

The Meander

Milk River Watershed Council Canada Annual Report 2007-08

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Year in Review — A Report from the Chair

by Tom Gilchrist



The MRWCC completed its second year of operation. Some directors were re-elected to provide a rotational continuity for future boards. The Board renegotiated the contract with Sandi Riemersma to provide administrative services and project coordination. The goals that were set last year have not changed. Four active teams are working energetically to reach those goals. The Team reports provide details of their programs.

Our operating funds are provided by grants from the provincial government, administered by Alberta Environment (AENV). We have received the requested amount of funds for administration and ongoing programs.

Discussions were held this year around the method of funding for WPACs. The method of funding for specific projects changed from grants to contracts. We did not agree with the contract approach due to a clause that specified that all information gathered under the contract would remain the exclusive property of the government. Our projects are funded through various levels of government as well as by inkind support from our partners. All cooperators are entitled to the information that they have helped to assemble. A meeting of all the WPACs in January, voiced considerable opposition to AENV's new approach and several solutions were suggested.

The AENV grant agreements also have a clause that prohibits the use of allocated funds for payment of GST. We are unable to comply with that clause because we are subject to GST and our only source of income has been from the grant, to date. We can only recover 50% of GST paid. The WPAC meeting in January brought this issue to the government's attention. One solution would be to approach the municipal governments in the watershed for an annual grant.

Your Board is composed of energetic people that are very interested in our watershed. As a result, the Teams are active and moving ahead rapidly on their project schedules. Sandi is providing enthusiastic coordination of all these activities. Our major project was the production of a State of the Watershed Report. The report is an excellent document, completed in house with input from several provincial and federal government departments, as well as non-government agencies.

Continued on Page 2.

Year in Review Continued...

Your Council looks forward to an active, productive year ahead and recognizes the commitment of its directors and residents of the watershed. The retiring directors deserve your vote of thanks for their valued input during their term of office.

Submitted by Tom Gilchrist, Chair

Community Awareness and Involvement Team Report

by Andrea Hohne, Team Chair

Another busy year for the Community Awareness and Involvement Team (CAIT). This year, CAIT developed a Team Charter to help define our Mission, Vision and Goals.

Team Mission:

To ensure that members are aware and involved in the activity of the Milk River Watershed Council Canada.

Team Vision:

Everyone in the watershed understands the role of the Milk River Watershed Council Canada and has the tools they need to ensure a healthy watershed for future generations.

Team Goals:

- To interact with other Teams to effectively promote and communicate their activities.
- To disseminate timely and relevant information to our members through the website, publications, advertising and the Annual General Meeting.
- To provide educational opportunities to individuals, schools, groups and the general public regarding issues pertaining to integrated watershed management and watershed health.
- To engage the membership and general public in the issues and current events that impact the watershed.
- To expand Team membership to include non-board members, to ensure that the Team continues to be inspired and dynamic.

CAIT's theme for 2007-08 was Get to Know Your Watershed. We organized a trip to the

headwaters in Babb, MT for Board members and our municipal Council partners. The trip was a great success and everyone enjoyed meeting our Montana colleagues interested in watershed management. We also organized an annual Canoe



Trip in June 2007 that was very well attended. To assist local schools with watershed education, CAIT developed a watershed toolkit that was distributed to three schools. The kit contained a video on wetlands, invertebrate identification keys and the MRWCC booklet, among other items.

We now have *Sharpie* permanent markers engraved with the MRWCC slogan "Our Water ~Our Legacy" and our website address and hope that people will find these a fun and useful reminder to visit us on the world-wide web.

We are always looking for new faces to join our team. See our website to learn how to get involved or contact the Project Coordinator. We encourage everyone to visit our website often to see what's happening in the watershed www.milkriverwatershedcouncil.ca.

Board of Directors 2007-08

MRWCC Chair Tom Gilchrist, Individual	Warren Cunningham, Non-Government Organization	Robi Gareau, Provincial Government
MRWCC Vice Chair Ken Miller, Farmer	Vacant, Federal Government	Vacant Towns and Villages
MRWCC Treasurer Don Welsh, Water Co-ops	Ross Ford, Rural Municipalities	John Ross, Rancher
Ken Brown, Recreation	Joan Hughson, Rural Municipalities	Darlene Sakires, Industry
Louella Cronkhite, Provincial Government	Andrea Hohne/John Byrne, Health	Don Watson, Non-Government Organization

Research and Monitoring Team Report by John Ross, Team Chair

This year the Research and Monitoring Team (R & M Team) focused their energy toward understanding the process of erosion on the Milk River in response to concerns expressed by a number of people in the watershed.

AMEC Earth and Environmental was hired to undertake the study of erosion and sedimentation. AMEC revisited sites along the river that had been surveyed in 1915, prior to the diversion of the St. Mary River into the Milk River. The study illustrated how the Milk River has migrated during the past 90 years. Since the diversion began, the Milk River has increased an average width of 10.5 to 21 m. The results of this study will be posted on our website.

The R & M Team also continued with the water quality monitoring program that was established

in 2006 in collaboration with the County of Forty Mile, County of Warner, Cardston County and Alberta Environment. Instream phosphorus concentrations tend to increase during periods of water diversion, while nitrogen and salt concentrations tend to decrease. The R & M Team will be collecting sediment samples to identify potential sources of nutrients and other water quality parameters.

The R & M Team plans to investigate some of the data gaps that have been identified in the Milk River 2008 State of the Watershed Report.

Thank you to everyone who has worked to help increase our understanding of our watershed's resources. We look forward to building on our existing research and to exploring more elements of our watershed.

2007 Milk River Watershed Council Canada Supported by:

Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development
Alberta Conservation Association
Alberta Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture
Alberta Environment
Canadian Natural Resources Ltd.
Cardston County
County of Forty Mile
County of Warner
Cows and Fish

Cypress County
Ducks Unlimited
Land Wise Inc.
MultiSAR
Operation Grassland Community
Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration
Sustainable Resource Development
Town of Milk River
Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park

The Treasurer's Report
by Don Welsh

Milk River Watershed Council Canada
Balance Sheet

December 31, 2007

Financial Statements

Assets

Current assets:

Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 130,291
Grants receivable	90,630
Goods and services tax recoverable	4,044

\$ 224,965

Liabilities and Net Assets (Deficiency)

Current liabilities:

Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 52,550
Loan payable	-
Deferred contributions	173,929

226,479

Net assets (deficiency) (1,514)

\$ 224,965

See accompanying notes to financial statements. Available by contacting the MRWCC.

Milk River Watershed Council Canada
Statement of Operations and Net Assets (Deficiency)

Year ended December 31, 2007

Revenue

Government Grants	
Alberta Environment	\$ 82,671
Agriculture and Agri-food Canada	107,123
Fisheries and Oceans Canada	3,000
Other income	3,147
	<hr/>
	\$ 196,441

Expenses

Project costs	\$ 127,157
Project coordinator contract	51,859
Administration	1,832
Newsletter	2,022
Travel	10,424
Non-recoverable goods and services tax	4,042
	<hr/>
	197,336
Excess of expenses over revenue, being the deficiency or the period	\$ (895)
Deficit, beginning of period	(619)
Deficit, end of period	<hr/>
	\$ (1,514)

See accompanying notes to financial statements. Available by contacting the MRWCC.

*In 2007-08, inkind contributions amounted to \$ 83,464.00.
 Thank you for your support!*

Water Supply and Management Team Report

By Tom Gilchrist, Team Chair

As Team leader, I would first like to thank the team members and Sandi for their valued input and counsel. This has been an interesting year with some major accomplishments and some frustrations.

The IJC has not yet provided any clue regarding their position on Montana's request to change the apportionment rules for the St. Mary and Milk Rivers. The Task Force Report has been in their hands since November 2006. The U. S. co-chair has been relieved of his duties as well.

Your Board, accompanied by a number of councilors from the municipal governments in the watershed traveled to Babb, MT in May to view the Sherbourne reservoir, diversion works, canal and siphons that divert St. Mary water into the Milk River. Representatives of the Bureau of Reclamation and the St. Mary Rehabilitation Working Group hosted us. Several explanatory talks were given about the various aspects of the project. Excellent discussion followed over lunch hosted by MRWCC. The events of the day opened some doors for future discussion.

Four members of our Board met with four members of the Reconstruction Committee plus the manager of the Joint Board of Control in Shelby near the end of November. We provided the group with examples of the output of AENV's model program. That led to detailed discussions about nearly all facets of the river on both sides of the boundary, including development of more storage. The talks resulted in an agreement that the Manager would provide Fresno Reservoir operating data for as many years as possible so that the model could investigate the value, if any, of storage in Alberta as it might augment usable flow for Montana users. The process was contingent on securing Laurent Conard's time to program and run the model. AENV agreed to provide Laurent's time for the work.

Sandi discovered the availability of PFRA grant funds to investigate supplemental water supply projects. The Team assembled a grant application for \$102,500.00 to hire a consultant to investigate several routes to conduct Ridge Reservoir water to the Milk River to alleviate drought induced low flow problems for the towns and irrigators and some 10,000 acres of irrigation expansion. The object of the investigation is to find a feasible route with associated costs. The next step would involve additional storage construction and canal enlargement downstream of St. Mary reservoir. Several consulting firms were asked to bid on the work. Klohn Crippen Berger was the successful bidder. A field tour was conducted in October to view the 5 routes. Preliminary work resulted in two routes being eliminated. Four routes will be compared and then one route will receive more detailed design. An additional \$20,000.00 grant was procured from PFRA to document environmental and historical artifact issues for the 4 routes. The final report was completed by March 31, 2008.



Water Supply and Management Team continued...

The team has completed a busy year with the capable direction of Sandi. The issues surrounding possible storage, Ridge supplemental supply and ongoing Montana dialogue will provide a challenge for the upcoming year.

State of the Watershed Team

By Sandi Riemersma

The State of the Watershed (SOW) Report Team is celebrating the release of the Milk River 2008 State of the Watershed Report!

The SOW Team was comprised of numerous government, non-government and industry representatives who contributed their time and knowledge to the development of the SOW Report. The Team met regularly throughout 2007 to discuss watershed resources and determine how to integrate all of the information that was available for the watershed. Diligence and hard work by this Team resulted in the successful completion of the SOW Report in time for the MRWCC's 3rd Annual General Meeting.

The State of the Watershed Report identifies what is currently known about the key indicators of watershed health, highlights the areas where we lack good understanding of watershed resources and provides recommendations for future work. The SOW Report also provides an interesting history of the watershed. This report will be used as a tool to help develop an integrated watershed management plan for the Milk River.

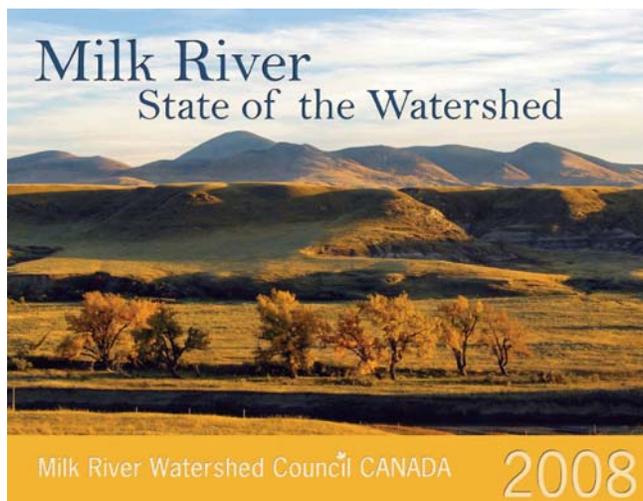
We thank everyone who helped to complete the SOW Report. Your willingness to participate and your chapter contributions are much appreciated. The Report truly represents the watershed and

will be a valuable reference for landowners and resource managers alike.

Hard copies of the State of the Watershed Report are available at:

- Town of Milk River office,
- County of Warner office,
- Alberta Environment, Lethbridge, or
- by email

sandi@milkriverwatershedcouncil.ca.



A PUBLICATION OF
THE
MILK RIVER
WATERSHED
COUNCIL CANADA



Box 313
Milk River, AB
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Our Water ~ Our Legacy

Message from the Project Coordinator

by Sandi Riemersma



Once again I would like to express my appreciation to our Board members and to our project partners for making the 2007-08 year an exciting one! Your hard work and dedication to the Milk River watershed is inspiring!

I think our greatest achievement this year was the completion of our State of the Watershed (SOW) Report. With much dedication and perseverance our State of the Watershed Team pulled together to deliver a great synopsis of the state of the Milk River watershed. This

Report will provide direction for the MRWCC and our partners in the years to come. We have received a lot of positive feedback for our process in developing the SOW Report and for the readable end product. I thank all of those who helped prepare this document—it could not have been achieved without you!

In addition to the SOW Report, we also undertook two other major studies this year. The Supplemental Water Supply Investigation and the Study of Erosion and Deposition which will support the development of the upcoming Milk River Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP).

I am looking forward to embarking on the Milk River IWMP this year. We have a great task ahead of us! The watershed management plan will provide specific recommendations to resource managers and decision makers regarding water and land use. Watch for upcoming meetings that will be held to gather your input! We have also planned more research projects for this year, addressing some of the data gaps that have been identified in the SOW Report and in follow-up to last years investigations.

Our membership is rising and we are building great relationships with resource managers in the southern half of the Milk River watershed (i.e., Montana). I look forward to collaborating on joint watershed initiatives in the upcoming year. Please get involved and contact us with any ideas, information or questions that you may have about the watershed or its management.

On a personal note, I would like to thank everyone for their support last year as we waited for the arrival of our son, Elijah Robert, born May 17th, 2008. Your understanding was greatly appreciated!

Sincerely,

Sandi

Contact Us

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