

# **Milk River Watershed Council Canada 2016-17 Annual Report**

**Our Water, Our Legacy**









## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

### John A. Ross

Without water, we wouldn't be able to live and prosper. Our Milk River watershed is an area where water can be scarce at times and abundant at others. We often take our river for granted, knowing that it will always be there – but that might not always be the case.

Since the Boundary Waters Treaty was signed in 1909 and the subsequent building of the diversion to transport water from the St. Mary's River to the Milk River shortly after, we have been blessed with a much more stable river than previously. We don't think about it, but we rely on this aging diversion to provide water for people, livestock, and wildlife including aquatic habitat, irrigation, industry and recreation. If the system fails catastrophically, we would all be exposed to the actual river as it used to be – more of a seasonal river, which at times would dry up completely in summer and freeze up completely in winter.

We need to work more closely with our friends to the south to ensure sustained delivery of water like we have been used to over the past 115 years. All the components of the diversion need work, which includes the actual diversion, the inverted syphons and the diversion canal that eventually delivers water into the Milk River from the St. Mary's. The system needs a lot of re-engineering and funds to bring it back to a reliable system for the future of our watershed.

Should the American diversion system fail, it would be critical that we have a dam in place to store the spring run-off for use during the year, although in some years this would still not be enough. We have learned to live and take for granted that the diversion will continue to work as it has for over 100 years. Education, collaboration and adequate funding are vital to the success of the diversion.

We are continuing with our Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program, intended for riparian restoration projects for residents within our watershed. We continue to hold educational tours for the public.

We couldn't accomplish any of this without our staff; Tim Romanow, Executive Director; Mary Lupwayi, Program Coordinator; and Kandra Forbes, our new Educational Outreach Coordinator.

On behalf of the MRWCC Board of Directors, we hope to see you at our 12th Annual General Meeting in Milk River on May 25th, 2017.

## 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 is available 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.

## 2016-17 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: Large mats of filamentous algae at the Pinhorn site in May 2016.

- Completed 11th year of water quality monitoring on the Milk River, including the seventh year of monitoring on the eastern tributaries.
- Conducted a Groundwater Monitoring Project with Alberta Health. Completed 36 wells.
- 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 the Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program by identifying and completing watershed conservation stewardship projects located along the Milk River.
- Conducted Phase 2 of the critical overwintering habitats for aquatic species at risk in the Milk River, A desktop review of identified locations of overwintering habitat specific to Western Silvery Minnow and Rocky Mountain Sculpin.
- Completed a Source Water Protection project

which involves looking at stress tests of scenarios that would impact groundwater and surface water in the watershed

### **Community Awareness & Involvement Team** Ed Sloboda, Chairman

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

- Hosted the 11th Annual General Meeting.
- Presented a Youth Engagement Program to local schools which included:
  - Participating in the Agrium sponsored Caring for Our Watershed Program.
  - Partnered 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 local schools.
  - Offered an extensive one credit on-line course for high school students.
  - Hosted the Annual Poster Contest to local schools.
  - Conducted field and classroom presentations for local schools.
- Partnered with local rural municipalities, Alberta Conservation Association, and GOA to develop and deliver the 9th Annual Southern Alberta Youth Range Days program.
- Hosted the Annual Canoe and Hike Tours to showcase the Milk River watershed.
- Attended Milk River Bonanza Days and participated in the local parade with a float, and presented a MRWCC display that brought awareness of the MRWCC activities to the community.
- Partnered with WOSPP to host a weed pull day.

- Completed 2 Meander newsletters.
- Maintained the MRWCC website.
- Conducted community awards programs: Environmental Stewardship Award and Tree Heritage Award.
- Hosted a Working Well Workshop, to promote proper maintenance of ground water wells to ensure water supply is safe and secure.
- Hosted a Septic Sense Workshop, to promote proper management and maintenance of septic systems.
- Hosted the 1st Annual Community Appreciation Forum to promote community involvement and environmental stewardship of the Milk River watershed.
- Hosted a Xeriscaping workshop, a gardening strategy that allows home or business owners to create and maintain a varied and colourful landscape plan that uses drought tolerant plants



2016 Xeriscape Workshop.

### **Transboundary Watershed Team - John Ross**

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.

- Organized a Prairie Transboundary Workshop in conjunction with PCF to help foster the relationship among transboundary partners and keep the dialogue going.



## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

### Tim Romanow

The past year has been an opportunity to focus our energy on the implementation of our Integrated Watershed Management Plan. We continue to seek opportunities to align and support community, municipal, and regional priorities within the watershed. We have continued efforts in developing targeted stewardship projects along the Milk River and select priority tributaries as part of our commitment to flood and drought resiliency with our Watershed Resiliency and Restoration program. The program has allowed us to implement 14 alternative and portable water developments with producers, many kilometers of riparian corridor, exclusion, and electric drift fencing to improve livestock management, and in total improved approximately 40km of riparian areas and access management for over 1200 head of livestock. We are excited to announce an extension for three years on our funding to continue to support producer projects into the eastern sandbed reach of the Milk River, and along other priority tributaries including Miners Coulee, and Breed Creek.

The MRWCC continues to work towards the development of an Approved Water Management Plan for the Milk River with AEP that will provide flexibility for Irrigators and water users within the Watershed to enact license transfers and diversion site adjustments in a timely fashion. We are working on enhancing Source Water Protection Planning to address water scarcity and security concerns. First steps have been to look at emergency preparedness, focusing on the Whiskey Valley aquifer water users, including security of water for the 350 plus water coop users. We will continue to be a strong voice for our community in regional initiatives such as the Biodiversity Management Framework for the SSRP and provide feedback and oversight on Species at Risk recovery planning and actions. Community outreach and education efforts continue to be expanded by working closely to provide a watershed science and stewardship linkage with Writing on Stone Provincial Park and with local schools and youth within the watershed.

Moving forward, the MRWCC has been working closely with our transboundary partners on both landscape scale issues such as native grasslands, invasive species, and soon a film project in recognition of the fragility of our current ties to the St Mary's and the connection between water, land use, and biodiversity. The MRWCC has been asked to place an updated State of the Watershed Report on hold by AEP and we anticipate asking our stakeholders to help us make a case for this important project and ensure an updated document that will be a valuable educational tool for both the scientific community and watershed residents in all three jurisdictions.



Above: Hiking the Milk River - 2016



Above: Youth Range Days - 2016



Above: Canoeing the Milk River - 2016

## 2016-17 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

Scott McGarty/Trevor Murray, Industry/Alternate

Ross Ford/David Cody, Rural Municipality/Alternate

Suzanne Liebelt/Lloyd Closson, Urban Municipality/Alternate

Darcy Wills /Warren Cunningham, Recreation/Alternate

Frank Larney, Federal Government

Lorraine Nicol, Academia

William King, Appointed member at large, Special Assignment

First Nations - Vacant

**A big Thank You to the Board members who work tirelessly for the success of MRWCC!**

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!!

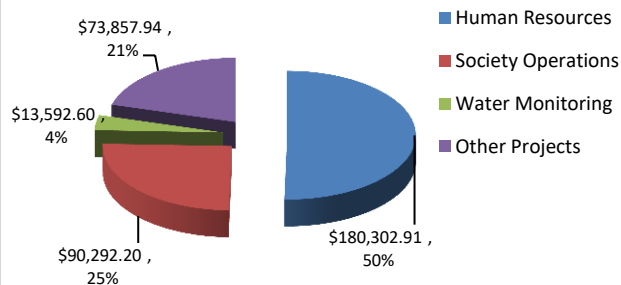
### 2016/17 Income

<b>AEP Core</b>	\$ 284,000.00
<b>Interest</b>	\$ 224.84
<b>Government of Canada (HSP)</b>	\$ 35,050.00
<b>Alberta Conservation Association</b>	\$ 10,000.00
<b>Youth Range Days</b>	\$ 7,830.29
<b>Other Donations</b>	\$ 15,411.70
<b>Workshop &amp; Tours</b>	\$ 1,705.00
<b>GST Rebate</b>	\$ 2,469.16
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 356,690.99</b>

### 2016/17 Expenditure

<b>Human Resources</b>	\$ 180,302.91
<b>Society Operations</b>	\$ 90,292.20
<b>Water Monitoring</b>	\$ 13,592.60
<b>Other Projects</b>	\$ 73,857.94
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 358,045.65</b>

### 2016/17 Expenses \$358,045.65



Above: Some of the 2016/17 MRWCC Board Members

### 2016/17 In-Kind Contribution

<b>Members at large</b>	\$40,189.00
<b>Alberta Environment and Parks</b>	\$11,293.40
<b>Town of Milk River</b>	\$3,203.60
<b>Alberta Health Services</b>	\$8,438.00
<b>Industry</b>	\$6,292.00
<b>County of Forty Mile</b>	\$2,404.00
<b>County of Warner</b>	\$18,575.50
<b>Cypress County</b>	\$13,910.00
<b>Cardston County</b>	\$14,584.00
<b>Government of Canada</b>	\$4,017.20
<b>Village of Coutts</b>	\$1,712.00
<b>MRWCC</b>	\$5,760.00
<b>Alberta Conservation Association</b>	\$7,856.00
<b>Community</b>	\$4,918.40
<b>University of Lethbridge</b>	\$3,520.00
<b>Total in-kind</b>	<b>\$146,673.10</b>

Thank you to all of the volunteers, sponsors and organizations that contributed in-kind and financial support to MRWCC.

A big thank you to Alberta Environment and Parks!  
We have accomplished much with your valuable support!

### CONTACT US

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