



Work is progressing in Montana near Babb at replacing the St Mary Diversion that feeds the miles of canal, siphons, and drops that bring water to the North Fork Milk River. The new structure incorporates advanced fish diversion screening, and a safer modern diversion system that will serve the project well and is long overdue. This construction project will be funded under the Bipartisan Infrastructure package which is a very large relief to the municipal and irrigation stakeholders in the basin as the project is over \$90 million for design, construction, and management. Previous proposed funding models weighted heavily on the highline Montana water users. The project is anticipated to be completed by the end of 2027.

The Canadian/American Joint Study Board



continues to work through the processes and hosted a stakeholder public town hall meeting in Montana during May. As incredible as the infrastructure funding is for the diversion, there is still a very large bill to complete the project, with upwards of 372 million needed to completely upgrade the project infrastructure. Montana's focus for funding needs have now shifted to the next pinch point in the

system, the St. Mary and Halls Coulee Siphons. Right now, funding has been acquired for designs which are anticipated later this year, but after that, water users will need to work on a funding package for the stakeholder portion for roughly \$53 million needed to support siphon replacement.

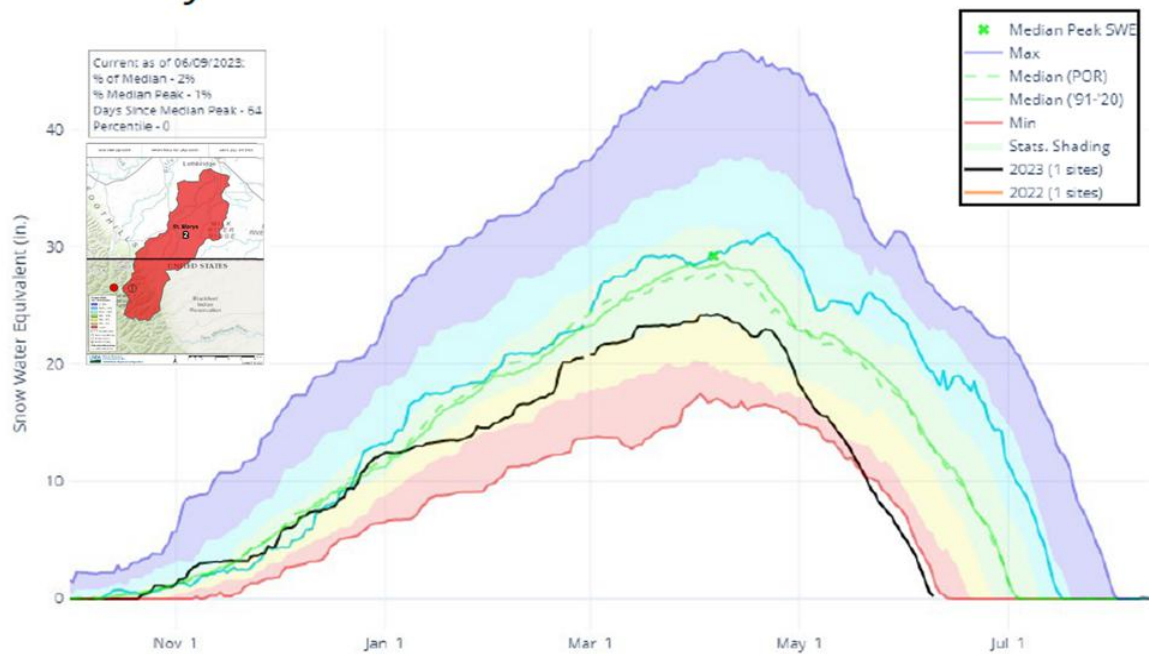
Remaining infrastructure deficits for upgrade or replacement:

- Halls Coulee Siphon Replacement
- St. Mary Siphon Replacement
- Restore Canal Prism to 850 cfs
- Canal Fixtures (i.e., culverts, wasteways, Tree Removal, etc)
- Drop 1, 3, 4 Concrete Chute/Stilling Basin Repairs
- Sherburne Dam Cylinders/Conduit Crack Repairs

Water Supply Forecast and Recreational Use

USBR anticipates water diversion from the St Mary's River basin into the Milk River are to stay at or near 600cfs through the balance of June and early July. Unfortunately, the long-range forecasts are not favorable with drought like conditions and low natural flow. The significantly below average snowpack in the upper St Mary and Milk River saw the earliest melt in over 50 years with May temperatures in the 30's. As of mid-June, there will likely be shortages for Canadian Milk River water users by late summer. Recreational water users should see good paddling conditions for the coming 6-8 weeks. The MRWCC will continue to provide regular updates available to all water users throughout the season. Watch for our Summer outreach assistant at local access points with watershed and safety information available to users throughout the months of July and August.

St. Mary River Basin



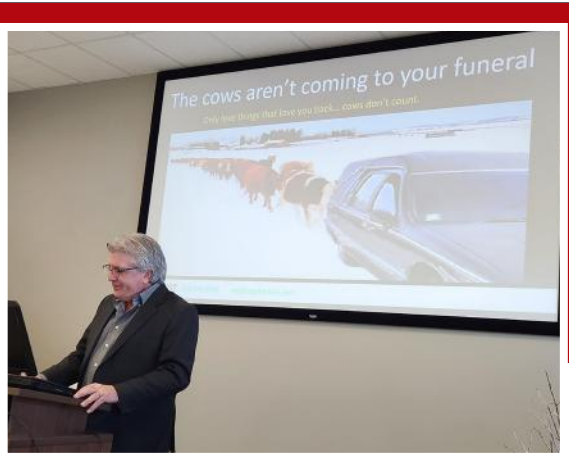
Current as of 06/09/2023:
% of Median - 2%
% Median Peak - 1%
Days Since Median Peak - 84
Percentile - 0

Producers Leading the Way Project

A grant provided by the Environment and Climate Change Canada Priority Places program has been an exciting opportunity for the MRWCC to document the cost and value of Native Grassland Conservation across the watershed. Small incentive programs have come and gone to producers to maintain or improve stewardship, but they have not avoided the past heavy-handed approach of damaging restrictive orders. This project has been an opportunity for producers to provide clear instruction of what expectations for future stewardship programming that will incentivize participation. The project's key finding will continue to help develop an ecological goods and services menu for producers and shape extension programming that helps keep family farms both environmentally and economically stable within the watershed. This past spring, the first series of such workshops as requested by watershed producers were held.

A farm succession planning workshop was held to introduce the culture, functional tools, and necessary processes that have been designed with practicality in mind to smoothly transition farming/ranching operations within families and within businesses. Ensuring a succession plan is in place will help ensure family legacies of stewardship will remain intact with the next generation. Participants worked with expert facilitator Reg Shandro to work on custom succession plans for each operation and to identify blind spots in planning. Some of the interesting discussions with families that have children that have married into US families or dual citizenship had to discuss inheritance taxation and strategies to transfer property to avoid splitting or fragmentation of assets.

A second workshop series brought well known Ranching for Profit facilitator Dave Pratt to Milk River. Two days of workshops covered balancing ecological needs of a ranching operation with economics. If the economics of a ranching business is not held in good standing, the ecological health of the ranching operation will suffer. A Ranching for Profit workshop held locally in the watershed will address high priority challenges facing local producers. Producers learned proven tools and techniques that will increase profit, improve the health and productivity of land, and increase success. There were a number of great lessons learned including moving your caving season to minimize reliance on hay, economics of the cow – the shockingly difficult but simple math of depreciation of a cow as a asset, what operation business models are



actually going to make you a profit? And how do young producers, or returning family members, provide value to your operation or build on the success of your agricultural business? Participants equated the workshops to drinking from a fire hose and follow up support from RMC facilitators will continue to support producer participants.

A third workshop series has been postponed from the spring regarding conservation tools with a focus towards connecting producers with the tools and technology to improve conservation of native grasslands, species at risk, habitats, and their operations.

This one window approach will provide information and hands on learning. Program managers from federal, provincial, and local NGOs will have information regarding available programming, funding assistance, and conservation incentives for producers within the watershed. Hands on displays and equipment demonstrations will be held as a tradeshow component to the workshop. These will include beneficial management practices for species at risk, as well as land management and drought management tools such as off stream or remote watering systems, electric fencing systems, invasive weed control, and range management tools. A new date is not set yet, but will include a registration field demo tour, likely in the Del Bonita area, later in the summer.

If you missed the Producers Leading the Way workshops this spring but still are interested, funding is available to continue the series this fall with rotating locations around the watershed (likely farther east). Contact our office or ensure you are on our producer contact list to get the most up-to-date information on extension programming. Also, contact your local ASB staff to find out about support workshops happening in your area.



2023 Community Appreciation Forum

The 2023 Annual Community Appreciation Forum

Back by Popular Demand!!

The MRWCC was so pleased to host an in-person Community Appreciation Forum after missing the event for 3 years due to Covid restrictions. Back by popular demand, Community Appreciation Forum, was a huge success this year and we saw the community once again, come together to celebrate the unique aspects of the Milk River watershed, growing community involvement in managing the important areas by recognizing the community's outstanding conservation efforts that sustain, protect, and enhance the environment within the watershed. Over 150 people attended the meeting.

This year's presentations included:

- Tim Romanow, the MRWCC Executive Director who presented on programs and activities that the Council has/is/will be undertaking.
- Megan Evans, Executive Director, Alberta Invasive Species Council/ President, Alberta, Native Bee Council, presented on pollinators and the importance of native grasslands.
- Cory Olson, Program Coordinator, Alberta Community Bat Program enlightened the participants with the status of Bats in Alberta presentation.
- William King, Board Member for the MRWCC and a long-standing citizen of the Milk River watershed, wowed the participants with a slide show of the history of the Milk River Natural Area through the eyes of a local Rancher.
- The keynote was delivered by Julie Landry-Deboer with Alberta Conservation Association/ MULTISAR. She gave a touching presentation titled "With Gratitude, for Grass and Grazing".

After presentations, the participants witnessed an awards ceremony featuring:

- Heritage Tree Dedication
- Environmental Stewardship Award presentation
- School Poster/Video Contest Awards

The award recipients went home with a variety of prizes. Checkout the award articles for more information.

The evening ended with a hearty dinner courtesy of the MRWCC and a very successful silent auction which brought close to \$7,000. A list of silent auction donors can be found on the "2023 silent auction sponsorship acknowledgement" page.

The MRWCC wishes to thank sponsors, the organizing committee, presenters, award recipients, and all participants for making the event a success!

BATS IN THE MILK RIVER WATERSHED: UPDATES AND RECENT NEWS

What's That Structure?

At the end of April, the MRWCC installed a bat condo at the Weir Bridge with the help of County of Warner staff and board members. The structure can house over 1,000 Little and Big Brown Bats, two species native to Alberta. Over time, we hope to see occupancy by bats to utilize the condo as a maternity roost, as the condo will provide a safe, long-term location for mother bats to raise their pups in the summer months. If bats end up utilizing the structure, this will also be a useful tool to monitor the spread and occurrence of White-Nose Syndrome.



More Bats Listed as Endangered

Unfortunately, 3 more bat species were listed as Endangered in Canada in May, 2023. The Hoary, Eastern Red, and Silver-haired Bats are Canada's 3 migratory bat species that were listed. These bats have experienced population declines due to collisions with wind turbines, and hundreds of thousands are estimated to be killed this way annually. To mitigate these devastating impacts, experts are suggesting turning wind turbines off for short periods at low wind speeds during the fall season when bats are migrating, which will in turn reduce mortality by 50-80%.

With the Little Brown Myotis and Northern Myotis already listed as Endangered, this brings the total number Alberta bat species identified as Endangered to 5 out of the 8 that are native to the province. For this reason, it is critical to ensure you do what you can to help prevent further losses to bat populations! Continue to be good stewards for bats on your lands, maintain large intact riparian areas for bat foraging, prevent premature death to bats through improper removal from buildings, and consider installing a bat house on your property if you plan to remove any trees or buildings that might potentially house bats.

Mist Netting in the Watershed

This May we had the pleasure of joining biologists from Alberta Environment and Parks to conduct mist netting at a bridge site and Writing-On-Stone Provincial Park to identify species present, and test bats for White-Nose Syndrome (WNS). Due to the recent discovery of Pd fungus, the fungus that causes WNS in bats, researchers are seeking to identify which bat populations may have been exposed to this fungus to monitor the spread and impact of Pd. This is achieved by netting bats throughout the evening and then taking swabs of their wings to be sent for analysis in the lab. Over the course of 3 days, 4 different species were caught for sampling: the Little Brown Myotis (endangered), Western Small-footed Myotis, Long-eared Myotis, and the Big Brown Bat.



(Above) IPC representatives receiving the gate sign at the 2023 Community Appreciation Forum. (Below) A representative of the Lackman family receiving a sign at the 2023 Community Appreciation Forum

Community awards

During the Community Appreciation Forum, two award programs were featured: Environmental Stewardship Awards and Heritage Tree Program.

1. Environmental Stewardship Awards

Earlier this year an ad was sent out that the Milk River Watershed Council Canada (MRWCC) was looking for nominations to honour individuals, families, commercial businesses, and environmental groups that are good environmental stewards of the Milk River watershed.

We are pleased to announce that the 2023 recipient of the Environmental Stewardship Award in the category of Commercial business is the International Petroleum Corp. Canada Ltd. (IPC).

IPC received the award for their commitment to operating in an environmentally responsible manner, integrating environmental considerations in all phases of their project planning to minimize risks to the natural environment. This includes measures such as environmental assessments, continuous monitoring, rehabilitation, and the implementation of new or improved technologies for the management of resources and facilities.

Introduction to IPC:

In 2008, DeeThree Exploration Ltd. acquired certain oil and gas assets from the Ferguson property located in the Lethbridge area of southern Alberta from a senior Canadian oil and gas producer at the time. DeeThree Ltd. acquired an approximate average working interest of 99% in over 220,000 acres of land, 100% ownership in over 200 km of natural gas pipelines, 100% ownership in five operational booster compression stations ranging from 95hp to 250hp, 100% ownership in a gas compression and dehydration facility with a sales connection, a 25% non-operated working interest in a second gas compression and dehydration facility with a sales connection, and an approximate average working interest of 96% in a total of 144 wellbores all being shallow natural gas at the time. In late 2010, DeeThree began to shift its focus from a predominant natural gas company to focus on a new emerging oil resource play, which is now referred to as the Alberta Bakken. DeeThree commenced drilling its first Alberta Bakken oil well and brought it online, making them the first commercially economical oil well in the Alberta Bakken Resource. Shortly thereafter, DeeThree started to delineate the pool which could be geologically mapped over 3.5 townships.

In 2015 DeeThree split the corporation



into two different companies; one being Granite Oil Corp who took over operations in the Ferguson field. From 2011-2020 DeeThree and Granite drilled ~ 85 horizontal oil wells and focused on using existing pads as much as possible to have a lower environmental impact to the nearby farmers and landowners. Granite Oil Corp. always ensured the environmental impact was kept to a minimum in all its operations.

In early 2020 IPC Canada purchased Granite Oil and has continued to develop the Ferguson play, but also keeping a top tier track record of ensuring environmental impacts are minimized in all its operations. Congratulation IPC! Keep up the good work!!

2. The Heritage Tree Program

The MRWCC introduced the Heritage Tree program to allow residents of the Milk River watershed to celebrate the pioneering spirit of the community by identifying and nominating trees of local significance within the watershed.

Heritage trees help ensure the sustainability of our riparian forests for future generations to enjoy.

Trees also play a role in not only telling the stories of local history, but also play pivotal roles in providing habitat for

many wildlife species and stabilize fragile prairie soils in erosion prone areas.

Native trees along riparian areas of the Milk River are rare and require additional protection and care for propagation.

The 2023 Heritage Trees Designation was awarded to a Manitoba Maple Stand on the White Homestead now owned by the Lackman family.

The trees were planted by the White family over 100 years ago to encompass the farmstead. The stand contains linear protecting, the farmstead from prevailing winds, trapping snow, enhancing wildlife habitat, and providing privacy for generations of landowners.

The site once belonged to Paddy White, an officer posted for the Northwest Mounted Police at Writing on Stone. He joined the Royal Northwest Mounted Police (RNWMP) April 27, 1909. He went on to serve on city and provincial police forces until retiring to Coutts in the late 1950's. He was married to his wife, Nancy Pearl, with whom he had a son W.F (Slim) White. Paddy collaborated on high profile cases in the early 1900's.

We wish to thank and congratulate the Lackman family for making this designation possible!



Photo from the 2016 groundwater monitoring

Groundwater project

This year, the MRWCC has partnered with Alberta Health Services again to continue with the long-term ground water monitoring program. The goal of the project is to observe long-term trends of ground water quality to ensure that domestic and livestock drinking water is safe and within established guidelines.

Project background:

In 2007, 40 wells were sampled (10 in each of Cardston County, County of Warner, County of 40 Mile, and Cypress County). The information was confidentially reported in the MRWCC 2008 State of the Watershed Report, and individual summaries of the water sample analysis were provided to well owners. Water sample collection was done by Milk River Watershed Council Canada (MRWCC) staff, and the then AAFC –PFRA staff.

In 2011, 34 wells were sampled (most of the wells used were the same ones, spread throughout the four Counties within the watershed). Less wells were sampled because some wells were no longer active or had been abandoned or decommissioned. Water sample collection was done by Milk River Watershed Council Canada (MRWCC) staff, and in part by the then AAFC –PFRA staff.

Sample analysis was completed by a private lab. Information was summarized and reported in the MRWCC 2013 Transboundary State of the Watershed, individual summaries were provided to the well owner. Well owners were also invited to attend a Working Well workshop that followed up on the project and assisted well owners in understanding water quality and developing well maintenance/security plans.

In 2016, collection of drinking water samples began on October 17, 2016, and was completed October 26, 2016. In total, 34 samples were collected across the watershed. Three samples were collected at each site, for bacteriological, routine chemical, and trace metal analysis.

All property owners who participated in the study were sent the results for all three tests, as well as information sheets to explain the parameters that were examined and applicable health guidelines.

Water sampling was done by MRWCC staff, and water analysis was done by Alberta Centre for Toxicology. Information is being summarized and will be included in the 2023 MRWCC Transboundary State of the Watershed report which will be released this fall. Summaries were provided to well owners with invitations to follow up working well workshops.

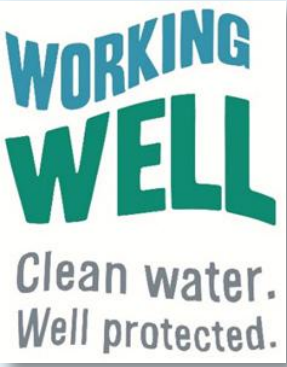
We are currently gearing up for the 2023 ground water program. We will be contacting homeowners this summer with water sample requests. We wish to thank all landowners who have allowed the Council to conduct water sampling on their properties. We hope you will continue working with us on this important project. Please note that this project aims to ensure that watershed residents have safe and secure drinking water.

Working Well Workshop

The Milk River Watershed Council Canada in conjunction with The County of Warner hosted a virtual Working Well Workshop on March 30, 2023 from 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm. Despite immensely advertising this workshop, it was difficult to get the desired numbers to warrant holding the workshop. However, in the end we managed to have 15 participants. Of the 15 participants, only 12 participated. Despite low registration, participants came away with a great deal of information from technical expertise provided by Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation, Alberta Environment and Protected Areas, Alberta Health Services, and licensed water well drillers.

During this comprehensive workshop, participants learned:

- How groundwater works
- How to test water quality and quantity
- How to protect your well from contamination
- Basic well maintenance
- How to water sample for analysis
- Why it is important to attend this workshop?



If you are one of 450,000 Albertans who use their water well for household purposes, the key to ensuring your water supply is safe and secure is knowing how groundwater works, learning about your well and understanding how to properly maintain it.

Consider how your life would change if you lost your water supply!

Did you know that a poorly maintained water well can put your water supply at risk of contamination and reduce your well yield?

Proper water well siting, construction, maintenance, and plugging will help protect your well from biofouling and contamination, save you costly repairs, and ensure your well water yields are sustained over many years.

To continue delivering this workshop, we need participation. Please let us know what more you would like to see or learn to improve participation. Send your suggestions to mary@mrwcc.ca

More information on Working Well Workshops: <https://www.alberta.ca/working-well.aspx>



Upcoming Education and Community Events!

Canoe the Milk – Coming soon – July, 7th, 2023

The MRWCC is planning a Canoe trip on Friday July 7, 2023, weather dependant.

The tour will be launched at Coffin Bridge travelling down to the Weir Bridge with a stop at Poverty Rock for lunch! This is a BYOB event, so make sure to Bring Your Own Boat. Special thanks to the organizing committee, Ed Sloboda and WOSPP for providing transportation.

Please note that this tour is provided to the MRWCC members only. Want to join our exciting excursions? Join the MRWCC Membership at <https://www.mrwcc.ca/index.php/get-involved/membership-information/>

Hike the Milk! Fall Hike Tour - Coming in September 2023!

The hike tour is scheduled to take place on September 29th, 2023. Location to be determined. More information will be emailed to the membership closer to the event.

Available to members only. Make sure to sign up for our membership to be the first to know; our events fill up fast!



Hiking and Canoeing the Milk - 2022

Surface Water Quality Monitoring Program

Water monitoring is a valuable tool that allows resource managers to better understand the status of resources in the watershed and assist with watershed management planning and decision-making. The monitoring of specific parameters (e.g., stream-flow, salt, nutrients or others) can be used to determine if water is suitable to meet the desired end uses for that water, including irrigation, livestock water, and recreation.

The Milk River Watershed Council Canada (MRWCC) has been monitoring water quality in the Milk River since 2006 in partnership with local municipalities and the provincial government. The objectives of the monitoring program are to:

- Collect baseline water quality data for the Milk River.
- Determine if present water quality is meeting Water Quality Objectives established in the Milk River Integrated Watershed Management Plan and other applicable water quality guidelines such as the Alberta Surface Water Quality Guidelines.
- Use results to encourage continued land and water stewardship and inform decisions regarding the future management of the Milk River and its tributaries.

The MRWCC and partners collect samples during the open



Staff water sampling on various sites - 2022/23

water season from April through October each year. This year we are sampling water at five locations on the mainstem of the Milk River. Samples are analysed for temperature, dissolved oxygen, specific conductivity, nutrients (phosphorus and nitrogen), total suspended solids, and fecal coliform bacteria.

The 2023 water monitoring program is ongoing. We wish to thank Alberta Environment and Protected Areas and Cardston County for their partnership on this project which affords us to continue this significant work during these economic hard times.

You can access historic water quality reports including the 2022 report at <https://www.mrwcc.ca/index.php?cid=152>

The Milk River historic surface water quality data can also be accessed on DataStream at <https://doi.org/10.25976/33tj-b538>. DataStream is an open-access platform for water quality data, with the aim of promoting knowledge sharing and advancing collaborative water stewardship.

We continue to thank local landowners for their part in taking care of our waterways and ensuring we have the highest possible quality water resources within the watershed.



Southern Alberta Youth Range Days 2023

Save the Date: July 18th-20th

Youth of all backgrounds and ages are invited to join us on this exciting trip to learn more about the important watershed we call home!



Space is limited:

Cost: \$80 per person. Ages: 13-18, families welcome! To register, or for more information, please contact the MRWCC office or email youthrangedays@gmail.com

The Southern Alberta Youth Range Days camp is a 2 ½ day camp to engage and inspire youth on topics such as rangelands, watersheds, wildlife, and natural resource management!

Camp this year will be held in the Del Bonita Campground and Hall off highway 62 in Southern Alberta!

There are many in-field activities planned to introduce youth to many rangeland and riparian management strategies! Some activities planned are:

- Evening Bat Walks
- Raptor Nest Building
- Floating Down The Milk River
- Songbird Identification
- Plant Identification
- And Many More!



Southern Alberta Youth Range Days

Transboundary State of the Watershed PHOTO CONTEST

The Milk River Watershed Council Canada, in partnership with the Milk River Watershed Alliance (Montana) and the South of the Divide Conservation Action Program (Saskatchewan), will be finalizing the 2nd Milk River Transboundary State of the Watershed (SOW) Report. The report will be due this fall. In an effort to secure best photos to be showcased in the 2023 Transboundary State of the Watershed, the Council presented a photo contest. To inspire the public and ensure that we have a wide range of photos to choose from, several categories were presented as follows: Landscapes, buildings, wildlife, plants, domestic animals, people, and processes/weather. The response was overwhelming as the public submitted exquisite photos on these different categories. It was very difficult to choose winning photos from a wide range of the photos that were submitted as they were all remarkable. We wish to thank everyone who submitted photos for the State of the Watershed. The winners received a prize from the MRWCC.



Wildlife – Konrad Galts



Processes/Weather – Elizabeth Mullen



Landscapes – Colynn Kerr



Landscapes – Colynn Kerr



Domestic Animals – William King



Domestic Animals – William King



Plants – Will Lindeman

Our partnership with Writing-On-Stone Provincial Park

This summer the MRWCC in partnership with Writing-On-Stone Provincial Park organized many in-person field trips and presentations on different aspects of the environment within the park. Several of the presentations were given to school groups, ranging from grades 8-12! Presentations extended from Water Quality Sampling with the same equipment we use in our sampling to Species At Risk presentations that

encompassed many different species of plants, birds, and fish that you can find within the park. Although school field trips finish at the end of June, the MRWCC will continue to be present at the park with many different roving interpretation programs in on topics ranging from bird walks, wildlife talks, and identifying different plant species. These are just some of the activities planned for this summer. Hope to see you there!



Bringing the Watershed to the classroom

It has been a busy start to the summer season with several presentations for the Milk River Elementary School and our partnership with Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park! Grade 2/3 students learned all about the water cycle and why water is important to the planet, people, and animals. It's always nice presenting to children who are engaged and full of questions, even questions we must ponder at times. Students also had the opportunity to use an interactive water table that helped them visualize exactly how the water cycle works, and what happens around them on a daily basis, which was a huge hit. MRWCC also gave a group of grade 10-12 students a presentation on water quality sampling to discuss the different factors that influence water that is used recreationally or commercially and discussing the different tests the watershed conducts to analyze several parameters within the water. To wrap up the school



year, a grade 8 class came down from Calgary to explore Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park. MRWCC gave a presentation on the different Species at Risk that could be found in the park and why they are beneficial to our ecosystem. After the presentation, the group went outside and had a friendly competition going through a wildlife friendly and a not-so wildlife friendly fence which was set up with string between two trees. It was an absolute blast and the group had lots of amazing questions.



2023 MRWCC AGM

MRWCC 18th Annual General Meeting Report

MRWCC – Going Strong for 18 years!! The 18th MRWCC Annual General Meeting was held on May 20, 2023, at the County of Warner ASB Meeting Room. 35 MRWCC members attended the meeting.

John Ross chaired the meeting and welcomed everyone to the AGM. The business discussions followed, including ratification of the bylaw amendments that were recommended by the Board at the Strategic Planning session held October, 2022.

Tim Romanow, the Executive Director followed with an update on the MRWCC activity Report, highlighting the roles of Alberta WPACs. He thanked Board members and other volunteer Team members for their accomplishments and went on to present each team's accomplishments.

He presented the 3-year strategic plan, which included Short-Term Drought Management and Long-Term Water Security.

Tim announced that the MRWCC is rebuilding their website. The MRWCC refurbished website coming soon! Check us out this summer at www.mrwcc.ca

Nicole Barnett, a Partner with Insight Chartered Professional Accountants, presented the MRWCC financial statements ending March 31, 2023. She went on to state that their review, found that the financial statements presented fairly, in all material respects.

Will Lindeman, election chair led nominations. Have a look at the 2023 elected members on the Board of Directors Corner page!

Chairman Ross thanked all participants for attending the AGM and all Board members and staff for a successful year.



2023 Poster & Video Contest

Once again, the MRWCC hosted a competition for the students of Milk River Elementary and Erle Rivers High School to ask students to think about what features of the watershed make it unique to them. We had participation from several grades, making it a difficult choice to pick the top contenders! The top 3 posters were selected for each grade, and 1 top prize was awarded to the older students who produced video presentations. All the students were awarded their prizes at our annual Community Appreciation Forum. We look forward to hosting the competition once again in 2024!

Special thanks to all the teachers who helped run the contest and our volunteers who helped in the selection of the poster winners.



Gratitude to Our 2022/23 Funders and supporters!

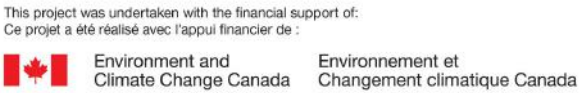
We wish to thank all those who provided funding to the MRWCC this fiscal year to assist the great work that the Council does to support watershed planning, monitoring, and stewardship within our community. We have accomplished a lot with these donations. Without your support much of these accomplishments would not be possible.

Alberta Environment and Protected Areas (AEP) - \$275,000



Alberta Environment and Protected Areas has been the main funder for the Council since its inception in 2006.

Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) - \$60,000



Producers leading the way Phase 2: a Two-year grant to help address gaps to increase native grassland conservation and species at risk stewardship within the Milk River watershed.

Other Individual/Corporate Support

In addition, we wish to thank Board members, Team members and all volunteers who give their time and resources generously to the cause of the MRWCC. Each year we receive around \$200,000 in in-kind contributions.

Thanks to the individual and corporate donations that we have received. These donations are essential to leveraging project funding from other funders.

You can view sponsors of our past auctions at www.mrwcc.ca

2023 SILENT AUCTION SPONSORSHIP ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Platinum Level Sponsor
(\$500.00 and over)



Gold level contributor
(over \$100.00 to less than \$500.00)



Gold level contributor Continued
(over \$100.00 to less than \$500.00)



Bronze Level Sponsor
(Silent Auction Item)



Bronze Level Sponsor (Silent Auction Item)

- Linda Cerney
- Roger Hughton
- Barbara Dickinson
- Mane Street Hair Styles
- Warren and June Cunningham
- Bob Bogle
- Milk River Home Hardware
- Subaru
- Tim Romanow
- William King
- Mary Lupwayi
- Jane Lancaster
- Derek Hacke
- Jean Buchanan
- Darcy and Robbie Wills
- Carly Stewart
- K Losey Family Farm
- Cheryl Dash
- Elise Walker
- Asura
- Kristen Dykstra

BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S CORNER

At the 18th MRWCC AGM, elections were conducted for the following positions on the Board and the following officials were elected:

New Board Members:

First Nations: Dr. Mike Bruised Head



Dr. Mike Bruised Head, graduated from St Mary's High school on the Blood Reserve in 1976. He received a Bachelor's of Arts Degree (BA) from University of Lethbridge in 1980 and then went on to serve on the on Blood Tribe Chief and Council 1981 to 1983. He was employed at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated college in

1984-85 as College Administrator. He then became the Executive Director of Sikoohkotoki Friendship Center from 1986 to 1994. Convocated in 1996 with a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) from thr University of Lethbridge. Employed by Kainai of Board of Education as a high school teacher, vice principal, and principal from 1996 to 2011. Obtained his Master's Degree (MA) from Gonzaga University, Spokane Washington (2003) in Administration and Supervision. Elected to Blood Tribe Chief and Council from 2011 to 2016. Formally created Kainai Ecosystems Protection Agency (KEPA) and served as chair for KEPA from 2012 to 2016. Chairman of KEPA Summit for four years, currently serving as an elder and academic advisor on KEPA committee. Organized the Partnership between KEPA, Earth Watch and Kainai High School for Blood Tribe Timber Limits Environment Assessment Program. He also serves the Oldman Watershed Council. Participates on the Crown of the Continent Roundtable Leadership Committee. Involved in Kainai ceremonies and cultural events. Speaks Blackfoot fluently. Presently serving as president of the University of Lethbridge Iniskim Indigenous Alumni Chapter and Chairman of the Kainai Board of Education. Recently completed a Doctoral degree in Philosophy, majoring in Social, Cultural and Political Thought and sessional lecturer. Director of the Crown Managers Partnership, and Waterton Biosphere Reserve association. Is a rancher raising horses and black angus cattle.

After years of having a vacant First Nations position, the MRWCC is pleased to introduce Dr. Mike Bruised Head, Ninnaa Piiksii, as the First Nations representative. We are so honoured to have Mike join the Council. He brings a wealth of knowledge on First Nation's cultural and political thought, and the Council is looking forward to collaborating with him and learning more on First Nations cultural awareness. Welcome Mike!

Academia: Janna Casson,



Janna has been an Agri-Environmental Science Instructor at Lethbridge College since 2020. She has a B.Sc in Agriculture Biotechnology from the University of Lethbridge and a M.Sc. in Natural Resource Sciences from McGill University. She worked in public service for about 19 years; 17 years with Alberta Agriculture and 2 years with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada). During her time as a public servant, she worked in agri-environmental research, extension, engagement (stakeholder and public), and land and water use policy development and implementation. She has been a volunteer on multi-stakeholder teams such as the Oldman Watershed Council Board of Directors, Agri-Environmental Partnership of Alberta, South East Alberta Watershed Alliance Technical Team, and Transboundary Grassland Partnership Core Team. She was a past chair of the Alberta Soil Science Workshop and continues to be part of the planning committee for this annual event. She is a southern Alberta girl at heart as she is born and raised in Lethbridge. She loves the outdoors and in her spare time enjoys hiking, camping, skiing, fishing, snorkeling, kayaking, paddle boarding, snowshoeing, weightlifting, martial arts, cooking, gardening, reading, and spending quality time with family and friends.

The Council is pleased to work with Janna. She brings a wealth of scientific, academic, and agricultural extension expertise. Welcome Janna!

Provincial Government (AEPA): Cheryl Dash



Cheryl has been working in Lethbridge since 1996 for the Government of Alberta within the environment/water/protected areas portfolio. She was around for the release of the original Water for Life Strategy and played a role in the development of the OWC, SEAWA and MRWCC many years ago.

Other projects and partnerships Cheryl has been involved with over the years include: the SSRB water management plan, Castle Education Working Group, Special Places (Twin River), the Oldman Dam EAC, Prairie Conservation Forum, recreation and footprint planning in the Livingstone-Porcupine Hills, supporting the development of the grassland's education kit and numerous other educational activities.

Currently, Cheryl is providing guidance to the Springbank Off-stream Reservoir land use planning project, coordinating implementation of the Livingstone-Porcupine Hills Land Footprint Management plan and furthering the Indigenous Knowledge and Perspectives Initiative.

In her spare time, she likes to wander around Keho Lake walking her two large crazy pups, coaching and supporting her daughter's sports activities and trying to stay connected to family and friends. Cheryl is looking forward to reconnecting with the Milk River watershed community and providing guidance and leadership to the wonderful work the Council is doing.

The Council is pleased to have Cheryl join the team! Her extent of experience in environmental practices, water management, and protected areas comes very handy. Not to mention her role in the development of several WPACs including the MRWCC. Welcome Cheryl!

Returning Board members:

Federal Government: Dr. Ben Ellert



Dr. Benjamin H. Ellert is a Research Scientist in Biogeochemistry with the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Research Centre in Lethbridge, Alberta. He studies carbon and nitrogen cycling in both cropland and rangeland ecosystems. He has expertise in quantifying soil carbon and nitrogen stocks, in investigating greenhouse gas emissions from soils, and in applying isotopic techniques to study the biogeochemistry of agricultural systems. He obtained a Ph. D. in Soil Science from the University of Saskatchewan, and was raised on a small mixed farm near Milk River.

Member at Large: William King



Five generations ago, William's Grandfather came to the Aden area before Alberta was a province. William was born on the road from Aden, along Deer Creek where he lived until he was 10 days old. He started farming and ranching on his own farm in 1965 until 2011 when he moved into the Town of Milk River. The ranch

is on Breed Creek which comes out of East Butte of the Sweetgrass Hills and runs to Milk River.

William has been a member of numerous groups such as:

- A member of a local Fish and Game Club since its inception and has received a lifetime membership award for over 40 years of service

- A member of the Alberta Outdoorsmen Association for 55 years

- A founding member of the Grain Agricultural Society in 1973 where he served as president three times over the years

- A founding member of the Border Surface Rights in 1981

- Served on Aden volunteer Fire Department for 30 years

- Helped with the compilation of the Milk River Natural Areas and Kennedy Coulee Ecological Reserve Management Plan which commenced in 1990 to present time

- Recent recipient of the Canadian Hereford Association pin in recognition of 50 years of rising Registered Hereford cattle

- A member of the Wildlife and nature photography. Some of Williams's photographs are featured in the 2nd Edition Milk River Transboundary State of the Watershed Report

William loves the area and can bring a wealth of knowledge and history of the East Milk River area to the board.

Member at Large: Warren Cunningham



Warren was born in High River and grew up in Calgary and Sherwood Park. He has a diploma in Soil and Water Technology and a Bachelor's degree in Agriculture (Soils and Plant Pathology major). Warren has been actively involved in the 4-H program for 19 years. He was also a member of the Southern

Alberta Outdoorsman Association as an environmental and promotional chairperson. Warren was also a councillor for the County of Warner. Warren has spent the last 30+ years ranching and grass seed farming along the Milk River. He has been a MRWCC board member since its inception in 2006 and is currently serving as the Secretary on the Executive.

Towns/Villages: Peggy Losey



Peggy has lived in the Milk River area all her life. She was born in Milk River and was raised on a farm, where she learned to garden and all the other chores involved in mixed farming.

Peggy has done many things in her life, but her most important titles are wife, mom and Grandma Peggy!

She is a graduate of SAIT where she received her EMR training and worked as a volunteer for the Milk River Ambulance Service for 5 years. She has also served on numerous boards and helped to found several organizations. Her most recent service jobs have been as a councillor for the Town of Milk River and before the last election, the mayor. Since 2021 Peggy has served on the Milk River Watershed board as the town of Milk River representative.

Recreation: Ken Brown



Ken was born and raised in the mountains of beautiful British Columbia. These mountain ranges were his playground as he grew up.

After graduating from High School, he worked for several different mining companies throughout northern British Columbia before deciding that

studying and learning might be easier than the shovel he was used to, so he enrolled at Simon Fraser University as one of its Charter students and, surprisingly to some, he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1969.

Along the way he met this very charming and beautiful young lady, Wendy. He was "smitten" and totally surprised when she agreed to marry him, but he had to move to Alberta to do it.

He learned a lot about the river and its history as he canoed and hiked up and down various sections of the river with his guide and local historian, Alva Bair. With the help of many other river enthusiasts, they built a shelter for those canoeing and floating the river for an overnight camping spot at Poverty Rock. Chris Nett was the landowner and allowed them to build the shelter there.

Ken and Wendy bought their Raft Tours Company from Wendy's cousin who was moving to Quebec to begin a new life there. They began offering guided Raft tours along the Milk River and have expanded their efforts by including canoe, stand up paddleboards, and river tubes to their itinerary. Unfortunately, o ngoing shoulder problems and difficulty finding other certified paddlers, they had to quit offering the guided raft tours.

Along the way several local people united to form a group looking to find ways to improve the water quality and quantity in the Milk River and searching out various water storage ideas along the Milk River to allay some of the water shortages that seemed to happen regularly. In time, this group became the Milk River Watershed Council Canada. Ken was privileged enough to be asked to belong to both groups and did so willingly.

He is currently on the MRWCC Board representing Recreation.



Meet the 2023 Board of Directors!

(Left) Standing, back row: Roger Houghton, Mary Lupwayi, Ken Miller, Ken Brown, Ben Ellert, Janna Casson, William King, Peggy Losey, Ed Sloboda, Ross Ford, Tim Romanow
Seated, front row: Joan Hughson, Will Lindeman, John Ross, Jon Boyle, Kristen Dykstra
Missing: Scott MacCumber, Richard Oster, Darcy Wills, Ron McNeil, Jollin Charest, Cheryl Dash, Warren Cunningham
(Right) Meet the Executive Board Members: Ron McNeil (Vice Chair); John Ross (Chairman); Will Lindeman (Treasurer); Warren Cunningham (Secretary)



CONTACT US

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We are closed weekends and holidays



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Photo credits for the newsletter:
William King, Ed Sloboda, Mary Lupwayi, Tim Romanow, Allison Choquette, and Jessica Olsen

WELCOMING JESSICA OLSEN – Outreach Assistant!

Jessica joined the MRWCC as a summer outreach assistant. With a strong background in public speaking, she will be helping with some of the Youth Education programs. She has also been helping on the bat stewardship project, assisting in organizing the Youth Range Days program, water quality sampling, plan-

ning presentations for school kids, and is pleased to meet some of the awesome board members! Jessica will be with the Council until end of August. Jessica is from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan and moved to Lethbridge a few years. She has a Diploma in the Natural Resource Compliance program from Lethbridge College and is currently working towards

the Bachelors of Ecosystem Management degree. She has been exploring areas of the Milk River since moving to Lethbridge and has spent plenty of time in Writing-on-stone Provincial Park. In her spare time, you can find her painting, drawing, camping, or bird watching!
Join us in welcoming Jessica to the MRWCC!

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

The Milk River Watershed is simply different than all other major watersheds in Alberta. Our diversity is reflected in our Board of Directors and the communities we serve. This is our strength. Our organization and our relationships as friends, neighbours, colleagues, and partners represent a truly special group of people who have chosen collaboration before conflict and conversation before dispute. This past year, we transitioned back towards in person meetings and events, time was dedicated to 4 major projects in addition to our regular operations, ongoing educational programming, and monitoring efforts to better understand conditions and changes within the watershed. Some of the most notable outcomes included: Supported the International Joint Commission St Mary – Milk River project including hosting IJC commissioners and staff on basin tours, supporting study outreach activities, public advisory committee and the aquatic resources committees with local knowledge and watershed monitoring data. The MRWCC has worked closely with Alberta Government Transboundary Water staff to ensure we have a voice at the table and that the community and environmental needs of the Canadian portion of the Milk River are not forgotten. I can’t thank the community members enough for packing the Civic Centre to share information and become more informed about the activities of the IJC study

project. Outcomes from this 4-year project will address both the structural needs and administrative changes needed to navigate the changing environment and timing of river flows to buffer droughts and minimize shortage or disruptions to the management of the two rivers well into the next 100 years. Leveraged funding for improved Species at Risk Habitat management with the development and completion of the Producers Leading the Way project Phase 2 in conjunction with ECCC and our municipal partners supporting extension workshops. In a commitment to providing connections and tools to maintain healthy ranching businesses that are less subjected to the challenges of markets, and the environment we have continued to provide high quality events such as our Farm Succession Planning and Ranching for Profit series to watershed producers; additional workshops and tours will continue to be made available with our Ag Service Board partners the coming year. Continued the development of the 2023 Transboundary State of the Watershed Report in partnership with sister organizations in Montana and Saskatchewan. We are now months away from the full completion of a 2023 SOW report book. This update from the 2013 edition will report exciting updates from all aspects of the watershed, fish, wildlife, water quality, as well as improve our sharing of information with Indigenous knowl-

edge woven throughout the document. This report will help set the guideposts to continue to better understand watershed dynamics and plan projects that fill those gaps for the next decade across all boarders. Successfully implemented the “Securing a Home for Bats in the Milk River Watershed” project that has identified, and documented important habitat used by the Little Brown Myotis throughout the watershed. The project has filled information gaps on bat species, monitored the presence of WNS and worked with private landowners to increase awareness and stewardship of riparian areas and other habitat. I am humbled by the number of private landowners who have supported the project and worked with Allison to survey their land and set up boxes for bats. The genuine interest has been exciting to see and helps us build a larger network of producers for future projects and potential species at risk work. Thank you again to all ~65 producers within the project! Thank you to the staff and membership of the council for making all projects possible this past year. Please watch for future opportunities to help support sustainable management within our watershed; and feel free to contact us to learn more about the projects and work of the MRWCC.
Tim Romanow
Executive Director, Milk River Watershed Council Canada

CHAIRMAN’S REPORT

The year is starting with some optimism, but there are always challenges. We had a fair amount of moisture this last winter which was able to both soak in and run-off to fill empty dams and dugouts. Now that we are warming up and it’s stopped freezing at night, the grass and crops have an opportunity to grow. A little rain now and then and we can look forward to a good year. However, with an El Nino building, we may once again be looking at a dry summer. Due to the amount of moisture this winter, the Americans did not incur a deficit on the “Letter of Intent”, which means that irrigations are once again threatened with an early shut-down this summer. This has become almost a yearly event and a full irrigation season on the Milk River is becoming less and less dependable. Water Security continues to be a huge issue for the Milk River watershed. The International Joint



Commissions’ (IJC) panel is in their second year (of a four-year study) to analyze and recommend options for both structural and non-structural solutions for improving water use with our limited supply. A dam upstream from the town of Milk River seems to be the best option, but it will be a long way off, if it is ever approved and built. Potentially another 15,000 acre-feet of water could be gained on a yearly basis. This could not only be used to increase irrigation and add to our economic development, but to firm up the reliability of the Canadian and American water supply. It would be used to increase the instream flow-needs required for our towns, fish, wildlife, and livestock in the watershed. It could also be used to aide our American friends with some of their water needs due to the siltation of the Fresno Dam, the upcoming construction and upgrades of the Sherburne Dam and the diversion. So far US\$90M has been allocated on the American side, but this is just a start, they will need much more. A gate above the newly rebuilt drop-structure #5 failed and the diversion water has already been cut off this spring to facilitate repairs. Several off-stream storage sites have been identified on the Canadian side, which would be relatively cheap and quick to build. This seems to be our best option at this time. We will be

needing the help of our Alberta Government to guarantee our water needs. This would be a Canada-only solution. We are very fortunate to have Allison Choquette on staff as our Wildlife & Outreach Technician. She will be continuing her work with bats in the watershed through 2024. She has been working to identify bat species groups in the area, supplied bat boxes to 40 landowners across the watershed, and installed a larger bat condo for maternity roosting purposes. All of this work will contribute to ensuring bats have access to safe habitat for years to come. She continues to monitor the impending spread of White-Nose Syndrome in the bat populations around us. I have a property in Ontario on Lake of the Woods and there are no bats anywhere to eat all the mosquitoes and other flying insects in the night. I really miss the bats there. I would also like to thank the MRWCC Board of Directors, other volunteers, and our staff, Tim Romanow, the Executive Director and Mary Lupwayi, the Program Coordinator for their services that ensure the success of the Council. Good Wishes, Good Health, and may it rain when you need it.
John A. Ross
Chairman, Milk River Watershed Council Canada