

The Meander

Milk River Watershed Council Canada Annual Report 2006-07

Year in Review — A Report from the Chair

by Tom Gilchrist



The MRWCC has completed its first year of operation. Directors were elected and an executive committee chosen. The board negotiated a contract with Sandi Riemersma to provide administrative and project coordination services. This was a fortunate move because Sandi managed the establishment of our Council for AENV. Goals have been set and 4 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 Water for Life Strategy, administered by Alberta Environment (AENV). The grant process had some hold ups as our grant application was not filed until September 2006. AENV then informed us that we would receive 50% of the requested amount. This issue took 3 months to resolve. The outcome of meetings and representations was a grant amount placed in our hands at the end of December for 80% of the original request. Additional funds were provided to assist us with the preparation of the Milk River State of the Watershed Report. This was gratefully received.

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 is the production of a State of the Watershed (SOW) Report. Fortunately, the SOW Team has access to the socio-economic sections of the Milk River Feasibility Study completed by Klohn Crippen, engineering consultants. We are also receiving a great amount of support through partnerships with the Alberta Conservation Association, Operation Grassland Community, Ducks Unlimited, Cows and Fish, Sustainable Resource Development, PFRA, Alberta Environment and others. This will enable us to produce a quality report at much lower cost.

Your Council looks forward to an active, productive year ahead and recognizes the commitment of its directors and residents of the watershed.

Submitted by Tom Gilchrist, Chair

Inside this issue:

Community
Involvement
Report 2

Board of Directors
2006-07 2

Research and
Monitoring Team
Report 3

MRWCC
Supporters 3

Treasurer's
Report 4-5

Water Supply and
Management Team
Report 6-7

Message from the
Project
Coordinator 8



Community Awareness and Involvement Team Report by Andrea Hohne, Team Chair

The Community Awareness and Involvement Team had a busy year promoting activities and events within the Milk River watershed. We also had the opportunity to represent the watershed at a variety of functions throughout the Province.

Prime Web Designs Inc. was hired in 2006 to design a dynamic and innovative website for the MRWCC. Our new website is located at: www.milkriverwatershedcouncil.ca You can register online for membership or renew your membership. We encourage everyone to visit the site often to see what's happening in the watershed.

The Team also assisted other MRWCC Teams plan their events for the year. The 2006 River Clean-Up was a great success and took one large step towards cleaning up our watershed. Many items were removed from the clean-up sites including tires, pails and barbed wire. A second River Clean-Up event is scheduled for

2007.

The Community Awareness and Involvement Team compiles and publishes The Meander Newsletter quarterly. The newsletter informs members about upcoming events, projects and achievements. It also encourages the public to become involved with the MRWCC.

Event planning included that of the MRWCC 2nd Annual General Meeting, held on April 4, 2007 in Milk River, AB. Keynote speakers discussed the topics of social history and water resources.

The Team is currently planning the Get to Know Your Watershed Canoe Trip scheduled for June 2007. This trip will provide a unique educational opportunity for members who wish to participate in a hands-on approach to learning about the watershed and its key issues.

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.

Board of Directors 2006-07

MRWCC Chair

Tom Gilchrist, Individual

MRWCC Vice Chair

Ken Miller, Farmer

MRWCC Treasurer

Don Welsh, Water Co-ops

Ken Brown,
Recreation

Louella Cronkhite,
Provincial Government

Warren Cunningham,

Non-Government Organization

Ryan Davison,

Federal Government

Ross Ford,

Rural Municipalities

George Henline,

Rural Municipalities

Andrea Hohne/John Byrne,
Health

Rosemary Jones,

Provincial Government

Edith Olson,

Academia, Resigned

Robert Oswald,

Towns and Villages, Resigned

John Ross,

Rancher

Darlene Sakires/Les Scory,
Industry

Don Watson,

Non-Government Organization

Research and Monitoring Team Report

by John Ross, Team Chair

We had an excellent first year of operations on the Research and Monitoring Team. In order to do the work necessary we've partnered with many city, county, government and non-government organizations to achieve the funding, data gathering, expertise and manpower that we required. We have a great mix of people on the team and everyone brings a can-do attitude to the meetings, and lots of ideas. It makes it a lot of fun to be a part of such a good group.

We got right to work after the Milk River Watershed Council was officially formed and elections were completed last year. We put together a plan to analyze water samples from 10 sites along the Milk River and some of its tributaries. The counties of Cardston, Warner and Forty Mile were instrumental in supplying personnel to help us collect those samples on a bi-weekly basis. The samples were checked at each site for temperature, turbidity and other environmental conditions that could affect the sample, then couriered to Calgary and analyzed for pH, electrical conductivity, nutrients and bacteria. The data we gathered is now being compiled and will eventually be placed on a map and presented to the public on our website. This will be an ongoing project and will be one of our basic tools that we'll be using to gauge the health of our watershed into the future, to make recommendations and plan projects. Due to time constraints we didn't get started sampling last year until mid-June, but we will be starting mid-April this year.

In February, with the help of Lifewater Drilling, we initiated a groundwater testing program. Forty water wells were sampled at a variety of locations through-out the watershed and in two distinct aquifers, the Milk River Sands and the Whiskey Valley aquifers. This data will also be made available to the public once it has been compiled. As far as I know we are the only WPAC to take on groundwater testing as one of our projects.

Funding was recently obtained for a streambank erosion study. The Milk River handles an increased volume of water above natural levels due to the 1909 and 1921 treaties which allow the US to divert water from the St. Mary's River into the Milk River basin. The study will determine how much additional erosion the diversion may cause. If we can make a correlation between the volume of water in the Milk River and erosion of the river banks, we can predict increased erosion should the US upgrade their diversion to handle their full entitlement of water from the St. Mary's in wet years. We will eventually be experimenting with different methods of streambank stabilization at problematic erosion sites.

Another project that we undertook this past fall was a very successful clean-up day along the Milk River. With the help of volunteers and other interested parties we hauled away barbed wire, stoves, cans and other assorted junk that had been dumped along the bank at one location. We had great weather that day, a nice lunch, and a lot of fun. More clean-up days are planned so please watch for future announcements or check our website.

2006 Milk River Watershed Council Canada Supported by:

Alberta Agriculture and Food
 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
 Life Water Drilling
 MultiSAR
 Operation Grassland Community
 Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration
 Sustainable Resource Development
 Town of Milk River

The Treasurer's Report
by Don Welsh

Milk River Watershed Council Canada
Balance Sheet

December 31, 2006

Financial Statements

Assets

Current assets:

Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 121,588
Goods and services tax recoverable	1,011
	<hr/>
	\$ 122,599

Liabilities and Net Assets (Deficiency)

Current liabilities:

Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 15,118
Loan payable	9,000
Deferred contributions	99,100

Net assets (deficiency)	(619)
	<hr/>
	\$ 122,599

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

Milk River Watershed Council Canada
Statement of Operations

Period from January 24, 2006 to December 31, 2006

Revenue

Government Grants—Alberta Environment	\$ 50,900
Other income	400

Expenses

Project coordinator fees	37,494
Consulting	8,200
Education	2,000
Registrations	1,050
Promotional items	1,017
Administration	595
Newsletter	544
Non-recoverable goods and services tax	1,019
	<hr/> \$ 51,919

Excess of expenses over revenue, being the deficiency or the period \$ (619)

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

Water Supply and Management Team Report

By Tom Gilchrist



The Water Supply and Management Team continued the work of the Milk River Basin Water Management Committee with respect to the issues involved with the request by Montana to open the apportionment section of the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 and the amended Apportionment Order of 1921, filed with the International Joint Commission in 2003.

The Water Supply and Management Team, by brief, supported the establishment of a Task Force by the IJC to consider the Administrative Measures that could refine the apportionment process. The Council responded to the IJC's invitation to comment on the preliminary report produced by the Task Force. I made a major presentation at a hearing in Havre, MT on the 23 of May 2006.

The major points stressed were:

1. Do not disturb the present long standing apportionment principle.
2. Any balance period used in the apportionment calculations other than the current weekly scenario is unacceptable for the following reasons:

An annual balance period proposed by Montana for the St Mary flows, when applied to the Milk River, would severely impact Alberta's Milk River irrigators because any surplus undiverted flows during flood periods could only be recovered from Canada's apportioned volume of natural flows later on in the season. The natural flow often approaches zero in July and August, periods of high demand for diversion licensees.

A balanced period of a month or several months does not measurably increase Montana's share of the St Mary if the reconstruction of the diversion system is designed for 850 cfs (the original design capacity).

3. Establish a Milk River Watershed Board composed of water users from Alberta and Montana that could improve the joint understanding of the full basin supply issues and recommend actions to provide more useable water for all basin residents.

I also attended the companion hearing in Lethbridge on the 24th of May 2006 and presented a short version of the presentation made at Havre.

The Task Force Report was not filed with the IJC until mid November, well after the US election. The report provides a very good understanding of the flow patterns of rivers, their apportionment and the volumes that are passed downstream. The inability of both countries to divert their apportioned share is the major issue. Canada lacks storage and the US uses an old decrepit diversion system. The major issue is the interpretation of the 1921 order. The Canadian interpretation is instant apportionment of flow with as short a balance period as practical. The Montana interpretation is apportionment of volume with as long a balance period as possible, preferably one year or seasonal. The members of

Water Supply and Management Team continued...

the Task Force could not find a resolution to that issue. The report did make several recommendations for improvements to administrative procedures. A full watershed council group, including members of Alberta and Montana, was also proposed. The IJC now has the task of replying to Montana's letter that asked the IJC to open the apportionment section of the 1921 Order. There is no timetable for an answer. The IJC's answer is a very important issue affecting the design of storage on the Milk River in Alberta. The storage project cannot proceed until an apportionment rule is provided by the IJC.

Senator Conrad Burns organized a hearing in Havre on September 1, 2006 respecting a Senate bill for reconstruction of the St Mary diversion works. Senator Pete Domenici chaired the hearing. Your Chairman attended as an interested observer. The diversion reconstruction plans are in disarray because of the change in the federal balance of power in the House and Senate.

Rosenberg Forum

The Minister of Environment invited your Chairman to the Rosenberg International Forum on Water Policy in Banff. The Rosenberg Forums emphasize the role of science in water management and in the making of water policy, and promote interaction between scientists and policy makers. All the IJC Commissioners attended so valuable contacts were established.

The Minister of Environment asked the Forum for advice. The panel was asked to review the Alberta water strategy, Water for Life, and make recommendations on how to strengthen implementation. The Panel was also asked to review existing arrangements for governing and managing groundwater in the Province and make recommendations.

CBC Wildrose Interview

Sandi, Project Coordinator, and I also participated in an interview on the CBC Wildrose Forum who hosted a weekly lunch-hour discussion on water in Alberta. The topic was the Milk River, water supply and international issues. One of the last questions posed to me was, "What would be the best and worst scenario arising from the IJC?" I replied, "The best would be status quo and the worst would be to re-open apportionment".

Securing Milk River Water Supplies

The Water Supply and Management Team is still in active pursuit of the objective of better utilizing our available water supply to stimulate social and economic benefits in this watershed.

The Team submitted a request to Alberta Environment to provide modeling assistance to address the lack of information on the security of supply issue for Alberta's Milk River water users. After nearly a year of refinement, the model is able to utilize 80 years of flow data to predict impacts on net usable water supplies of various infrastructure modifications including diversions and storage capacities. The Team will continue to work with Alberta Environment to predict best scenarios for water management in the Milk River watershed.



A PUBLICATION OF
THE
MILK RIVER
WATERSHED
COUNCIL CANADA



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Our Water ~ Our Legacy

Message from the Project Coordinator

by Sandi Riemersma



It is hard to believe that another year has passed. We have accomplished a lot in our first year of official operation! This is mainly due to the commitment, dedication and hard work of the many people who volunteer their time to the Milk River Watershed Council Canada.

I thank the Board of Directors, Team Chairs and Team Members for their leadership, enthusiasm and get to it attitudes! You have made each of our meetings time efficient, productive—and fun! Thank you also to our many project partners—without your help, many of our projects

and events could not be accomplished.

I am really looking forward to 2007 as we move ahead with a number of outstanding projects that have been brought to our attention from landowners and various people working in the watershed. These projects include a study of erosion and deposition on the Milk River, a Supplemental Water Supply Investigation and the Milk River State of the Watershed Report. These projects will support the development of a watershed management plan that will provide direction for future management activities.

Our membership is rising and I hope that we can increase participation again this year. It would be great to see everyone in the watershed involved in some way. I encourage all of you to join in the activities of the MRWCC as we learn about the watershed resources, the people who rely on them and develop management strategies together.

I hope you will get involved this year and contact us with any ideas, information or questions that you may have about the watershed or its management.

Yours,

Sandi

"When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world."

John Muir, Naturalist (1838-1914)

Contact Us

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