



# The Meander

Summer 2006

## The Milk River Watershed Council Canada is Official

On March 31, 2006, a crowd of about 60 people assembled at the Milk River Civic Centre to attend the Milk River Watershed Council Canada's 1<sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting. That evening, everyone enjoyed a dinner sponsored by ATB Financial, Alberta Environment and the Milk River Watershed Council Canada.

Opening remarks were provided by Paul Hinman, MLA. David Hill of the Alberta Irrigation Projects Association provided an interesting discussion on the topic "Water: There's No Replacement for it". Dave McGee, Alberta Environment presented "Transboundary Water Perspectives and Update". These talks highlighted the importance of water in southern Alberta and some of the water scarcity challenges we may face as we move into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.



*Our new logo.*

Rosemary Jones announced the winner of our Logo Contest that we held last fall. The winner, Karen Ellert-Garber, was presented with an i-Pod for her creative work (shown right). A thank you was also extended to Travis Peter whose logo came in 2<sup>nd</sup> place. The hand drawn logo has been digitized and will be used on all our publications and presentations. Elections were also held to appoint our new Board of Directors. We had a great nominations list and look forward to an exciting year ahead.



*Karen Ellert-Garber, receiving an i-Pod for her logo design from Rosemary Jones.*

## Welcome Our New Board of Directors

The MRWCC Board of Directors for 2006 consists of 16 members representing a broad range of residents that bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the Council regarding current Milk River watershed issues. We are looking forward to an exciting year ahead!

### MRWCC Board of Directors for 2006:

- Andrea Angus and John Byrne; Health
- Ken Brown; Recreation
- Louella Cronkhite; Provincial Government
- Warren Cunningham; Non-Government Organization - General
- Ryan Davison; Federal Government
- Tom Gilchrist; General Membership (Chair)
- Ross Ford; County/ Municipal District
- George Henline; County/ Municipal District
- Rosemary Jones; Provincial Government
- Ken Miller; Agriculture – Farmer (Vice-Chair)
- Edith Olson; University/College
- Robert Oswald; Towns and Villages
- John Ross; Agriculture – Rancher
- Darlene Sakires and Les Scory; Industry
- Don Watson; Non-Government Organization – Environmental
- Don Welsh; Water User (Treasurer)



*New Board of Directors for the Milk River Watershed Council Canada.*

## International Joint Commission Release Task Force Report

Five members of the MRWCC traveled to Havre, Montana, to present a brief response to the International Joint Commission and Task Force responsible for providing advice on the water sharing agreement and Treaty of 1909.

Approximately 100 people attended the Havre and Lethbridge meetings to discuss water sharing opportunities. The MRWCC requested that a collaborative approach be undertaken that will involve a Working Group of local people to help identify the next steps.



*Milk River water spilling from Fresno Reservoir, Montana, on its way downstream to the Missouri River.*

## ...grazing school continued

Fescue / Idaho Fescue / Western Wheatgrass near Del Bonita, the Idaho Fescue / Northern Wheatgrass / Needle and Thread near Milk River and the Needle and Thread / June Grass / Blue Grama Grass community near Aden.



*Stockman's Grazing School participants learned to identify various grasses in the mixed grass ecoregion.*

*This lupine is a prominent forb found in native pastures in the brown soil zone of the Milk River watershed.*



## 2006 Milk River Watershed Stockman's Grazing School a Success



The Milk River Watershed Council Canada teamed up with Cardston County, County of Warner, County of Forty Mile and Cypress County to organize and host the Milk River Watershed Stockman's Grazing School from June 19 to 21, 2006.

Sixty-four people attended the School and some attended all three days.

This year's Grazing School was unique as it traveled the watershed from West to East over three days (Del Bonita, Gold Spring Provincial Park, Grains Community Hall). Ranchers and farmers enjoyed a series of presentations related to grazing management, forage production, plant identification and tame pasture management. Other topics included the Real Canadian Beef School overview, pasture watering systems, managing for species at risk and water quality awareness. Approximately half of each day was spent in a classroom setting, and the other half was spent "hands-on" in the field. Field tours included a look at the Ross Ranch grazing strategies for wildlife management and various offstream watering options at Henline Ranches Ltd.

Plant communities studied included the Foothills Rough

The organizing committee would like to thank everyone who supported this years Grazing School including: Greencover Canada, Sustainable Resource Development – Lands Division, Cows & Fish, Alberta Conservation Association, Alberta Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture, Alberta Agriculture, Operation Grassland Community, MULTISAR, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Ducks Unlimited, Hostess-Frito-Lay, Canadian Natural Resources Ltd., Jacques Whitford Ltd., Farm Credit, Home Hardware Milk River, Environment Canada, Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration, Alberta Environment, Triple "O" Sales, Milk River Farm Supply Ltd., Dri-Land Feeders Ltd., Cargill, Southern Agri Services Ltd., Dow Agri Sciences, CAP Solar, Kelln Solar, Solar West, Alberta Environmental Farm Plan Company, and UFA.

### Did you know...?

Historically, watersheds have been important in determining boundaries, particularly in regions where trade by water was important. The English crown gave the Hudson's Bay Company a

monopoly on trade in the entire Hudson Bay watershed, an area called Rupert's Land. Image: [www.answers.com](http://www.answers.com)



## MRWCC Team Chair Updates

### Community Awareness and Involvement Team

The Community Awareness and Involvement Team is responsible for keeping you informed about the MRWCC's activities throughout the year and to get you involved! Some of our activities will be to update our website and display, host a tour with our Montana neighbours sometime later this summer and organize a speaker series for the Fall. We will work closely with all of the Teams to ensure that their information is passed on to you.

### Rural and Urban Project Team

The Rural and Urban Project Team will be developing and implementing programs that have a beneficial impact on the quality of our watershed. With the 2006 Stockman's Grazing School complete, we will focus on documenting the occurrence of streambank erosion, abandoned dump sites and other priority items (e.g. restricted or noxious weeds) along the Milk River. Once these sites have been identified and documented, we will develop a program to stabilize erosion areas of concern and clean up the abandoned dump sites in order of priority. We will work closely with the Research and Monitoring Team.

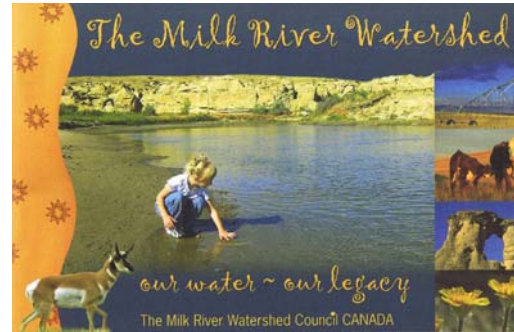
### Research and Monitoring Team

The Research and Monitoring Team is responsible for collecting pertinent information about the quality of the Milk River Watershed. We are going to focus on areas that have not been a priority in the past. We have developed a water quality monitoring program that began at the end of June. Seven sites along the mainstem of the Milk River and three tributary sites will be monitored twice per month for the remaining 2006 year. In addition, we will work with the Rural and Urban Project Team to identify erosion sites along the Milk River and to monitor erosion rates through time. This will help us understand the impact of increased flow from the St. Mary diversion on streambank stability and riparian health.

### Water Supply and Management Team

The Water Supply and Management Team is responsible for addressing quality water supplies in the watershed. We have been busy preparing a response for the International Joint Commission Public Open Houses in late May. The upcoming focus will be to model different water sharing scenarios to identify options that will provide the most benefits for everyone. We will be collaborating closely with our Montana neighbours to share information and ideas for future water management.

## New Publication Available



The Milk River Watershed Council Canada released a new publication about the watershed at the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting. This publication has been widely distributed and well received by all. The booklet outlines general characteristics of the Milk River watershed, including size, land use, water management and organizations working on conservation initiatives in the watershed. It also outlines the main goals of the Milk River Watershed Council Canada. If you would like a copy of this document you can obtain one from your County Office or at the Town of Milk River Office.

## Focused on Partnerships



The MRWCC would not be very successful without our Partners! We would like to acknowledge the assistance provided by Tim Romanow, Rural Extension Specialist with Cardston County. Tim's general responsibilities revolve around the County's Sustainable Agriculture Program with an emphasis on community initiatives involving grazing and riparian area management. Tim has been actively involved with the MRWCC, assisting with the Research and Monitoring Team and the Water Monitoring Program. He also assists with organizing and hosting events throughout the watershed, such as the Milk River Watershed's Stockman's Grazing School.

Tim is a graduate from the University of Lethbridge and Lethbridge Community College with a Degree in Environmental Science, Diploma in Renewable Resource Management, and a Certificate in Fish and Wildlife Technology. He has a background in agriculture, and his family still runs a small cow/calf operation near Didsbury, Alberta. Tim's professional interests are in Rangeland Restoration and Fish Habitat Enhancement. Feel free to contact Tim! **Phone:** 403-653-4977; **Email:** [tim@cardstoncounty.com](mailto:tim@cardstoncounty.com)

**THE NEWS COLUMN**

**Milk River Watershed -Water Supply Forecast**

As of July 1, 2006, below average natural runoff volumes are forecast for the March to September 2006 period in the Milk River watershed. Current forecasts in the basin range from 67 to 78% of the median, which is higher than volumes recorded during the same period in 2005. Forecasts decreased by 7 to 10% since the June 1 forecasts were published. For the Milk River at Milk River, current forecasted values for the March to September 2006 period would rank 27th lowest in 91 years of record (1912-2001).

For more information about water supplies in Alberta, visit Alberta Environment's website at <http://www3.gov.ab.ca/env/water/ws/watersupply/>.

**2006 Stewardship Conference: Valuing Nature - Stewardship and Conservation in Canada**

Congratulations to MRWCC Board Member Ken Brown who was chosen as southern Alberta's representative to attend the Valuing Nature Stewardship Conference in Cornerbrook, Newfoundland and Labrador! Here's what Ken had to say:



The Conference was held July 5 to 8 and was attended by about 500 people from across Canada. Five of those selected were from Watershed Councils across Alberta. A plenary session highlighted

each day's activities. Delegates were then assigned to small group sessions where successful watershed ventures from all regions of Canada were presented so others could question and, perhaps, model similar projects in their own regions. It was interesting to discover that many of the stewardship projects in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador have been initiated and funded by industry to promote a clean and healthy environment. Industries have found, through experience, that when land and water resources are allowed to flourish, industry benefits. Most groups in Newfoundland and Labrador have "bought in" and everybody seems to be benefiting from these initiatives.

The next National Stewardship Conference will be hosted by Alberta in 2009. I'm sure each Watershed Council will be asked to provide significant input into the planning, promotion, and participation of that conference.



**New gopher control program proven effective.**

**Mark Your Calendar!**

[2006 North American Weed Management Association \(NAWMA\) Conference: Invasive Plants - Risk Assessment and Ecological Integrity](#)  
September 18-21, 2006 / Calgary, Alberta

[2006 Clean Air Strategy Alliance \(CASA\) Science Symposium on Nitrogen: Fixed on Nitrogen](#)  
September 27-29, 2006 / Banff, Alberta

[Cochrane Low Impact Development Conference: Innovations in Urban Development](#)  
October 18-20, 2006 / Cochrane, Alberta

[Paradise Canyon Golf and Country Club Bioengineering Workshop](#)  
October 25-26, 2006 / Lethbridge, Alberta

[14<sup>th</sup> Annual Alberta Lake Management Society Workshop: Managing Reservoirs for Conflicting Uses](#)  
October 20-21, 2006 / Lethbridge, Alberta

[8th Prairie Conservation and Endangered Species Conference and Workshop](#)  
March 1-3, 2007 / Regina, Saskatchewan

**We would like to hear from you!**

If you have any ideas, comments or are wondering how to get involved in the Milk River Watershed Council Canada...we want to know! Contact your local area representative or the MRWCC Project Coordinator below if you would like more information:

Sandi Riemersma  
Project Coordinator  
Tel. 403-921-5667  
Email. [info@milkriverbasin.org](mailto:info@milkriverbasin.org)

