

Milk River Watershed Council Canada 2014-15 Annual Report

Our Water, Our Legacy



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

John A. Ross

We are excited to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Milk River Watershed Council Canada. In our first 10 years we have undertaken many studies such as water quality, erosion and sedimentation, water supply, in-stream flow needs, microbial source tracking and other watershed improvement projects. During this time we have published two State of the Watershed Reports (SOW) which document general trends in the condition of natural resources in the watershed. The most recent "Transboundary" SOW report is a significant achievement in moving towards resource management that is uninhibited by political boundaries. Furthermore, we have produced an Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP), a living document intended as a guideline to be used by residents, organizations, and all levels of government to aid in planning and creating policies. This work would have not been possible if it wasn't for our numerous partners who share an interest in the Milk River Watershed.

Of course we can't do all this without good people and I think I am surrounded by the best. The people who have contributed their time and effort on the Board of Directors have changed a lot since the beginning, but the goal has remained the same; 'to achieve balance among a thriving community, a healthy environment and a prosperous economy through understanding, dialogue and action'.

Many thanks go to past Board of Directors and Team members who contributed their time and knowledge to a great cause, making our slice of Alberta a better place.

Our staff make things happen and my thanks go out to Tim Romanow, Mary Lupwayi, Cyd Cunningham, and Sandi Riemersma for getting the job done and keeping us moving forward.

MRWCC 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

MRWCC GOAL

To achieve balance among a thriving community, a healthy environment and a prosperous economy through understanding, dialogue and action

PLANNED OUTCOMES

Reliable and Safe Water Supplies

- Water is managed in a manner that benefits communities while meeting the needs of the aquatic and riparian environment.
- Water sharing disputes are resolved.
- Groundwater is mapped, interactions are understood and the resource is properly managed.
- An improved economy in the Milk River watershed due to a secure supply of water.
- Information on water use in the Milk River watershed is available to the public.

Quality Water

- Quality water provides for communities, terrestrial and aquatic life, recreation and industry in the Milk River watershed.
- Baseline water quality information is available to the public.
- Water quality and quantity information is used to achieve sustainable use and integrated management of water resources.

Riparian Protection

- Healthy, functioning riparian areas contribute to stream bank stability, good water quality, forage, shelter and biodiversity in the Milk River watershed.

Land Use

- Innovative and sustainable land use and development practices take place in the watershed.
- A healthy, vibrant economy that will attract people and investment to the watershed.

Biodiversity

- A diverse native wildlife and plant community is present in the Milk River watershed through habitat protection and enhancement efforts.

Informed Community

- A community that is informed and actively involved in the Milk River Watershed Council Canada and its initiatives.

Transboundary Relationships

- Good working relationships with Saskatchewan and Montana that create a process and forum to address transboundary watershed concerns.

2013-14 HIGHLIGHTS

Water Supply and Management Team – Ken Miller, Chairman

- Participated in the Alberta-Montana Water Management Initiative, a joint cross-border Council formed to address water sharing and management for the Milk River.
- Addressed issues of water supply including water shortages, predicting future supply scenarios and working with our Montana neighbours to investigate international water-sharing management strategies.
- Currently helping to promote the Milk River Water Storage project.

Research and Monitoring Team - Will Lindeman, Chairman

The Research and Monitoring Team is responsible for collecting information about the watershed

and identifying gaps in our current knowledge. The team initiates science and research projects that will further understanding of the watershed health.



Above: Off-stream Watering Installation 2014

- Completed 9th year of water quality monitoring on the Milk River, including the fifth year of monitoring on the Eastern Tributaries.
- Partnered with the Federal Government to manage a Milk River Transboundary Aquifer Program (MiRTAP) focused on the 3-dimensional model development of the Milk River Aquifer.
- Assisted a local Red Creek Watershed Stewardship group by providing program coordination and monitoring assistance to the group in conjunction with the County of Warner.
- Conducted water conservation stewardship projects.
 - Installation of two off stream watering systems to promote improved riparian health along the Milk River.
- Completed an Ecological Goods and Services producer payment programs literature review to inform IWMP Implementation and SSRP Biodiversity Framework.
- Worked on cooperative invasive weed

mapping project in conjunction with Rural Municipalities in the watershed.

Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP) Team - Ken Miller, Chairman

Prepared the Milk River Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP) which makes recommendations to decision making authorities, natural resource managers, users, and residents regarding the management of land and water resources in the watershed that reflect the communities desired watershed outcomes.

- Revised and finalized the Draft Milk River Integrated Watershed Management Plan.
- Hosted 9 Team meetings responsible for completing various aspects of the IWMP.

Community Awareness & Involvement Team - Ed Sloboda, Chairman

Ensures that community members are aware and involved in the activities of the Milk River Watershed Council Canada.

- Hosted the 9th Annual General Meeting.
- Presented a Youth Engagement Program to local schools which included:
 - Participating in the Agrium sponsored Caring for Our Watershed Program.
 - Partnering with Alberta Parks and local schools to develop and implement a Youth Engagement Program to deliver watershed related education materials and foster a stewardship ethic within both the rural and urban communities.
 - Developing an extensive one credit on-line course for High School students.
 - Hosting the Annual Poster and Multimedia Contest.
 - Conducted classroom and field presentations for local schools.
- Partnered with local rural municipalities and

ESRD Public Lands to develop and deliver the 8th annual Southern Alberta Youth Range Days program.

- Hosted the Annual Canoe and Hike Tours geared to showcase the Milk River watershed's extraordinary landscape.



Above: 2014 Youth Range Days



Above: 2014 Tree Planting Project



Above: 2014 Hike Tour Participants



Above: 2014 WOSPP Weed Pulling Project

- Partnered with WOSPP to conduct shoreline cleanup and weed pulling project.
- Initiated 2 community awards programs aiming at recognizing watershed residents for their environmental stewardship.
- Attended Milk River Bonanza Day and participated in local parade with a float and presented a MRWCC display that brought awareness to MRWCC activities to the community.
- Completed two newsletter publications and an Annual Report.
- Maintained the MRWCC website, expanded digital library, and incorporated social media into communications.
- Represented MRWCC at meetings and events.
- Presented workshops such as the tree planning project.

Transboundary Watershed Team - John Ross

Is a newly formed team that has been formed to foster the Transboundary State of the Watershed Report (SOW). The team is responsible for developing an action plan that will identify knowledge gaps and improve information sharing with neighbouring jurisdictions for the better management of the common watershed resources.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Tim Romanow

The past year has been busy for the MRWCC; we have accomplished an important milestone in completing our Integrated Watershed Management Plan. The plan is a roadmap, and has been a tool for us to refocus efforts, and recognize the importance of actions not only based on a watershed scale but also based on community priority. The Watershed plan has been a result of five years of work and reflects the good work of our technical committees, council, and community. This past year we expanded our education programming efforts in the development of new web based accredited distance learning tools for educators, and successfully partnered with Alberta Parks – Writing on Stone Provincial Park to provide watershed based learning opportunities to groups visiting our watershed from across the province. We continue to participate at the provincial table on a number of key initiatives including wrapping up a two year stint as the WPAC representative on Alberta Water Council, thank you Ken Brown for your dedication and for representing our community well on this committee. We also have informed the Provincial response to aquatic invasive species ensuring our inspection crews particularly along the Canada/US border have the resources and tool necessary to combat the threat of invasive species to our waterbodies and infrastructure. As well we have assisted in the development of a Provincial Watershed Restoration and Resiliency Program, that helps communities better identify and prepare for challenges in both flood and drought management.

LOOKING AHEAD

The MRWCC will continue with projects that support implementation of our IWMP. Highlights from our 2015-16 Work Plan include: Assist ESRD in the completion of an Approved Water Management Plan for the Milk River. Work with municipal partners and local producers to implement BMPs to improve riparian health and water quality. Summarize

Available Groundwater Quality Information in a Community Report to inform Source Water Protection Planning. Conduct Cooperative Invasive Weed/Riparian Mapping using near-infrared spectroscopy and low level drown data collection. Conduct a River Crossing Pipeline Integrity Investigation to review current condition, location, and maintenance of pipelines. In addition, we will continue to refine and expand on our education and outreach delivery, and celebrate 10 years of success within our watershed!

2013-14 Board of Directors

Executive Board Members:

Chair: John Ross, Agriculture

Vice Chair: Ken Miller, Agriculture

Treasurer: Will Lindeman, Water Use

Secretary: Warren Cunningham, Recreation Alternate

Board members:

Ed Sloboda, NGO

Ron McNeil, NGO Environmental

Dennis Spackman/Aaron Domes; Provincial Government/Alternate

Brian Hills, Provincial Government, ESRD

Joan Hughson, Rural Municipality

Kristen Dykstra, Health

Roy Audet, Individual

Trevor Murray/Darlene Sakires, Industry/Alternate

Ross Ford/David Cody, Rural Municipality/Alternate

Suzanne Liebelt/Lloyd Closson, Urban Municipality/Alternate

Darcy Wills /Warren Cunningham, Recreation/Alternate

Paulette Fox, First Nations

Frank Larney, Federal Government

William King/ Ken Brown, Appointed members at large, Special Assignment

*Academia is currently vacant

2014/15 In-kind Contributions

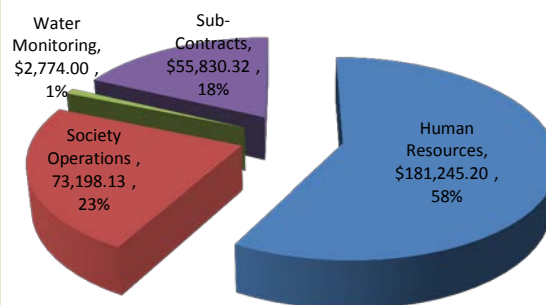
Members at Large	\$26,497.00
ESRD	\$25,184.90
Alberta Parks	\$3,778.25
Town of Milk River	\$2,214.60
Alberta Health	\$4,457.10
Dee Three Exploration Ltd	\$5,230.00
County of Forty Mile	\$2,768.50
County of Warner	\$20,793.35
Government of Canada	\$1,784.00
Village of Coutts	\$3,594.40
Cardston County	11,307.00
Alberta Agriculture (ARD)	\$2,584.00
Cows and Fish	\$2,560.00
MRWCC	\$7,320.00
Alberta Conservation Association	\$401.10
Community Association	\$1,134.00
Medicine Hat College	5,760.00
Cypress County	\$10,457.50
Total in-kind	\$137,825.70

2014/15 Income

ESRD Core Funding	\$ 248,924.00
ESRD Projects	\$ 40,000.00
Interest	\$1,334.72
Donations	\$ 28,245.27
Workshops & Tours	\$ 865.00
GST Rebate	\$ 5,945.48
Total	\$ 325,314.47



MRWCC 2014/15 Expenses Total \$313,047.65



Expenditure

Human Resources	\$ 181,245.20
Society Operations	73,198.13
Water Monitoring	\$ 2,774.00
Sub-Contracts	\$ 55,830.32
Total	313,047.65

CONTACT US

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Our Water, Our Legacy

Thank you to all of the
volunteers, sponsors and
organizations that contribute
In-Kind and financial support
to MRWCC.

We have accomplished much
with your valuable support!

To our Volunteers and Supporters!!

Everyone leaves behind footprints in the sands of time,
but your footprints will be engraved on stone for future
generations to follow.

Thank you for your support!!



Photo Credits:
Sam Wirzba
William King
Ed Sloboda
Tim Romanow
Mary Lupwayi