

January 2014

ANNUAL WFL PARTNERSHIPS NEWSLETTER

ISSUE THREE



About this Newsletter



The AWC special annual newsletter highlights the *Water for Life* partners and their success stories from the past year. Building on the work of the Alberta Water Council Moving from Words to Actions report results, the partnerships newsletter helps to create more awareness of the partnerships and the good work being done in water management around the province.

Special thanks to the contributors of our third issue: Land Stewardship Centre of Canada, South East Alberta Watershed Alliance, Athabasca Watershed Council and Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development.

In This Issue:

About the *Water for Life* Partnerships

Changing Perspectives About Beavers - Anne and Sandy Cross Conservation Area

Planning for Stewardship - Moose Lake Watershed Society

A Dedication to Bob Phillips - South East Alberta Watershed Alliance

Athabasca Watershed Council Update

Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development

2013 Flooding: Albertans Come Together in the Spirit of Community - ESRD

The Alberta Wetland Policy - One Step Closer to Implementation - ESRD

Water Conversation Update - ESRD

About the WFL Partnerships

[Water for Life](#): a strategy for sustainability is the Government of Alberta guidance document for water management. The strategy was launched in 2003 and renewed in 2008 and a new action plan was released in 2009. The renewed strategy continues to identify partnerships as a key mechanism for achieving the goals and outcomes. Three types of partnerships were identified in the strategy: local [Watershed Stewardship Groups](#) (WSGs), regional [Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils](#) (WPACs), and the provincial [Alberta Water Council](#) (AWC). The AWC provides a forum for sectors and *Water for Life* (WFL) partnerships to come together to discuss and find innovative solutions to shared water management issues.

water for life

The WFL partnership system is composed of the provincial AWC, 11 regional WPACs and approximately 140 local WSGs. The partnerships typically include stakeholders representing governments, industries, non-government organizations, Aboriginal and other communities, and members of the public. At present, more than 1,000 Albertans are working directly under the banner of WFL.

Changing Perspectives About Beavers

The beaver – that iconic symbol of Canada – has long been both revered and reviled. One southern Alberta watershed stewardship group is working hard to change people's perceptions about this tree toppling, semi-aquatic rodent, and through reintroduction and education efforts, demonstrate the animal's positive impact on watersheds.

The Ann & Sandy Cross Conservation Area (ASCCA) embarked on this project because they recognize beavers have significant value, yet they are often misunderstood. In Alberta it is common for beaver dams to be blown up and beavers trapped, but as Greg Shyba, Chief Executive Officer of ASCCA explains, "Beavers and dams provide valuable ecological goods and services like holding back water, and enhancing bird and wildlife habitat. There are ways to use beavers as a management tool to change things like flow regimes."

ASCCA researched and based their reintroduction on similar projects conducted in the US, where beavers are utilized in watersheds rather than being removed. From these studies ASCCA learned how to do the reintroduction properly and safeguard the beavers. They focused their efforts on reintroducing the animals into the north and south arms of the wetlands forming the headwaters of Pine Creek.

A large part of ASCCA's efforts also included documenting and monitoring the results of the reintroductions. They also engaged partners (Miistakis Institute for the Rockies, Trout Unlimited Canada, and Ducks Unlimited Canada) to assist with various aspects of the project. Grade 7 students from the Calgary Science School were also involved in the development of a baseline for the state of the watershed around the southern arm of Pine Creek, where ASCCA released four of the beavers. Students from the school will continue to monitor the impact of the reintroduction over the next three years.

ASCCA considers the project a success. The beavers survived the winter and acclimated well to their new home. They are even currently building a new dam. In addition, since the project was initiated, the group now receives calls from local ranchers, who want to learn to how manage or relocate beavers, rather than use previous eradication methods.

ASCCA's efforts are now focused on the future and how to properly manage the beavers. ASCCA will develop education materials and workshops for municipalities, government and landowners that will help them better understand and manage beaver populations. "Education is the key," adds Shyba. "We will continue to help people learn about the value of beavers and how they contribute to the ecology of a watershed."

For more information visit the Ann & Sandy Cross Conservation Area website.

<http://www.crossconservation.org/>

Planning for Stewardship

In a time where organizations can be started one minute and gone the next, one local stewardship group, the Moose Lake Watershed Society (MLWS) has been successfully working to protect their local watershed for more than 10 years – and proper planning has been the key to their longevity and success.

MLWS was established in 2002, when a concerned group of residents, municipal and government representatives came together to tackle some of the lake's pressing issues such as algal blooms, which resulted from significant development and lack of proper lakeshore management. More than 10 years later, they attribute their achievements to the management plan they established early on, which clearly outlined the strategies that guided their work, timelines that enabled them to complete and follow through on activities, and criteria to evaluate their success.

"The MLWS's management plan was developed in 2006 and adopted by municipalities in 2007," offers Kay Lee Kinch, Environmental Coordinator with the Municipal District of Bonnyville and Secretary-Treasurer for MLWS, "It was created to address key issues facing the lake including low water levels, source water protection, algal blooms and increased development around the lake." The management plan was established on a five-year time frame and is meant to be reviewed regularly so the group can evaluate their work and success.

MLWS uses the management plan to direct their projects around the watershed, which include annual open houses, that helps to bring awareness to issues such as invasive plants, water quality and algae, or in recent years the development of the Island Bay Provincial Park proposal. The group also participates in creek restorations and tributary sampling to gather data and develop baselines for nutrient levels in the lake, as well as youth education through their flagship program Walking with the Moose. "Walking with the Moose", which began with three schools and approximately 200 children, has grown to include eight schools and approximately 400 children. While that kind of success and growth could overwhelm a small organization like MLWS, it's the management plan that helps keep their programs on track with their overall goals.

MLWS also attributes their success to the tremendous support of individual volunteers and contributions from a variety of organizations including Portage College, Cows and Fish, Beaver River Watershed Alliance and Alberta Parks.

When asked what advice she'd give to other groups which may just be starting up or which may be struggling with outcomes, Kinch suggests it's really important for watershed stewardship groups to set goals, both short term and long term, and then stay focused on engaging in activities that will help achieve those goals. "Having a management plan has allowed our group to clearly articulate our goals, stay focused and follow through on projects," adds Kinch. "This is also motivational because when you achieve the goals you've set, you're reminded of why you are involved in stewardship."

Learn more about and connect with the MLWS on Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Moose-Lake-Watershed-Society/219944464704576>

A Dedication to Bob Phillips, SEAWA Executive Director

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of our good friend and watershed steward, SEAWA Executive Director, Bob Phillips. Bob passed away on Wednesday, October 23, 2013, at the age of 58 years. The shockwaves of his sudden passing are still reverberating through the WPAC community. Bob was the Executive Director of SEAWA for six years and his dedication to educating citizens on the importance of water management was an important part of SEAWA. He brought experience in business administration and an interest in conservation and development to the organization. He was always enthusiastic about



promoting SEAWA projects, along with educating stakeholders on recent developments in watershed management. Kind and considerate, friendly and funny, Bob will be remembered for his wit as well as his wisdom. April Fool's Day will not be the same without his memorable pranks. To honor his work and the passion he had for the support of education, research and management in the watershed, SEAWA created the Bob Phillips Legacy Fund through the Medicine Hat College Foundation. This annual award will go to a student in Environmental Studies at Medicine Hat College. Partners and friends may donate directly to Medicine Hat College. A tax receipt will be issued to you for your gift. Bob's family has requested that any remembrances or donations in his honor be made to the Legacy Fund.

For more information about SEAWA, visit: www.seawa.ca/

Photo Credit: SEAWA

Athabasca Watershed Council Update

The Athabasca Watershed Council has been focused on our new Athabasca State of the Watershed (SoW) Phase 4 project, which includes upgrades and enhancements to our Interactive Atlas (found on our website www.awc-wpac.ca). Currently, we are following up with all of our municipal representatives from across our watershed. We are truly looking forward to working with these new representatives to target our future

initiatives and outreach in their respective communities. In addition, we are actively participating in the multi-stakeholder meeting on the Joint Canada Alberta Implementation Plan for Oil Sands Monitoring; attending the Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development's (AESRD) Surface Water Quantity Framework workshop and the information sessions regarding the ongoing implementation of the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan; and providing feedback on the pending Mackenzie Bi-Lateral Agreement. Our collaborations have extended to Sherritt International, Obed Mountain Mine, and we have started receiving frequent updates on the remediation efforts and water monitoring along the Athabasca River. The AWC-WPAC will be communicating these updates on our website and through our social media avenues in an effort to keep our stakeholders informed about the activities at the Obed Mountain Mine. As for our local initiatives, the AWC-WPAC presented to the West Fraser Pulp Mill Advisory Committee to disseminate information regarding our ongoing projects within the watershed. In addition, we participated in Career Day, which student Amanda Bembeneck joined our AWC Staff for a day and provided feedback on our new outreach projects targeted for Junior and Senior High School students.



Photos: Marilou Montemayor, Amanda Bembeneck, Lee-Anne Bembeneck & Jen Landry.

Athabasca State of the Watershed (SoW) Phase 4 Project Overview

The AWC-WPAC has completed two phases of the SoW Report, Phase 1 in 2010, Phase 2 in 2011, and is currently finalizing Phase 3. Athabasca State of the Watershed Report Phase 4: Organic Compounds in Surface Water and Sediments, and Trace Metals in Sediments, is a project being undertaken by the AWC-WPAC during the period from September 1, 2013 to March 31, 2014. The main component of this project will continue to compile, analyze, and interpret existing and available data on water quality parameters in the Athabasca watershed that could not be covered by the previous project. The SoW Phase 4 Report targets water quality parameters that include data on organic compounds such as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), pesticides, organochlorines (dioxins and furans), and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and naphthenic acids. In addition, organic compounds and trace metals in sediments will be included. Other compounds to be included are adsorbable organic halogen (AOX), chlorinated phenolics, phenols, aliphatic and aromatic hydrocarbons. Also, organic compounds and trace metals in sediments associated with mining operations in the McLeod River and Pembina River subwatersheds will be included. This project will also include identification of data gaps and recommendations on data availability and access. This project is completely dependent on available and accessible existing data.

AWC Interactive Atlas Upgrade & Enhancement Project

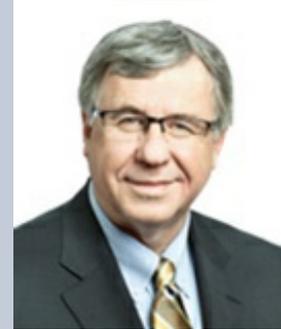
Our sub-project focuses on upgrading and incorporating intuitive enhancements to the AWC-WPAC's online Interactive Atlas. Additional layers mainly from the SoW Phase 3 Report will be added to the Interactive Atlas. The goal is to communicate the results of the different phases of the State of the Watershed Reports in a user-friendly interactive spatial format.



AWC-WPAC would like to acknowledge the funding support from Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (AESRD) and Yellowhead County. Without these donors, these projects would not be possible.

Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development

Mr. Campbell was elected to his second term as a Member of the Legislative Assembly for West Yellowhead on April 23, 2012. Mr. Campbell was appointed as Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development and Government House Leader on December 13, 2013. He previously served as Minister of Aboriginal Relations, Deputy House Leader and as a member of the Treasury Board.



Prior to becoming a Cabinet Minister, Mr. Campbell served as Chief Government Whip and Deputy Government Whip. He also chaired the Northern Alberta Development Council. Mr. Campbell attended Laurentian University from 1974 to 1978 graduating with a Bachelor of Science. He spent many years lecturing at Universities and conferences across the country about labour relations issues.

Prior to entering provincial politics, Mr. Campbell was the president of the local United Mine Workers of America and worked as an appeals commissioner with the Workers' Compensation Board. He was also a member of the Alberta Labour Relations Board and the Environmental Protection Advisory Committee. Mr. Campbell was also a key participant in the Cheviot hearings, representing the Hinton and District Chamber of Commerce, Alberta Council for Sustainable Communities and the Environment and the United Mine Workers. In the summer of 2013, Mr. Campbell was recognized by Treaty 7 Management Corporation and supporting Chiefs for his work with First Nations. During a ceremony in Calgary, Mr. Campbell was given a ceremonial headdress and the Blackfoot name Mak-Koyii-Sa-Pii, meaning "Wolf Charger." Mr. Campbell currently resides in Jasper.

2013 Flooding: Albertans Come Together in the Spirit of Community

Albertans have come together in the spirit of community – they've opened their doors, reached out their hands and helped lift up one another. Alberta Public Service staff have been an integral part of the flood response, giving of their time, energy and often working long hours away from their families.

Martin Foy, Regional Director for the South Saskatchewan at ESRD, provides some thoughts on the department's role: "I couldn't be more proud of the people I work with, the region I work in or the department I work for. We really have made an enormous difference. We couldn't have done this without the support and patience of the rest of the department."



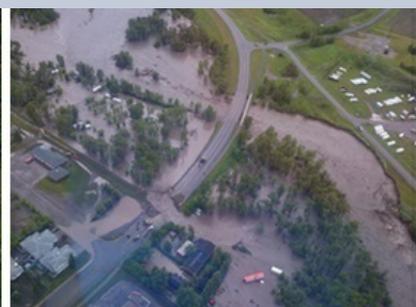
Martin Foy, Regional Director for the South Saskatchewan region, ESRD

While we've been wildly successful and have accomplished a great deal, this is far from over. There are still thousands out of their homes and millions, if not billions, of dollars of critical infrastructure at risk. Some of the largest tasks ahead of us here in the South Saskatchewan region include:

- Completing the roll out of the \$116 million dollar flood recovery and erosion control program.
 - We have approved \$40 million in projects already, but there's still \$76 million to go. Most of these projects



Flooded gauging station at Waiparous Creek
(photo credit: Kate Forbes)



Flooding on the Sheep River at Turner Valley
(photo credit: Salina Perry)

will be ongoing until 2015, so there is plenty of project management work still to undertake;

- Developing and delivering a \$10 million backcountry trail rehabilitation program to rebuild hundreds of bridges and other crossings that comprise our trail system;
- Developing and delivering a \$10 million fish habitat restoration program to mitigate some of the damage from the flood, as well as the impacts on our aquatic ecosystems, as we've moved forward with flood recovery projects;
- Perhaps most daunting for us is keeping up with the pace of recovery from an authorization perspective. We are facilitating both Public Lands and Water Act authorizations at an incredible pace, but we know as disaster recovery program funding becomes available to flood affected Albertans, the recovery effort will ramp up further;
- The City of Calgary alone will be looking for as many as 200 approvals (\$250 million in disaster recovery program funding) before the end of 2015;
- 30 other municipalities and First Nations declared states of local emergencies and are undertaking significant work that requires authorizations;
- Tourism, Parks and Recreation has \$66 million to fix parks infrastructure;
- Alberta Transportation still has hundreds of projects to undertake; and
- In addition there is our own water infrastructure program, anticipated provincial mitigation projects, and hundreds of general public applications.

Add all that to the backlog of core work and it's really quite overwhelming. However, we have pulled together, developed processes we are confident in, and prepared for the challenge ahead – for the long haul.



ESRD staff surveying the damage while searching for a gauging station near Black Diamond (photo credit: Kate Forbes)



Cougar Creek flooding, Canmore (photo credit: Scott Campbell)



Flooding in High River (photo credit: Scott Campbell)

The Alberta Wetland Policy - One Step Closer to Implementation

The Alberta Wetland Policy – One Step Closer to Implementation Since 1993, wetlands in the White (settled) Area of Alberta have been managed through an interim policy. In 2008, the Alberta Water Council provided the provincial government with a series of recommendations that would inform development of a new wetland policy. These recommendations now form the basis for the Alberta Wetland Policy, which was released by then Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development, Diana McQueen, on September 10th of 2013. This new policy will enable a comprehensive management system for wetlands of all types across all areas of Alberta.

The Alberta Wetland Policy provides the strategic direction and tools to support informed management decisions in the long-term interest of Albertans. The Policy will minimize the loss and degradation of wetlands, while

allowing for continued growth and economic development in the province. The goal of the proposed Alberta Wetland Policy is to conserve, restore, protect, and manage Alberta's wetlands to sustain the benefits they provide to



the environment, society, and economy. Where development activities have the potential to impact wetlands, the wetland policy promotes avoidance and minimization as the preferred courses of action. Where impacts cannot be avoided or minimized, and where permanent wetland loss is incurred, wetland replacement is required.



Photo: Former Minister Diana McQueen (adjacent to Thorsten), along with ESRD Water Policy members (Joey Hurley, Shannon Flint, and Thorsten Hebben)

Alberta's wetlands are highly diverse in form, function, use, and distribution across the Province. Hence, they are not all of equal value. Under the Alberta Wetland Policy, relative wetland value will be assessed on the basis of supported biodiversity, ability to improve water quality, importance to flood mitigation, and various direct human uses. Individual wetlands will be evaluated against these key criteria and assigned an overall wetland value. This information will be used to inform regulatory responses in cases where human activities have the potential to negatively impact wetlands.

With approval of the Alberta Wetland Policy, the Government of Alberta has begun to develop key operational components that will enable policy implementation in the White (settled) Area of the Province by mid-2014, and the Green Area (crown lands) by mid-2015. To date, the Water Council and its stakeholders have played a vital role in development of the Alberta Wetland Policy. It is anticipated that these relationships will continue to support ongoing development and continuous improvement of the new wetland management system into the future.

Photo Credit: Environment and Sustainable Resource Development

Water Conversation Update

In 2013, the Government of Alberta renewed a conversation with Albertans about how we manage our water resources to ensure we meet future needs.

The water conversation focused on potential water management options that could help Alberta respond to future demands for water to support growing communities, healthy aquatic ecosystems and a strong economy – the three goals of Alberta's Water for Life strategy.

Options were focused on four priority areas: healthy lakes; hydraulic fracturing and water; drinking water and wastewater; and water management. Participants were welcome to raise other water-related issues if they wished to do so.

From February to April, community conversations were held in 20 locations across Alberta. The government welcomed Albertans at open houses which featured small discussion groups where participants could exchange their views freely and frankly.

A series of in-person conversations were held with stakeholder groups including lake stewardship groups, Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils, landowner associations, municipal governments, irrigation districts, agricultural producers, recreation associations, conservation groups, environmental non-governmental organizations and industry sectors.

A series of dedicated conversations were also held for Alberta First Nations and Métis organizations, recognizing their special relationship with water and land.



About 1,000 people took part in all these meetings. More than 760 surveys were done either online or on printed copies that were sent in by mail. In addition, more than 350 written submissions were made. These were delivered via email, Twitter, blog entries, letters or in person at a meeting. Information gathered during the water conversation will inform future water policy decisions. For more information visit: <http://environment.alberta.ca/04125.html>

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