board.

- **Stakeholders** - Ensure full basin representation, who is missing, approach industry / water users and invite them to participate, consult directly with missing orgs, add other groups - federal wildlife agency, first nations, more intimate stakeholder engagement, include more Sask RM's, industry - potash, oil and gas, mining, transportation - rail, trucking, irrigation groups, urban and rural, watershed orgs, academia.
- **Structure** - Governance - what should this look like, there are other models out there; make sure grassroots is directly involved, what other orgs are doing will guide whether we use an existing org or a new one. Bylaws, policies, work on the model options right now, are we going to establish a commission, consider RRBC model. Include sub basins in the name. Identify a governance model. Develop a resolution to agree in principle on a governance structure. Define the fall meeting agenda.