

**Supporting Alberta's Watershed
Stewardship Community:
Alberta Environment's Role and Resources**

**Red Deer Watershed Alliance
Watershed Stewardship Group Sharing Session
January 29, 2009**

Watershed Stewardship in Alberta

Status of Watershed Stewardship Community:

- Groundswell of interest in watershed stewardship across province as reflected by number of community-based stewardship groups.
- WSGs evolving beyond promoting awareness and implementing BMPs to point of being actively involved in planning for management of local environmental resources.
- Increasing demands and expectations being placed upon limited government resources.

Watershed Stewardship in Alberta

Growth of Stewardship Community:

- Initial concentration of WSGs in the southern watersheds in response to agricultural pressures, water quality, stream fisheries issues.
- Spreading north to address recreational lake, groundwater, and municipal source water issues.
- Currently, 140+ WSGs across the province, and number is growing!

Watershed Stewardship Groups in Alberta

(Alberta Stewardship Network 2009)



Watershed Stewardship Groups

Who are they?

- Stewardship groups are most often composed predominantly of interested volunteers from the local community.
- These are people that have little or no authority around the lake, but have a personal interest in improving their local watershed.
- WSG is a broad term used to encompass diverse types of community partnerships actively engaged in environmental stewardship of the air, land, water and biodiversity within their local watershed.
- Stewardship groups are self-defining and self-governing.
- AENV/GOA does not define or legitimize WSGs.

Water for Life Partnerships

Alberta Water Council (Provincial)

- *Advise on provincial water management issues.*
- *Guide and track implementation of Water for Life.*
- *Identify research priorities.*

Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils (Regional)

- *Report on state of the watershed.*
- *Develop watershed management plans.*
- *Promote best management practices.*

Watershed Stewardship Groups (Local)

- *Undertake stewardship activities to improve and protect local watersheds.*

The Big Picture



Just as smaller watersheds are nested into larger watersheds, so too are local community stewardship initiatives part of something bigger.

By working together, information, resources and support can flow through this partnership network improving the health of local watersheds now and in the future.

Benefit of Community-Based Stewardship

Why is Stewardship Important to Local Community?

- Many of Alberta's air/land/water issues are local, both in their cause and in the solutions required. In these cases, province-wide approaches may not be appropriate or efficient.
- Stewardship initiatives offer another way of addressing these issues. This community-based approach provides an opportunity for local stakeholders to design local solutions to address their concerns.

Benefit of Community-Based Stewardship

Why is Stewardship Important to AENV?

- Can't regulate everything – need to make broad-scale socio-ecological change (1000's of intentional acts benefiting the environment)
- Supporting stewardship will in return help us achieve shared environmental outcomes for air, land, and water.
- We envision an independent stewardship community that has the skills, knowledge, tools, and capacity to set and achieve local environmental outcomes.

Supporting the WSG Community

Desired Outcomes from this Partnership:

- Environmental outcomes
 - Protection/enhancement of water quality and aquatic/riparian health
 - Sustainable watersheds and healthy aquatic ecosystems
- Social outcomes
 - Individual and community adoption of stewardship and BMPs
 - Active and empowered community-based stewardship groups across province
- Operational outcomes
 - Achievement of WFL and environmental outcomes beyond individual ability/jurisdiction
 - Increased public compliance to environmental policy/legislation/ regulations
 - Improved government image, establishment of trust, and greater community buy-in and support for gov't actions and decisions.

Supporting the WSG Community

Traditional Services Provided by AENV:

- **Formational/Organizational Services**
 - Participation on boards and committees
 - Meeting management/facilitation/administration
 - Strategic project planning
 - Information-sharing, education & awareness
 - Provision of funding resources
- **Technical/Scientific Support**
 - Water quality monitoring and training
 - Data sharing, interpretation, report writing
 - Mapping, modeling
 - Tool building

WSGs as Water for Life Partnership

Water for Life Commitment to WSGs:

- WSGs identified as one of three types of partnerships integral to achieving stewardship of our water resources.
- WFL actions for 2007-10 to “support watershed stewardship groups to improve the conditions of local watersheds”.
- AENV will actively partner in community-based stewardship initiatives where we have common priority objectives and/or shared environmental outcomes.

Supporting the WSG Community

Implementation Challenges:

- Partnership is a new way of doing business for government.
- Requires extraordinary commitment by stakeholders.
- AENV doesn't have the capacity to "partner" with all stewardship groups.
- Need to improve relationship and communication between all Water for Life partnerships.
- Need to clarify roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of all WFL partners (including GOA).
- Lack of consistency in, or coordination of efforts within or between agencies supporting stewardship.

Services/Resources Available to WSGs

	Group Establishment/administration	Meeting Management/Facilitation	Strategic Planning	Project Planning Support	Grant Writing & Review	Participation on Boards & Committees	Letter to other Agencies & Residents	Info-sharing Education & Awareness	GIS Mapping	Aerial Videography	Water Quality Monitoring	Coordinating Training Sessions	Water Resource Modeling	Data-sharing	Data Interpretation & Report writing	Website Development	Tool-building	Riparian Assessments	Estuarine Restoration	Implementation of BMPs	Funding
AENV	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•				•
ERD								•	•	•				•				•			•
TPRC	•					•			•					•							•
AAFAESA	•			•		•		•			•			•						•	•
Municipal Affairs	•	•	•		•			•				•									•
AAFC/PFRA				•	•	•		•	•	•				•			•			•	•
Environment Canada				•										•							•
DFO				•				•	•				•						•		•
ASIN	•				•	•	•	•				•				•	•				•
LSCC	•	•	•		•	•		•	•					•			•				•
Recreation Model Forest				•	•	•		•	•		•			•		•		•			•
ATA	•			•	•			•		•				•						•	•
Restants Forever																			•		•
Cows & Fish					•	•	•	•				•		•				•			•
DUC	•		•	•		•		•	•					•	•				•		•
FAN								•	•					•	•	•					•
ALMS						•		•	•		•			•	•		•				•
Volunteer Alberta	•	•			•			•				•					•				•
NSWA								•													•
BRWA					•	•		•													•
EDRWA					•	•		•						•	•		•				•
BRBC				•	•	•		•	•					•	•						•
OWC					•	•		•	•			•	•	•	•						•
MRWCC					•			•			•			•	•						•

Supporting the WSG Community

Status of AENV Support:

- AENV currently reviewing the manner it and other agencies currently supports WSG in effort to increase coordination and effectiveness of support.
- AENV philosophy is to build and provide tools, programs, and/or products to build capacity of provincial stewardship community.

Supporting the WSG Community

Role Envisioned for AENV:

- Raise profile of WFL partnerships
- Serve as linkage to other agencies/services/resources
- Support initiatives to share resources and build local capacity (eg: ASN, WPAC-led support initiatives, synergy groups...)
- Build and deliver tools and training
- Provide technical support and information
- Assure alignment of basin/sub-basin plans and initiatives
- Provide financial support

Supporting the WSG Community

Toward Achievement of Outcomes for Stewardship in Alberta:

- Develop common awareness of the opportunity that exists to achieve outcomes by supporting community initiatives and/or another agency's programs.
- Provide basis for initiating discussion and coordination of activities with other support agencies, contributing to the development of new, and/or strengthening of existing, partnerships with other support agencies and organizations.
- Outline a sustainable and coordinated long-term plan to support stewardship groups, as well as other organizations and/or their programs.

ASN Watershed Stewardship Grant Program

Background:

- ASN approached AENV in 2005 with proposal to administer WSG grant program on behalf of Government of Alberta
- Grant program established in 2006 with funding coming from Water for Life budget.
- Program provides community-based Stewardship Groups with funding to support on-the-ground activities and projects aimed at safeguard Alberta's watersheds and water resources (max \$7,500 per project per year).



ASN Watershed Stewardship Grant Program

Funding Categories:

- Awareness & Knowledge
(eg: info sessions and workshops, brochures, bulletin boards & signage, websites, display materials, home-site assessment consultations)
- Tool Building
(eg: SOW reports, wshed mgmt plans)
- Team Building
(eg: group formation, meeting facilitation, membership drive,
- Biophysical & Social Monitoring
(eg: water quality monitoring, riparian health inventories, fish/invert sampling, recreational user surveys, paleolimnological assessment)
- Community-based Action
(eg: garbage clean-ups, weed pulls, riparian fencing and off-site watering systems, streambank/wetland/fish habitat restoration projects)



ASN Watershed Stewardship Grant Program

Highlights:

- 4 grant rounds since spring 2006.
- 74 different stewardship groups received funding.
- 130 projects funded.
- More than \$750,000 awarded.
- Grant recipients located in 6 of the 7 major watersheds in Alberta (no grants yet awarded in Mackenzie River basin).



ASN Watershed Stewardship Grant Program

Successes:

- 2009 program will mark successful delivery of >\$1 million of programming in support of this province's stewardship community by Alberta Stewardship Network.
- New and ongoing partnerships established as grant recipients work toward the implementation of their projects.
- Through partnerships, and in-kind contributions, grant recipients are able to multiply funding received 4x (conservatively estimate).
- Each project furthers the reach of public awareness of watershed issues and of opportunities for engagement in watershed stewardship initiatives.

Note: at present, it is currently estimated that >30,000 people been touched *directly* either through hands-on involvement with or personal presentations by grant recipients.



ASN Watershed Stewardship Grant Program

Notice of 2009 Grant Program:

- apply for up to \$7500 in funding for projects to be completed before March 31, 2010
- Groups may submit applications as a registered society or in partnership with an eligible legal entity.
- **Application deadline: February 16, 2009**
(early application deadline February 9th)

For more information, contact the ASN at
1-877-7-ASK-ASN (1-877-727-5276)
or via email at asn@landstewardship.org
website: www.ab.stewardshipcanada.ca

