

# MILK RIVER INTEGRATED WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN TERMS OF REFERENCE

## VISION

A watershed where community well-being is supported by a vibrant economy and sustained by a healthy environment that will endure as our legacy for future generations.

## PURPOSE

To develop the Milk River Integrated Watershed Management Plan that will provide guidance to decision-making authorities, natural resource managers, users and residents regarding land and water resources in the watershed.



L. Gilchrist

## WHAT WE HOPE TO ACHIEVE (OUTCOMES)

<b>Water Supply</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water is managed in a manner that benefits communities while meeting the needs of the aquatic and riparian environment.</li> <li>• Water sharing disputes are resolved.</li> <li>• An improved economy in the Milk River watershed due to a secure supply of water.</li> <li>• Information on water use in the Milk River watershed is available to the public.</li> </ul>
<b>Water Quality, Streambank and Riparian Protection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality water provides for communities, terrestrial and aquatic life, recreation and industry in the Milk River watershed.</li> <li>• Baseline water quality information is available to the public.</li> <li>• Water quality and quantity information is used to achieve sustainable use and integrated management of water resources.</li> <li>• Healthy, functioning riparian areas contribute to streambank stability, good water quality, forage, shelter and biodiversity in the Milk River watershed</li> </ul>
<b>Groundwater</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Groundwater is mapped, interactions are understood and the resource is properly managed.</li> </ul>
<b>Land Use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Innovative and sustainable land use and development practices take place in the watershed.</li> <li>• A healthy, vibrant economy that will attract people and investment to the watershed.</li> </ul>
<b>Biodiversity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A diverse native wildlife and plant community is present in the Milk River watershed through habitat protection and enhancement efforts.</li> </ul>



S. Riemersma

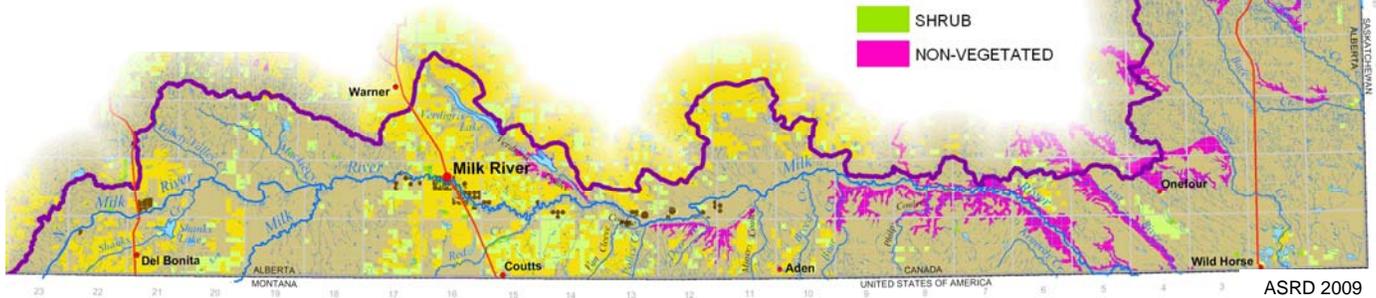
## MILK RIVER WATERSHED PLANNING AREA

**Watershed Area:** ~ 6,664 km<sup>2</sup>

**Milk River Length in Canada:** 180 km

The planning area will be confined to the Milk River watershed within Alberta, although some consideration may be given to elements that have inter-provincial or international significance.

### LEGEND



## MAIN WATERSHED ISSUES (as identified in surveys and technical workshop)

- Ability to secure a dependable water supply from a limited resource,
- Augmentation of natural flow by the St. Mary River diversion (particularly timing and volume),
- Ability to maintain surface and groundwater quality,
- Ability to maintain wildlife and biodiversity,
- Potential loss/degradation of wetlands and riparian areas,
- Impact of land use (e.g. recreation, oil and gas, and agriculture) on watershed resources, and
- Limited economic development opportunities due, in part, to the limited, secure supply of water resources.

## INTEGRATED WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN (IWMP) OBJECTIVES

### A. Water Supply

**Objective 1.** Develop an Approved Water Management Plan (which will be a subset of the comprehensive Milk River IWMP) that recommends:

- Water Conservation Objectives (WCOs) for the Milk River (including minimum and maximum flows).
- The matters and factors which should be considered by decision makers prior to approving a transfer of an allocation of water under a license or issuing an approval for work that may impact on the quality of water resources.

**Objective 2.** Recommend strategies that enhance the delivery of apportioned shares of water while maintaining environmental integrity in the Milk River watershed for both Alberta and Montana.

**Objective 3.** Recommend water conservation strategies that promote the efficient use of water for all sectors (i.e., municipal, industrial, irrigation).

Water supply objectives will be presented to Alberta Environment for Approval in a Water Management Plan (a sub-component of the IWMP) as defined in the *Water Act*.

## IWMP OBJECTIVES

### B. Water Quality, Streambank and Riparian Protection

**Objective 4.** Recommend water quality objectives (WQOs) for four reaches of the Milk River (i.e., North Fork Milk River, Milk River gravel bed reach, Milk River sand bed reach and Milk River proper (South Fork).

**Objective 5.** Recommend minimum setback requirements for development from the Milk River and its tributaries to protect and/or enhance riparian and aquatic ecosystems.

### C. Groundwater

**Objective 6.** Recommend groundwater protection and conservation measures for vulnerable areas, including the Whisky Valley and Milk River aquifers.

### D. Land Use

**Objective 7.** Recommend land use and development practices which are congruent with the objectives and resource management strategies for the Milk River watershed and its unique semi-arid environment.

### E. Biodiversity

**Objective 8.** Recommend strategies to conserve and enhance native wildlife and plant species diversity found within the watershed.



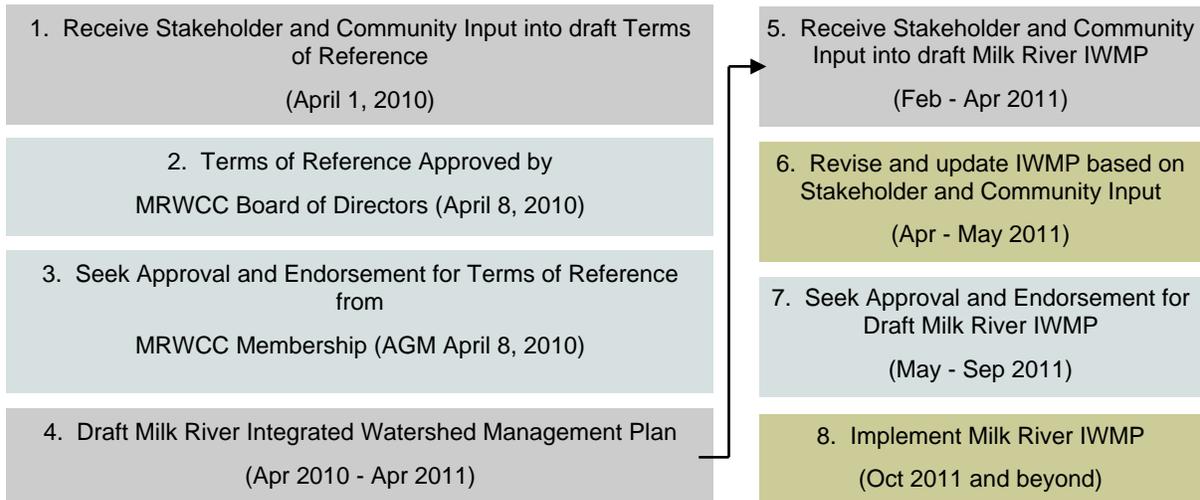
Short-horned Lizard. L. Gilchrist

## STAKEHOLDER AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION



S. Riemersma

## PLANNING PROCESS AND SCHEDULE



## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- Aquifer** An underground layer through which water can pass and is stored. Aquifers supply water for wells and springs.
- Biodiversity** The relative abundance and variety of plant and animal species and ecosystems within particular habitats.
- Riparian** Riparian areas are the lands adjacent to streams, rivers, lakes and wetlands, where the vegetation and soils are strongly influenced by the presence of water.
- Watershed** An area of land where water moves through a network of drainage pathways (coulees, streams, rivers), both underground and on the surface to a common water body (creek, river, lake or ocean). This term is interchangeable with catchment area or catchment basin.
- WCO** A Water Conservation Objective (WCO) pertains to the amount and quality of water established by the Director [under the *Water Act*] to be necessary for the:
- protection of a natural water body or its aquatic environment, or any part of them;
  - protection of tourism, recreational, transportation or waste assimilation uses of water; or
  - management of fish or wildlife,
- and may include water necessary for the rate of flow of water or water level requirements.

## HOW CAN I PARTICIPATE?

Your input is essential to the success of the Milk River Integrated Watershed Management Plan. To help you participate, consider some of the following activities:

- Stay informed. Visit the Milk River Watershed Council Canada's website at [www.milkriverwatershedcouncil.ca](http://www.milkriverwatershedcouncil.ca) often to see the most current updates regarding the planning process.
- Participate in MRWCC events, including workshops, field trips, Public Open Houses and Annual General Meeting.
- Contact Sandi Riemersma to discuss elements of the plan.
- Fax comments to 403-647-3808.



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