

December 2008

Headwaters Edition — It all begins in the Canadian Rockies

RDRWA State of the Watershed Update

The Red Deer River Watershed Alliance is progressing steadily on the State of the Watershed Project. The report is designed to give a snapshot of the current health of the watershed based on 20 indicators of health. The first draft of the report was completed in September and is developing into the most comprehensive State of the Watershed report done in Alberta in recent years (670 pages).

In October the RDRWA completed a series of Open Houses to offer the public the opportunity to view and comment on the first draft State of the Watershed report. Open houses were held across the watershed in Sundre, Red Deer, Three Hills, Drumheller, Brooks and Empress. The Open Houses had static displays, including summaries for each sub-basin in the watershed. Attendance at the Open Houses was fair, but RDRWA and Aquality (the SOW consultant) received valuable comments and feedback that has been addressed in the second draft report where applicable. The report is currently online, and can be reviewed by chapter or sub-basin at:

www.aquality.ca/RDRWASOWRchaptersh.html.

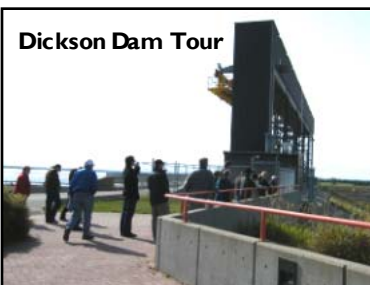
The State of the Watershed Technical Advisory Committee and the Steering Committee met in late November to finalize a methodology for measuring and summing up health and/or risk. The health summaries will be included in the next draft which is due to the RDRWA from the consultant on December 15. The final roll out of the report will be in the spring of 2009.



Watershed discussions at the Red Deer Open House

Fall RDRWA Events

On September 26 RDRWA stakeholders attended an informational tour of Dickson Dam. Ross Martyn, Team Leader at Dickson Dam, provided attendees with a detailed history, dam management and operation objectives and an outside tour of the dam. The hotdog lunch prepared by chef Jim Martin was an added bonus to the tour.



Dickson Dam Tour

The RDRWA fall General Meeting, Urban Watershed Management, was held November 25 in Red Deer. Presenters shared details on Low Impact Development, Water Assurance, Red Deer City's Wastewater Treatment & Management, Storm water management, Floating Islands, RDR Municipal User's Group, AUMA's Water Conservation and Efficiency Plan, and the Central Alberta Wastewater Management Plan. If you missed the event, check out the presentations from the meeting, now posted at www.rdrwa.ca/meetings.php. The next RDRWA general meeting is scheduled for March 13th, 2009 with topic and location yet to be finalized.

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Thank you to our State of the Watershed sponsors:

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- Alberta Environment Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada



Alberta government ensures future of water quality, quantity

Water for Life strategy renewed to reflect changes in province

The Alberta government renewed its *Water for Life* strategy to ensure the water quality and quantity needed to support population and economic growth in the province. "Continuing to support *Water for Life* is critical to making the right choices for Alberta's water resources," said Rob Renner, Minister of Environment. "there's a new reality in Alberta and this renewed strategy reflects it."

The renewed strategy accelerates action to safeguard Alberta's water sources, ensuring integration of watershed planning with regional planning under the proposed Land-use Framework, and set clear direction and action for improved watershed management in Alberta. It outlines the need to take action on a number of fronts, including regional drinking water and wastewater solutions, aquatic ecosystem health, viable governance system that supports sustainable management of surface and groundwater and water monitoring, evaluation and public reporting.

The Alberta government asked the Alberta Water Council, appointed in 2004 to provide independent oversight and advice on *Water for Life* implementation, provide government with renewal recommendations, which they submitted in January 2008. Those recommendations were accepted by government and guided the renewal process. "By renewing *Water for Life* we are making a good plan even better," said Renner. "*Water for Life* is among the most comprehensive water management plans in North America, and we plan to keep it that way."

Implementation of Alberta's original *Water for Life* strategy, released in November 2003, has involved the efforts of many partners from a number of sectors including non-government organizations, industry, provincial and other governments. To successfully move the renewed strategy forward, a detailed action plan will be released in 2009. For more information about the renewed strategy, visit www.waterforlife.alberta.ca

Weed and feed lawn product to be eliminated

A new ban protects Alberta's water

A new ban on herbicide-fertilizer combination products in Alberta will help protect the quality of water downstream of urban areas.

As of January 1, 2010 herbicide-fertilizer combination products will no longer be sold in Alberta. Products intended for spot application to weeds will still be available for sale and use.

"We need to take steps wherever possible to protect and preserve the quality of Alberta's rivers and lakes," said Alberta Environment Minister Rob Renner. "By eliminating products that encourage mass application we will reduce the amount of chemical run-off in our waterways."

A chemical used in herbicide-fertilizer combination products, such as weed and feed, is highly mobile and commonly appears in water downstream of municipalities. This occurs when excess chemical runs off lawns into storm drainage systems and is deposited into creeks and rivers. More than 10 times the required

amount of pesticide can be applied to lawns when weed and feed is used. The decision to ban weed and feed will not impact the agriculture sector or the landscaping industry since these products are almost exclusively used on homeowners' lawns.

The regulation of pesticide use is typically the responsibility of Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency. Currently, the average amount of 2,4-D in surface water downstream of Alberta municipalities is below the recommended federal threshold. By banning weed and feed, Alberta is taking a proactive stance to eliminate opportunities for additional unwanted substances to enter our waterways.

"This is a simple measure that Albertans can take to curb the amount of chemicals entering our water," said Renner.

This action supports Alberta's *Water for Life* Strategy and is another way that Albertans can commit to One Simple Act to improve the well-being of the environment.

Upcoming Events

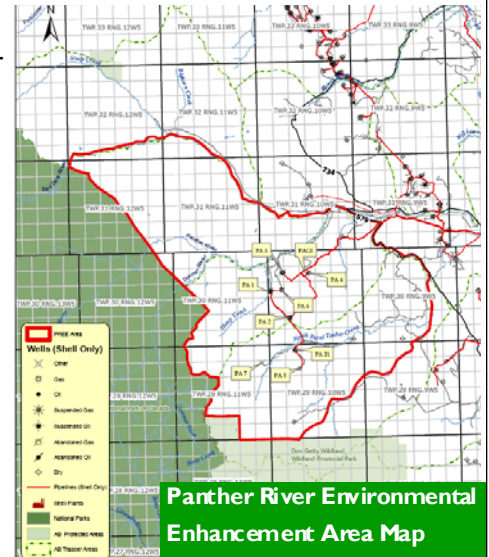
- **We are all Upstream II: Making Connections** February 10-12, Executive Royal Inn, Leduc/Nisku. The Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin will be unveiling their Saskatchewan River basin State of the Watershed report at this event. (the Red Deer River watershed is part of the Saskatchewan River basin.) For more information on the conference visit: www.saskriverbasin.ca/Upstream2/Home.html
- **Strengthening Stewardship and Conservation Conference: 4th National Conference** July 8-11, 2009, MacEwan Conference & Event Centre, University of Calgary. This is the only conference of its kind where stewards can meet to discuss emerging issues and solutions for strengthening stewardship across the country. For more information visit www.stewardship2009.ca

Panther River Environmental Enhancement Legacy Fund

In 2007, Shell and Suncor established the Panther River Environmental Enhancement (PREE) Legacy Fund, with the purpose of funding action-oriented environmental protection, enhancement, restoration, and education projects on public lands in the Panther area. Approximately \$300,000 has been dedicated over the next three years. "We've been a responsible developer in this area for many decades and understand the importance of nurturing it for future generations," said Norm Wiens, Shell Foothills Venture Manager for Development. "It's the first thing stakeholders ask of us. So it's a pleasure to be able to work with them through the Environmental Enhancement Legacy fund to support the kind of programs that will sustain the area well into the future."

Applications were collected and the first round of decision-making resulted in one approved project, a book, to be called *The Face of Time: Panther River and Burnt Timber Country*. The intention of this book is to educate readers about the background and environmental setting of the area. Chapters include topics on the geology of the land, the First Nations and early outfitters, forest rangers, trappers, park wardens, the Ya-Ha-Tinda Ranch, oil and gas exploration and Mountain Aire Lodge. The book is expected to be released in 2010.

The PREE Legacy Fund Steering Committee is currently accepting applications for their second round of decision-making. The application deadline is November 30, 2008. If you would like more information on the PREE fund or would like to apply, please contact Natalie Cooper (PREE Legacy Fund Coordinator) at 403-691-2004.



Calling all kids...



Winning Poster 2007-2008

Watershed Poster Contest

We are now accepting watershed poster entries for our annual watershed poster creation contest. Take a look at our website www.rdrwa.ca to learn more about your watershed and to find out what your watershed address is. Then draw or paint your area of the Red Deer River Watershed including activities and actions that are going on in your neck of the woods. Submit your entries to: Poster Contest, 4918—59th Street, Red Deer Alberta T4N 2N1. Last year's poster winners won great prizes and all entrants were awarded a watershed certificate. Join in the fun today and create your watershed masterpiece.



The Red Deer River Watershed Alliance and Agriculture Canada met with a Junior Forest Warden Group in November, to share watershed, wetland, groundwater and environment news and information. The Wardens inspected the groundwater model to learn how surface water and groundwater are connected and how contaminants can move through the watershed. The wardens also signed up for "One Simple Act" where they committed to change one of their daily activities to contribute towards the improvement of the environment. Provincial watershed puzzles were created to help the wardens identify the location of their watershed. Then the group cooked up a wetland using the FEN and BOG recipes, adding ingredients such as frogs, grasses, black aspens, mosquitoes and cattails to mix up a wetland. These Junior Forest Wardens were eager to learn and discovered what they could do to protect their watershed.



Alberta Water Council Update

The Alberta Water Council meets on December 2nd for its final board meeting of 2008. During the fall of this year, the Council completed three major initiatives: The Wetland Policy Project, The Shared Governance Project and the Water Conservation, Efficiency and Productivity Sector Planning Project. Work continues on several Council teams and committees.

Wetland Policy Project

On September 18th, 2008 the Alberta Water Council recommended one of Canada's most comprehensive wetland policy and implementation plans to the Government of Alberta. The Council's reports will help the provincial government develop and finalize a new provincial wetland policy for Alberta. The Council's recommendations focused on protecting Alberta's wetlands by managing impacts; setting objectives; encouraging stewardship; and building knowledge and capacity. Two sectors indicated that while they supported most of the policy and plan, they could not fully support all of the idea and actions recommended by the project team. Their concerns and other's responses to those concerns were forwarded to the Minister of Environment for his consideration in developing the final policy.

Shared Governance and Watershed Planning Framework Project

The Shared Governance and Watershed Management Planning Framework Project Team was established in 2007 to develop two products: (1) a Shared Governance Framework for the *Water for Life* partnerships and (2) a Framework for Watershed Management Planning. This team's Shared Governance report, titled *Strengthening Partnerships*, recommends how the current shared governance model can be improved and pays particular attention to the roles, responsibilities, relationships and accountabilities of the various partnerships identified in the *Water for Life* strategy. The team's second report is scheduled for final review in December.

Water Conservation, Efficiency, and Productivity Sector Planning Project

The report, *Recommendations for Water Conservation, Efficiency,*

and Productivity Sector Planning was approved at the September Water Council meeting. The report provides a foundation and guidance for water conservation, efficiency, and productivity sector planning to meet the goals and objectives outlined in the *Water for Life* strategy. The report will be officially launched in late 2008.

Current and On-going Committees and Teams

- The **Water Allocation Transfer System Upgrade Project Team** (WATSUP) continues to work toward developing recommendations to improve Alberta's water allocation transfer system. As part of their work, they will be hosting a symposium during March 4th and 5th, 2009 in Calgary to enable stakeholders and international experts to share information on this topic – so block off these dates in your calendar! More information about the symposium is available on the Council's website.

- The **Water for Life Implementation Review Committee** is responsible for routinely reviewing the implementation progress of the *Water for Life* (WFL) strategy and providing recommendations to ensure its effectiveness. The Committee is currently conducting its third review and a report is expected in the spring of 2009. The team has recently completed gathering input from a wide variety of stakeholders. Thank you to everyone who took the time to participate in this survey.

- The **Health Aquatic Ecosystems Project Team** continues to work toward developing a working definition of the term *healthy aquatic ecosystems*. The team will also recommend priority actions the Council and other water strategy partners can do to best advance this goal. Their work is scheduled for completion in March 2009.

Business Planning will begin early in 2009 as the Council's current three-year business plan winds down.

For further information on any of these initiatives, please contact:

Alberta Water Council

Email: info@awchome.ca

Web: www.awchome.ca



Holiday Greetings!

Thank you for supporting the Red Deer River Watershed Alliance.
We wish you a happy holiday season and all the best in 2009!

Executive Director, Staff and Board of Directors

Red Deer River Watershed Alliance