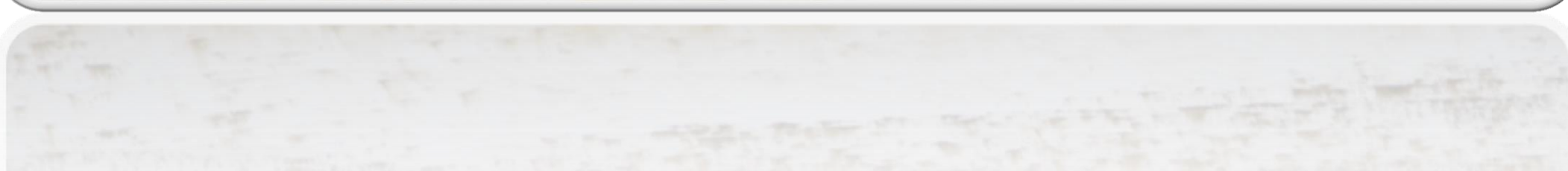


Milk River Watershed Council Canada 2017-18 Annual Report

Our Water, Our Legacy



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

John A. Ross

This past year was challenging for the MRWCC. Water security was tested as favorable spring conditions and an early thaw resulted in localized flooding on the Montana Highline communities. A full Fresno reservoir meant Montana could not accumulate a deficit of water with Alberta and the letter of intent that allows Alberta to balance needs with Montana water later in the season was pulled from us. August 3rd, 2017 all water users were shut off, at critical stages for crops and irrigated forage.

We know we need storage on the Milk River in Alberta, the 'flash drought' this past summer highlighted how vulnerable we are on both sides of the border. Storage will guarantee water security for Milk River, Coutts, Sweetgrass, and many outlying residents/water coops and secure proper in-stream flow needs for fish and other wildlife. It will also gain the potential for Clean Hydro generation and help mitigate potential flood and bank scour events. Most importantly, it will secure the economics in our watershed because without water there will be no wild life or people.

Our Montana neighbours continued to reach out and support a transboundary approach to watershed management. This past year, with Fresno 50% silted in, their 5 communities and 93,000 acres of irrigation in many ways were just as vulnerable.

Working together on a joint project could lessen the cost of diversion repairs and come up with a joint strategy to replace aging infrastructure on the St Mary's River. Our Government won't help, but we will help the Milk River Watershed Alliance build support where appropriate, as we had our Member of Parliament Glen Motz down with 100 delegates from Montana to tour infrastructure this past June.

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.

2017-18 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 supplemental water supply investigations.

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: First day of water sampling at the Pinhorn site on April 12, 2018.

- Completed 12th year of water quality monitoring on the Milk River, including the eighth year of monitoring on the eastern tributaries.
- 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.
- Completed phase one of the Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program (WRRP) by identifying and completing watershed conservation stewardship projects located along the Milk River. Starting to implement phase 2 WRRP projects.
- Completed Phase 2 of the critical overwintering habitats for aquatic species at risk in the Milk River to identify locations of overwintering habitat specific to Western Silvery Minnow and Rocky Mountain Sculpin.
- Presented the MRWCC Science Forum to showcase scientific research that has been conducted in the Milk River Watershed. This forum provides a stage for researchers to share their findings with engaged community

members and stakeholders.

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 12th 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.
 - Conducted school interactive programs such as hosting the Annual Poster Contest.
- Partnered with local rural municipalities, Alberta Conservation Association, and GOA to develop and deliver the 10th Annual Southern Alberta Youth Range Days program.
- Hosted Community Engagement Activities:
 - Tours:
 - Annual Canoe and Hike Tours
 - East Watershed and the River Rendezvous Tours to showcase the Milk River watershed.
 - Participated in the Milk River Bonanza Days by bringing awareness of the MRWCC activities to the community.
- Conducted community awards programs: Environmental Stewardship Award and Tree Heritage Award.
- Facilitated the Source Water Protection Workshop, to maintain and improve the condition of surface water and groundwater

through a proactive, risk-management approach with various stakeholders.

- Hosted a Strategic Planning Session from October 24 to 26, 2017. The purpose of the session was to review the organizations bylaws, structure and activities, and to establish a three-year work plan in alignment with current provincial direction.
- Worked with the community to promote Xeriscape projects
- Hosted the 2nd Annual Community Appreciation Forum to celebrate the unique aspects of the Milk River Watershed and growing community involvement.
- Completed 2 Meander newsletters.
- Maintained the MRWCC website and promoted the MRWCC through social media.



East Watershed Tour, October 2017.

Transboundary Watershed Team

Ron McNeil, Chairman

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 common watershed resources.

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

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Tim Romanow

This past year we refocused our work on further implementation of our Integrated Watershed Management Plan, expanding stewardship efforts across the watershed with the Assistance of our Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program Funding from AEP. Filling knowledge gaps with our overwintering habitat stewardship program with the Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk funded by Environment Canada. Building on Source Water Protection efforts in the Whiskey Valley Aquifer. And most importantly supporting our key stakeholders on both sides of the border through some difficult challenges in water management. If we learned anything in 2017, it was that communication is critically important and we need to find common language on issues before solutions are derived.

We look forward to an exciting 2018-2019 fiscal year, where we will continue to improve communication, education, and expand our outreach efforts. Plans are underway to review on-stream storage investigations for the Milk River and further press for long term solutions to economic, social, and environmental challenges within the watershed. We have many accomplishments to be proud of within our community, as demonstrated by the outpouring of community support at this past Community Appreciation Forum. Once again, thank you to all our program sponsors, donors, staff and volunteers that make our work not only possible, but rewarding.



Above: Touring the Milk! - River Rendezvous Tour, the St. Mary's Dam - 2017



Above: Hiking the Milk! - Sandstone Ranch area, 2017



Above: Canoeing the Milk! - Eastern Reach, 2017

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, AEP

Joan Hughson, Rural Municipality

Kristen Dykstra, Health

Roy Audet, Individual

Scott McGarty/Trevor Murray, Industry/Alternate

Ross Ford/Shawn Rodgers, Rural
Municipality/Alternate

Suzanne Liebelt/Jim Willet, Urban
Municipality/Alternate

Darcy Wills /Warren Cunningham, Recreation/
Alternate

Ben Ellert, Federal Government

Lorraine Nicol, Academia

William King, Appointed member at large,
Special Assignment

First Nations – Vacant

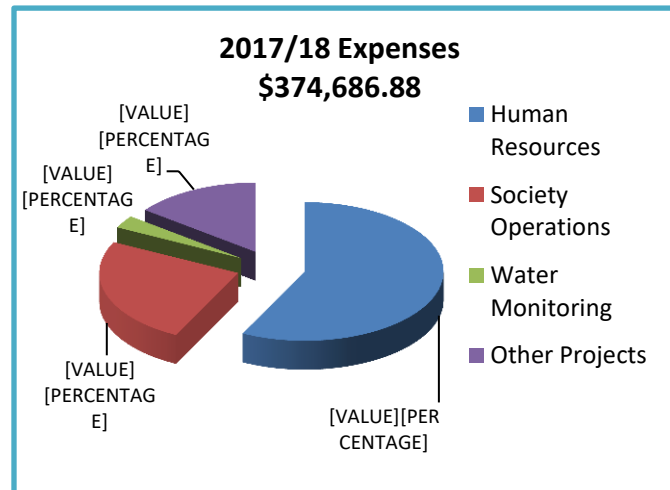
A big Thank You to the Board members who work tirelessly for the success of MRWCC!

"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!!

2017/18 Income	
AEP Core	\$ 250,000.00
Interest	\$ 286.58
Government of Canada (HSP)	\$ 25,000.00
WRRP	\$ 125,000.00
Youth Range Days	\$ 10,836.00
Other Donations	\$ 16,661.19
GST Rebate	\$ 2,600.15
Total	\$ 430,383.92

2017/18 Expenditure	
Human Resources	\$ 215,009.78
Society Operations	\$ 93,527.71
Water Monitoring	\$ 11,156.20
Other Projects	\$ 54,993.19
Total	\$ 374,686.88



Above: Some of the 2017/18 MRWCC Board Members

2017/18 In-Kind Contribution	
Members at large	\$91,290.00
Alberta Environment and Parks	\$30,556.75
Town of Milk River	\$8,426.90
Alberta Health Services	\$4,550.95
Industry	\$3,182.50
County of Forty Mile	\$4,331.75
County of Warner	\$24,530.85
Cypress County	\$14,293.75
Government of Canada	\$3,530.95
Village of Coutts	\$4,091.00
Cardston County	\$ 7,746.00
Palliser Environmental Services	\$800.00
Trace Association	\$3,740.00
Alberta Energy Regulator	\$3,740.00
Alberta Conservation Association	\$4,144.95
Community	\$ 2,033.60
Agriculture and Forestry Alberta	\$ 1,073.50
University of Lethbridge	\$1,073.50
Total in-kind	\$213,136.95

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Kandra Forbes - Education/Outreach Coordinator
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Phone: 403-647-4306

Thank You! 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!



Our Water, Our Legacy

Photo Credits:
William King
Kandra Forbes