MINUTES
of the
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Courtyard by Marriott
Lincoln, Nebraska

April 24, 2025

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MEMBERS AND ALTERNATES PRESENT (*virtual*)

ALASKA	*Christina Carpenter*
ARIZONA	
CALIFORNIA	Jeanine Jones
COLORADO	
IDAHO	Mathew Weaver
KANSAS	Earl Lewis
MONTANA	Trevor Watson
NEBRASKA	Jesse Bradley
NEVADA	
NEW MEXICO	Tanya Trujillo
NORTH DAKOTA	*Reice Haase*
OKLAHOMA	Julie Cunningham
OREGON	
SOUTH DAKOTA	Nakaila Steen
TEXAS	
UTAH	Candice Hasenyager
WASHINGTON	*Ria Berns*
WYOMING	

STAFF

Tony Willardson, Executive Director

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Julie Cunningham, Vice-Chair chaired the Executive Committee and called the meeting to order. She welcomed those attending in person and virtually.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held in Lawrence, Kansas on October 23, 2024 were moved for approval, but there was an objection given the omission of a brief discussion related Tony's upcoming retirement and the search for a new Executive Director. The following addition was added to the minutes, pending subsequent approval.

"Tony, having expressed his plans to retire in the new year, likely sometime next summer, there was a brief discussion related to finding his successor. He was hired to succeed his predecessor, Craig Bell, after consideration of his then 30 years of service and position as Deputy Director. No law or policy was found requiring a public search, and while such was considered, in the end, it was determined that it would be an empty exercise and his promotion was in the best interest of the Council. The process for finding his replacement will be considered further at the next meeting of the Committee."

Also, of note, the minutes from the meeting held in Fargo, North Dakota had been posted just the day before the meetings in Kansas. Members had been asked review and submit comments to staff, but the minutes were not actually approved. Neither were they officially approved in Kansas.

REPORT ON BUDGET AND FINANCES

Tony reported that all member state dues had been received. Next, it was noted that the Council's reserve funds are held in the State of Utah's Public Treasurers Investment Fund (PTIF), as are separate funds dedicated towards equipment replacement and fulfilling staff leave payout obligation upon retirement or separation from service. Interest earned on these funds is considerable, particularly interest accruing on dues payments held until required for Council operations.

The Council has drawn $319,729.86 against its $400,000 WaterSMART grant for the development of the Western States Water Conservation Application Tool (WestCAT), given the uncertainty related to the future of existing federal grants and our contractor, Don't Panic Labs, accelerated work schedule. WestCAT is expected to be operational in May.

The Council has committed $200,000 from its reserves towards upgrades to our Western States Data Access and Analysis Tool (WestDAAT) prerequisite to its use facilitating WestCAT. To date, $150,000 has been drawn from reserves. We continue to receive some income from agreements with Duke University supported by the BHP Foundation for WestDAAT work that also provides a match for the WestCAT effort. The Council is required to match the entire $400,000 WaterSMART grant funding, and will be able to do so in part given allowed pre-award costs related to the development of our WestCAT proposal that totaled over $179,000 largely covered by our philanthropic partners.

Separately, the Council has a subcontract with the Lincoln Institute's Center for Geospatial Solutions to assist in the development of a Water Data Hub for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation that runs through September 2025. Receipts from that agreement have been less that anticipated given our accelerated work on WestCAT.

Lastly, the Council has completed work in partnership with the Thornburg, Walton and Water Foundations, on prioritizing water infrastructure investments for the State of New Mexico. The Council received $208,600 – almost all received in the last fiscal year – while most of the expense was incurred in the current fiscal year. Most of the work was done by SWCA environmental consultants with Council assistance.

Regarding expenses, the accelerated WestCAT development has been noted, which exceeded budgeted outlays, but with proportionate increases in revenue from our WaterSMART grant. Also of note, the Executive Committee in Kansas agreed to expend up to $20,000 for an independent consultant to assist with a strategic planning exercise (that was not originally in the budget).

Meeting and arrangements expenses are overbudget, in part due to our joint meeting in Kansas with the Interstate Council on Water Policy, though we have received payment for its share of the meeting expenses. Also, under the Thornburg grant, a related workshop was held in New Mexico.

Travel expenses are anticipated to be overbudget as well, as are our audit review expenses. Otherwise, most usual line items are within anticipated expenditures.

Lastly, as noted, the accelerated DPL contract work on WestDAAT 2.0 and WestCAT has similarly accelerated related expenses, but mostly offset by increasing draws against our WaterSMART grant. There have also been some savings in related staff salary and benefits, as Ryan James, our hydroinformatic specialist has been working half time since the birth of his daughter last October.

<u>SUNSETTING POSITIONS</u>

Julie Cunningham noted the positions presently sunsetting that are being reviewed by the working committees at this meeting.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT/WSWC ACTIVITIES and EVENTS

Tony noted recent WSWC activities and events described in the briefing materials.

FUTURE WSWC MEETINGS

Julie noted the next WSWC meetings will be held in Utah on June 10-12, and will include a celebration of the WSWC's 60th anniversary. The fall meetings will be held in California.

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Tab B, in the briefing materials listed a number of individuals included in WSWC activities and mailings by virtual of their position, while awaiting formal appointment by their governors. Often these are people filling the positions vacated by an appointed WSWC member. We would appreciate members assistance in securing appointment letters from their governors.

SUNSETTING POSITIONS for SUMMER 2025 MEETINGS

The positions sunsetting at the next meeting were noted for future review.

OTHER MATTERS – COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Given the departure of Jon Niermann from state service with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, and related resignation as Chair of the Council, there was an extended discussion related to the nature of the process for selecting new leadership. The Council's rules of organization provide for filling any vacancy by an election at the next regularly scheduled Council meeting. Consistent with tradition, a Nominating Subcommittee, consisting of past Council Chairs, considers possibly replacements and recommends individuals for Council approval. It has always recommended advancing officers with the Vice Chair succeeding the Chair, the Secretary/Treasurer moving to Vice Chair, and an individual named to fill the remaining vacancy position, taking into consideration such factors as active Council participation, longevity, regional diversity, etc. The Council has always approved the recommendations of the Nominating Subcommittee.

A singular minority view questioned this traditional process as not really an election, as members generally are not availed the opportunity to express an interest in serving and seeking the nomination. In the end, the majority did not object to the current process, though it was mentioned that perhaps the Rules of Organization could be amended to conform with current practice.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Tony was excused as the Committee met privately to discuss matters related to selecting his eventual successor.