Canadian Environmental Network (RCEN)
Water, Fisheries and Oceans Caucus meeting minutes
Sunday, November 4, 2007, 1:00 – 2:30 PM
University of Ottawa, Ottawa

Present: Ralph Pentland (Gordon Water Group), Jim Elliot, Martha Kostuch, Olga Schwartzkopf, Peter Karwacki, Pierre Olivier-Lamontagne (non-RCEN member), Lisa Fox, John Burcombe, Cliff Wallis, Kate Maddigan, Sharon Jeffery, Mark Willcock, Alexander Gillette (Non-RCEN member), Jennifer Graham, Isabel Muzichuk, Zo Ann Morten, Dianne Ramage, Leela Ramachandran

Chair: Martha
Minutes: Leela

Action Items:
-**Lisa and Olga** to contact CWRA about their interest in developing a process for a National Water Policy
-**Lisa** and **National Water Policy Working Group** (Peter, Martha, Olga, Susan?) to develop fundraising proposal for first stage of work on National Water Policy
-**Leela** to schedule a Fisheries teleconference for November 9th, 2 PM Eastern and post on Fisheries Listserve. Anyone who is a member of the RCEN and is not on the listserve can contact Leela before Friday to be added to the listserve.
-**Leela** to post call for a Water, Fisheries and Oceans National Council representative to the Caucus.
-**Leela** to add new members to Water, Fisheries and Oceans Caucus email list based on sign-up sheet circulated at meeting

1. Review and Revise Agenda
Added Item: National Council rep from WFO Caucus

2. Review of WFO Caucus Objectives:
- to share information
- to develop joint strategies
- to help each other
- to provide advice to government.

Caucus has developed Action Plan, but lack funding to implement fully. More recently have developed draft proposal for National Water Policy.

3. National Water Policy:
Lisa Fox: Suggests strategy for developing a National Water Policy based on models of stakeholder-based WPACs. Federal Water Policy from 1987 (which Ralph Pentland was involved with) has never been implemented, need a new policy but more importantly a good process to create a new policy.

RCEN has a draft plan for a process to develop a National Water Policy. Recognizing that many groups have been working on this issue, feel the first stage needed is scoping to identify work to date, key actors and organizations. Depending on outcome of this exercise, this Caucus may want to organize a multi-stakeholder workshop to share information and come up with a collaborative process to develop a National Water Policy. Third stage would be policy development.

Ralph Pentland:
The Gordon Water Group water policy project was initiated by Elizabeth May, while she was still head of the Sierra Club of Canada, and during the controversy surrounding state-provincial negotiations regarding Great Lakes diversions. At that time, it became evident that states and provinces were not following the advice of the IJC, and that the federal government's capacity to meet its reponsibilitiies had been greatly reduced in recent decades.

Elizabeth May went to Gordon Foundation for funding to work on a National Water Strategy, began to pull together a team of academics and experts. Tim Morris did core work, others reviewed and contributed. Began by looking at other countries, eg. Australia. Published report in October 2007. Advisors to appropriate federal Ministers and members of the Liberal Water Caucus have been briefed on the content of the Report.

Canadian Water Resources Association (mainly professionals) is also developing a strategy; Pollution Probe has also held a series of meetings.

CWRA is going to put out an RFP to develop a process. RCEN to consult with them on this (Lisa, Olga).

How to ensure that government will consider or implement recommendations from multi-stakeholder input?
Alberta has an MOU that says if a multi-stakeholder group reaches consensus on recommendations, then the ministers involved will advocate for their implementation in government. RCEN would want a similar agreement with federal government regarding implementation of process for policy development.

Ralph: Need to get everyone to agree on a dozen principles up front, and work towards those principles, instead of framing it as a National Water Policy from the start.

Need to integrate science and role of scientists into policy development.

Next Steps:
Lisa will take lead on implementing Phase I of proposal (scoping). Will be supported by Working Group on National Water Policy: Peter, Olga, Martha, and Susan Howatt (not present, but is already involved in this work).

4. Fisheries:

-Last October, RCEN and DFO organized a workshop on the Fisheries Act. Held successful workshop with 25 ENGOs and DFO. Afterwards, a joint ENGO-DFO National Fish Habitat Coordinating Committee was set up. Committee met face to face in February to develop joint workplan, meets regularly by teleconference. Have organized a second workshop for November 5-6 in Ottawa.

Relationship with DFO is difficult but both sides are trying to work more constructively together.

-New Fisheries Act (Bill C-45): Was killed when Parliament was prorogued, but has been reintroduced last Friday.

Need to make sure that Bill doesn't get unanimous consent to be reintroduced at same level. Anyone with political contacts should try to influence them to oppose it.

Concern that if Bill C-45 goes through, could force an election and result in a Conservative majority. The environmental consequences of this could be worse than the Fisheries Act. ENGOs need to strategize.

Leela to schedule an RCEN ENGO teleconference November 9th, 2 PM Eastern and post on Fisheries Listserve. Anyone who is a member of the RCEN and is not on the listserve should contact Leela before Friday to join. (Leela will not be on this call but will get someone else to take minutes).

5. Oceans
There is a coalition of groups active on Oceans issues, but not formally linked to RCEN. Member groups can use RCEN listserve, Caucus email list, etc. to distribute relevant information.

Several groups who are not currently working on Oceans issues are still very interested in these issues. Important for all Caucus members to hear what other groups are working on.

6. Go-round (not time for everyone to speak):
Peter Karwacki: Taking federal govt to judicial review over dam refurbishment on Kipawa River. Environmental Assessment was shown to be self-serving.
Jim Elliot: Prairie Citizens Water Directive – trying to reach consensus on water policy and issues across AB, SK, MB.
Isabel: Water regulations haven't been applied for 20 years in prairie provinces, destroying property, ecosystems, watersheds. Also concerned about Intensive Livestock Operations (ILOs) and the impacts on watersheds. There haven't been as many new projects being proposed, but is still a problem.
John: sceptical of participating in consensus-based consultation processes, feel it is a waste of time and resources that are better spent raising awareness, going directly to the public and media, bringing attention to problems.
Julie: people not in ENGOs always ask her 'what can we do?' about environmental problems – need more focus on strategies, direct action

Denys: has formed an ENGO to pressure provl govt to enforce its water policies
Michael: youth members have been discussing need to use technology, mass media to educate people on issues, eg. You Tube, blogs
Jen: groups have formed Nova Scotia Coastal Coalition to pressure government to develop provincial policy framework, including package of regulations.

7. Other business: Martha resigning as WFO representative on the RCEN National Council; Leela will put a call out to Caucus for a replacement.

Meeting Adjourned