



The Meander

THE MILK RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL CANADA

FALL/WINTER 2019

Milk River Water Security Investigations Summary

The MRWCC is pleased to announce the completion of the summary report of Past Water Supply Investigations in the Milk River Basin. The summary looks at over 40 years of water management and storage investigations that have occurred in the Milk River basin, many of which have not publicly been available to watershed stakeholders and community members.

This summary document is intended to provide an objective review of past water supply investigations and supporting studies to establish a common understanding of the work completed among water managers and water users. The document may be used to guide future planning and decision-making to improve water security and drought resilience in the Milk River basin.

The Transboundary nature of the Milk River and inter-connections to the St Mary's River Drainage warrant continued dialogue and work towards improved water management on both sides of the border. A water supply project in the Milk River basin (AB) could mitigate the impacts of water shortages for existing water users, and potentially provide additional opportunities for the community and region. Past studies have investigated the feasibility of improving water supplies in the Milk River basin by way of onstream or offstream storage, or supplemental water supply from Ridge Reservoir to the Milk River. Most recently, the Joint Initiative Team completed a modelling exercise aimed at improving access to entitled shares of water for both Canada and the United States by way of administrative and structural measures. Canada uses an estimated 12% of its annual Milk River entitlement (54,000 dam³). The remainder of unused water (about 47,000 dam³/year) flows to the U.S.A.

The Milk River Watershed Council Canada is committed to science based decision making that continues working partnerships with government and non-government organizations, industry, and watershed residents to effectively manage watershed resources in alignment with the MRWCC Integrated Watershed Management Plan and South Saskatchewan Regional Plan priorities. We are mindful of the changing regulatory environment, aquatic and terrestrial species at risk concerns, and land use concerns expressed by stakeholders and our community. Now is the time for leadership to address water security challenges in the face of climate change to provide long term resiliency.

Water shortages occur frequently and are expected to increase in response to changing climate. The most notable droughts were experienced in the 1940s, 1976, 1977, 2001, 2007 and 2017. The Milk River and its tributaries are a primary source of water

for the Milk River community. The impact of drought is felt mostly by the towns, rural water co-ops, Milk River irrigators and other water users who rely on the river for their water supply.

The Milk River is sustained by foothills snowmelt in the headwaters, tributary inflows throughout the basin, and an inter-basin transfer of water from the St. Mary River to the North Fork of the Milk River via a diversion canal operated by the U.S.A. during the growing season. The diversion of water is made in accordance with the 1909 Boundary Waters Treaty and 1921 International Joint Commission (IJC) Order. A Letter of Intent allows each country to access more than they are entitled to for some specific weeks of the year, which increases the total water each country can access during the whole year. The St. Mary River diversion canal infrastructure was completed in 1917 and is increasingly at risk of failing. Failing infrastructure, combined with changing climate, increases uncertainty in water supply for existing water users, and limits the potential for economic growth and investment in the basin. It also impacts riparian and aquatic ecosystems.

Past studies indicate that water storage could secure water supplies for existing water users in times of drought or during periods when the St. Mary diversion infrastructure is shut down. Water storage could also benefit new uses, including the irrigation of an additional 1,825 hectares to 13,500 hectares, depending on the future water supply option implemented. Based on a more recent study of the economic benefits of irrigation in Alberta, an increase in irrigable land could contribute as much as \$74 million to the provincial GDP, annually.

For a full copy of the Storage Investigation Summary, please contact our office or download the digital version from our website www.mrwcc.ca

Key Findings

- ◆ Offstream water storage options (located on tributaries to the Milk River) provided significantly less capacity compared to onstream options, and had greater water quality problems (e.g., local salinity issues). Offstream options required pipeline/canal infrastructure to capture mainstem river flows that increased project costs without adding benefits. Multiple reservoirs could increase storage capacity, but costs would increase to construct, operate and maintain multiple facilities.

- ◆ Route 4 was considered the most feasible of five proposed pipeline/canal water supply routes from Ridge Reservoir. However, compared to onstream storage, the volume of water that could be practically delivered via pipeline/canal from Ridge Reservoir was small and

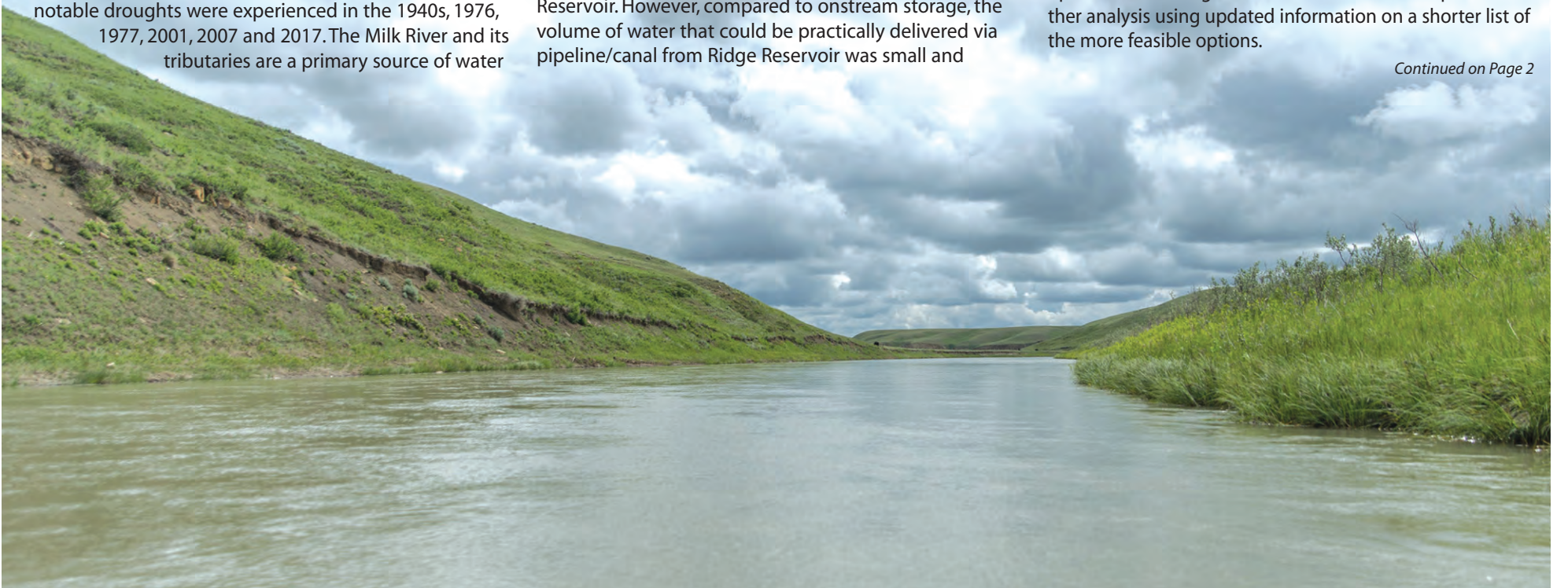


unable to provide the same benefits. Social barriers also limited the future potential of this option, including the inter-basin transfer of water from Ridge Reservoir to the Milk River, and availability of water and use of infrastructure that is currently designated for other water users in the St. Mary River basin.

- ◆ Considering all onstream storage sites investigated, only the Milk River 2 (Forks) site had the storage capacity approaching the hydrologic optimum. The remaining onstream options were either limited in size by site topography and water supply, or were sized at less than their maximum capacity. The Milk River 2 (Forks) site was recommended as the most feasible onstream water storage option in all studies, except Klohn Crippen (2003) which did not identify preferred options. This site was considered optimal due to its comparatively large capacity, location upstream of the Town of Milk River (to maximize downstream benefits), and for its potential to provide continuous flow during winter or periods of drought to improve instream habitat for aquatic life. The recent modelling results by the Joint Initiative Team indicated that storage at the Milk River 2 (Forks) site could have mutual benefits for both countries (JIT 2015). Administrative options (i.e., Letter of Intent (LOI)) could be used to maximize mutual benefits of onstream water storage options.

The Water Supply and Management (WSM) Team, comprised of Alberta Environment and Parks, Milk River irrigators, and Milk River Watershed Council Canada Board members evaluated the water supply options presented in past investigations (highlighted in the summary). The WSM Team identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the most feasible options: onstream storage at the Milk River 2 site, offstream storage at Lonely Valley B, and the alternative water supply from Ridge Reservoir (Route 4) (Appendix B). The Team concluded that all of the options have strengths and weaknesses that require further analysis using updated information on a shorter list of the more feasible options.

Continued on Page 2



Watershed..... QUICK FACTS:

Do you know where our water comes from?

On average 80-90% of the river flow of the Milk River comes from a diversion off the St Mary's River in Montana. If not for the St Mary's diversion, most years late summer natural flow of the Milk River east of the Town of Milk River would be non-existent.

Groundwater and Milk River flow

Did you know that studies have demonstrated the connectivity of the Milk River to both the Whiskey Valley Aquifer and the Milk River Aquifer. Over 350 farms, acreages, even parks are reliant on Water Co-ops that draw from the Milk River and adjacent aquifers for domestic drinking water. Thanks to leadership of the MRWCC and

Geological Survey of Canada, we have some of the best transboundary aquifer mapping resources in the world right here in Milk River.

Water quality of the Milk River is affected by the St Marys River

The MRWCC has been monitoring water quality along the Milk River and many important tributaries for over 13 years. This data has helped form some of the most complete long term trend data sets found in any of the provinces major watersheds. Trends have shown us there are distinct differences in water quality between the Milk River natural flow which is high in salts and influenced by springs/groundwater flows; and St Marys River which is often higher in quality and glacial fed. The Milk River is distinctly two different rivers between the diversion and non-diversion periods.

Water and agriculture

There are over 93,000 acres of irrigation reliant on the Milk River throughout the highline of Montana, and on average 8600 acres in Alberta. The Milk River is likely just as valuable to the ranching community with thousands of head of livestock reliant on the Milk River for water sources, rich riparian plains for grazing and refuge.

Water storage options identified in reports

Continued from Page 1

The Team noted that the option that provided the largest water storage capacity and greatest economic benefit for the Milk River basin was likely the combination of water storage at the Milk River 2 (Forks) site, the upgrade/restoration of the St. Mary River diversion canal, and administrative tools to optimize operations (modified Letter of Intent). Increased access to secure water supplies would build community resiliency to predicted water shortages resulting from climate change, and address the increasing risk of infrastructure failure in Montana.

Recommendations Moving Forward

- 1) Municipal, provincial and federal decision makers and water users should explore opportunities for collaboration to undertake the necessary analysis for the most feasible options. Options to be explored should maximize benefits for both Canada and the U.S.A.
- 2) Funding to support the next phase of work should be sought from municipal, provincial and federal governments, and industry (e.g., agriculture, hydropower) when the options and scope of analysis have been determined.
- 3) Updated information and analysis should include:
 - a) An assessment of watershed hydrology that considers climate change impacts on future runoff and natural water supply.
 - b) An updated economic analysis to reflect current socio-economic conditions, and identify the potential benefits derived from irrigation expansion, industry development, hydropower generation, and/or increased water-based tourism and recreation in southern Alberta.
 - c) Examination of opportunities to:
 - ◆ Restore existing environmental impacts from current water management practices (e.g., winter water quality conditions, streambank and channel erosion, loss of riparian and fish habitat), and
 - ◆ Mitigate new environmental impacts that may result from a water storage project (e.g., potential to restore native grassland habitat to offset project impacts; mitigate potential impacts to fish species at risk and aquatic life).

Economics of a potential Milk River 2 site

Milk River 2 (Forks) site had the highest construction cost (\$123 to \$143 million; 2009 assessment) compared to other water storage options. The cost per unit storage of water was lowest at the Milk River 2 (Forks) site (high water level approximately \$1051 per acre feet and topographic water levels approximately \$905 per acre feet). Milk River 2 site was the only option with a positive cost benefit analysis to Albertans using standard metrics.

Economists generally use a cost-benefit analysis approach to rank natural resource projects when a number of options are presented. However, the cost-benefit analysis is just one consideration used to inform decisions together with other social, environmental and regulatory indicators. While the hard costs of water supply options (e.g., construction, stimulus) may be readily estimated using standard rates, not all social value indicators (benefits) can be easily determined.

An onstream water storage project at the Milk River 2 (Forks) site is expected to have a 600 year life span (Klohn Crippen 2003). According to a recent study, a multi-use water storage reservoir could increase productivity in the basin and contribute significantly to local and regional prosperity. Paterson Earth & Water Consulting (2015) estimated the value of irrigation in southern Alberta and found:

- ◆ For every cubic metre of water delivered for irrigation and other related uses, about \$3.00 to the provincial GDP and \$2.00 in labour income was generated.



Figure 1. Sequence of past water supply discussions and investigations for the Milk River basin (1976-2019).

- ◆ For every dollar invested by the GOA in irrigation-related activities, about \$3.00 in added revenue to Alberta and Canada was generated annually.
 - ◆ Irrigation crop and livestock product sales amounted to about \$2,400/ha compared to about \$329/ha for dry-land production.
 - ◆ For every \$1.00 of irrigation sales, the total [Alberta] GDP increased by \$2.54 and labour income increased by \$1.64. Every million in irrigation sales increased total employment by about 39 jobs.
- Thus, a 12,141 ha irrigation project in the Milk River basin could generate about \$30 million in irrigation product sales, and contribute as much as \$74 million to the provincial economy, annually (determined by applying the GDP provincial multiplier of \$2.54). Substantial employment opportunities could also be generated.
- The income generated for non-irrigation related activities were also identified:
- ◆ Hydropower generation: One plant operating during the summer months when sufficient water was available in the St. Mary River Irrigation District's main canal generated about 11.6 MW of power and \$2 million, annually (Paterson Earth & Water Consulting 2015)
 - ◆ Tourism and recreation: Recreational activities associated with irrigation projects generated about \$24 million (Paterson Earth & Water Consulting 2015). Based on the estimated value of \$55 per visitor, a reservoir in the Milk River basin could generate up to \$2.8 million in recreation revenue, annually, assuming an annual average of 50,523 visitors at Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park (Marv Anderson & Associates 2009).
- A water supply project could provide for some entirely new economic activities in the region that have not yet been identified or quantified (i.e., intensive feeding operations, food processing, hydro-power generation, and water-based recreation) (Marv Anderson & Associates 1980). Water security would allow Milk River communities to take full advantage of inherent advantages that include unique agro-climatic and ecological features, strategic highway-railway linkages, and physical proximity to U.S.A markets (Marv Anderson & Associates 1980). Any



further investigation should update costs and benefits to reflect the current value of a water supply project in the Milk River basin, and should consider the most recent findings related to the value of irrigation in Southern Alberta.



***Last chance to apply for project funding!
Don't miss this chance! Apply soon!***

As we enter the final year of the Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program, we would like to remind watershed residents and agricultural producers who are interested in applying for funding to implement stewardship projects, to please do so promptly. All projects to be completed by March 2020. Remember that funding is on first come first serve basis.

Project Types:

- ◆ Wetland enhancements:
 - Watering systems / Alternative water developments - \$10,000/one individual operation (maximum grant)
 - Riparian Corridor / Exclusion fencing - \$5,000/site (maximum grant)
 - Riparian plantings - \$2,000/site (maximum grant)

- ◆ Wintering site management projects:
 - Portable windbreaks /calf shelters/winter watering system - \$4,000/site (maximum grant)Please note that this is a cost-share funding opportunity. The MRWCC will be responsible for material procurement and landowner will be responsible for construction and all in-kind costs.

Please visit our website at www.mrwcc.ca for a complete funding guideline and application form or simply call Tim at 403-647-4342 if you have questions.

We wish to thank the Government of Alberta for the funding and all residents and producers who have bought into this program which improves riparian health of the watershed.

Milk River Watershed Film Project

Lifeline of the Highline



The Milk River Watershed Alliance (MRWA), in Montana, in partnership with, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Conservation districts/Counties of the Highline, Blackfoot Nation, and the Milk River Watershed Council Canada have completed a video to showcase the St Mary Diversion headworks and challenges facing water security for communities on both sides of the border.

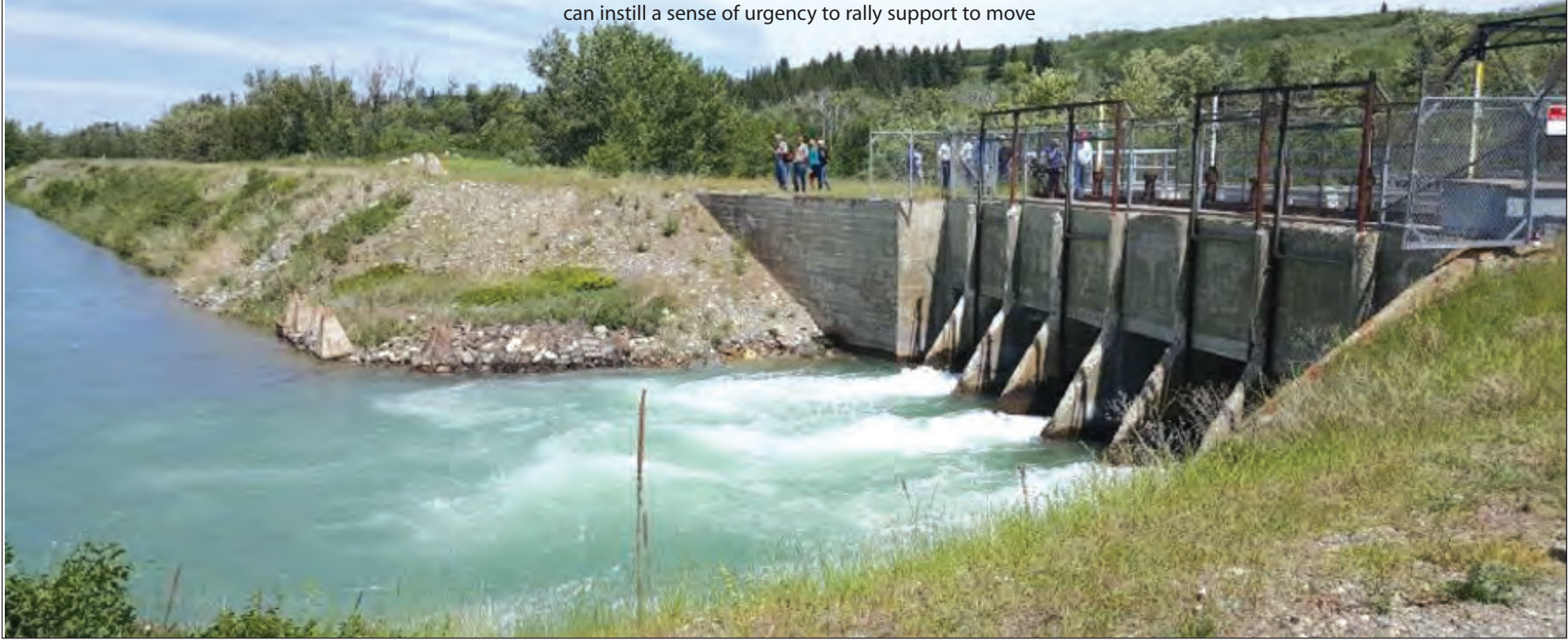
“We believe that the most powerful way to explain the importance and complexity of the St. Mary’s diversion system, which can provide up to 90% of the flow for the Milk River, is through a short film” says the MRWA. By showing the location, extent of the project, beneficiaries, and consequences of failing to act, we can instill a sense of urgency to rally support to move

the project forward.

Please watch or share the video, and start a conversation; the MRWCC is working with our partners to facilitate long term solutions to water security that strike a balance on environmental, social, and economic challenges.

As residents, recreationalists, and water users you need to let your elected officials from Municipal, Provincial, and Federal governments know that political will and leadership are required to ensure security.

The Film can be found either through the link on our website www.mrwcc.ca main page or directly from YouTube: <https://youtu.be/Vg2srtp14x4> (search: Milk River Watershed).





Blanket Flower



Blazing Star



Blue Gramma Grass (early stage)

Xeriscape project

Interested in the plants? We will get you connected!
You may have noticed how nice the plants look in front of the Town of Milk River office building. The xeriscaping is complete. Both the north and the south section of the front of the Town Office look great. The North side is flourishing! Xeriscaping is landscaping and gardening that reduces or eliminates the need for supplemental water. With the

water security issues that face our region, it is beneficial to look at what we can do to be pro-active in our landscaping. Some of the flowers have gone from one to twenty since being planted last year. The south side was planted this year in very, very hard soil (as some of you witnessed) but nonetheless the plants are doing well and we were able to recycle some of the rocks from the Civic Center. If you are interested in which plants were used for either side check out the plant list by the Town Office. Feel free to pop into our office if you have any more questions!
Here are some of the plants from the North Side:
Blazing Star (*Liatris spicata*): This native prairie plant makes a wonderful addition to any garden. It is drought tolerant and thrives on neglect. The hairy

flowers on the cone-shaped stalks are unusual because they open from the top down on the flower stalk. They are also favorites of bees, butterflies and hummingbirds.
Blanket Flower (*Gaillardia "dwarf goblin"*): Full sun and very well-drained soil are musts for blanket flowers to thrive. They prefer loose, sandy soil that isn't overly fertile with a pH near neutral or slightly alkaline. Established plants are quite drought tolerant. It is a good choice for attracting bees and butterflies to your yard.
Blue Gramma Grass (*Bouteloua gracilis*): Blue grama is short growing, long-lived, warm-season, native perennial grass that grows throughout the Great Plains. It's readily established from native grass seed and is now used in low maintenance lawns. It uses one-third of the water of a traditional Kentucky bluegrass lawn and is very drought tolerant.



The Milk River Historical Society held the Oral History workshop at the Heritage Hall in Milk River

Article by Dale Leffingwell
President, Milk River Historical Society

The Milk River Historical Society has provided the Land of the Milk with an important venue where stories and artifacts are preserved for our community and help future generations to appreciate the efforts of our pioneers. Volunteer members of our society work tirelessly on fundraising, artifact acquisitions, displays and recently an important step in

oral history and tradition education.
On Saturday October 5th we hosted a Beginners Oral History workshop at the Heritage Hall in Milk River made possible by a grant from the Community Foundation Henry S Varley Fund for Rural Life. Thanks to collaboration of the University of Lethbridge and the Galt Museum there were speakers from the University of Lethbridge Dr. Carol Williams (Professor, History & WGST U of L), Dr. Carly Adams (Associate Professor, Kinesiology, U of L) and Diane McKenzie (MA Candidate History U of

L), Aimee Benoit (Curator ant the Galt Museum) and Kimberley Lyall (Motivational Speaker and Consultant). With several U of L student participants as well as local attendees the workshop was a success. We will be hosting a follow-up workshop to the Oral History in early spring.
The Milk River Historical Society has recently moved into a much larger building and are looking forward to being able to accumulate more artifacts and stories from the families of early pioneers that helped establish Milk River and surrounding area.

CANOE

tour report

Our canoe tour this year took us from the site of the Forks, where the South and the North Fork of the Milk River meet. This is a point that few get to see but obviously is very important for the Milk River. We were able to paddle the area that is considered the best spot for a potential dam. The river was moving faster than we anticipated so we were able to cover a lot of distance! The weather was great and only one canoe went for a swim. We had our lunch in the Twin River area and ended just west of the Town of Milk River. Participants were fascinated by some of the amazing history surrounding the barn. It was a great way to end an awesome day on the river.

Caring for our Watersheds Program

It's that time of year again! Caring for our Watersheds asks students "What can YOU do to improve your local watershed?" This education program engages students in preserving and improving their local watersheds through student-led solutions. This program is curriculum-based and an excellent way to bring project-based learning to the classroom. Plus, students and their schools can win cash-prizes! Over the years Milk River has done very well in this competition. Kandra was fortunate enough

to take part in the judging process last year and was amazed by some of the projects proposed. Classes and projects from Medicine Hat and Cardston were recognized. Top projects get to go to Calgary and sell their project to a panel of judges. Winning groups win cash prizes and students, whether they win or not, have the ability to access funds to make their projects a reality. This includes the hawk nest poles put up around Milk River (one nest had another successful brood this year).

Are you in Grades 7 to 12?

Compete to win \$1,000 cash!

Submit a proposal that answers the question:

“What can you do to improve your watershed?”

- Research your local watershed and come up with a solution to an environmental concern
- Finalists present their idea to win cash rewards
- Nearly \$20,000 will be awarded to students and schools who participate
- Funding is also available to help implement student ideas

Southern Alberta contest deadlines:
March 13, 2020 – Contest Entry Deadline
April 25, 2020 – Final Competition

Central Alberta contest deadlines:
March 17, 2020 – Contest Entry Deadline
April 25, 2020 – Final Competition

Enter the contest nearest you. Typically students south of and including Airdrie enter Southern AB and students north of Airdrie enter Central AB.

CARING FOR OUR Watersheds™

For more information visit

CaringForOurWatersheds.com

With support from community partners:

4-H Alberta
Athabasca Watershed Council
Alberta WaterPortal Society
Battle River School Division
Beaver River Watershed Alliance
Bow River Basin Council
Ducks Unlimited Canada
Inside Education

Lesser Slave Lake Watershed Council
Mighty Peace Watershed Alliance
Milk River Watershed Council
North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance
Oldman Watershed Council
Red Deer River Watershed Alliance
Trout Unlimited Canada

Water Supply Forecast

Current water forecast projections are for much wetter and cooler than average in the St. Mary River Basin this winter. Conditions were drier and cooler than average in the Milk River Basin during October, though recent snow and rain events have helped restore soil moisture even in the eastern reaches of the watershed. The November/December outlook is forecasted for a 40% chance of above average precipitation with average temperatures. Reservoir conditions are holding steady though below average for the Sherburne (25%) in the upper St Mary, and Fresno in the lower Milk River at nearly 150% of average for this time of year and 71% full.

TOTAL DISCHARGE FROM LAKE SHERBURNE

| Month | Maximum Probable (cfs) | Most Probable (cfs) | Minimum Probable (cfs) |
|----------|------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| Apr 2020 | 100 | 50 | 400 |
| May 2020 | 350 | 250 | 330 |
| Jun 2020 | 700 | 480 | 310 |
| Jul 2020 | 450 | 280 | 540 |
| Aug 2020 | 450 | 570 | 140 |
| Sep 2020 | 460 | 590 | 30 |
| Oct 2020 | 0 | 70 | 0 |

Update on actions from the International Joint Commission (IJC)

The IJC provides direction for the measurement and apportionment of water that crosses the international boundary in the St. Mary and Milk River basins, in accordance with the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 and the IJC Order of 1921. The Accredited Officers, appointed by the two governments, are responsible for the measurement and apportionment of waters of the St. Mary and Milk rivers in accordance with the IJC's 1921 order.

The Officers' had been tasked with developing a report summarizing options to address water challenges (both administrative and structural) for the St. Mary and Milk rivers, and was submitted to the IJC Commissioners in July. This report was reviewed, and then recently accepted by the IJC Commissioners at their semi-annual meeting. The commissioners requested that the accredited officers prepare a proposal for a budget request for further action. They indicated that their proposal would include technical work as well as some town hall type engagements. The officers should be making the report available soon, now that it has been accepted by the IJC.

There is a common understanding that any actions taken to address water security moving forward will need to result in a benefit to both Countries and jointly managed. Watch for additional updates and opportunities to participate in any town hall forums that maybe scheduled.



2019 Youth Range Days report

This year was the 12th annual Southern Alberta Youth Range Days (YRDs). YRDs is a program for youth to learn and be inspired to promote stewardship of southern Alberta’s native working agricultural range-lands. YRDs program is a celebration of our western heritage, connecting the next generation to the people, knowledge, and skills that will help them better understand our connection to the land, water, and biodiversity. Youth Range Days locations rotate across southern Alberta, allowing the camp to be situated in different eco-regions of the prairies, offering a slightly different agenda each year. In addition to the core program, additional agenda items focus on local topics or guest speakers selected to highlight current events or people/areas of interest in that location.

YRDs is about making lasting memories of summer days spent in nature with good friends having fun learning new skills. This year’s Youth Range Days took place at Grain Hall near Aden. The registration was full by mid-May! We are so glad that this program continues to be popular. We had insanely hot weather one day and windy the next to keep us on our toes. We were excited to start with showing the participants short horned lizard habitat and one of our organizers was lucky enough to find and safely handle a female lizard so the participants would all get a chance to see it. After our lizard search we cooled off with a tube down the Milk River at Writing on Stone Provincial Park. After dinner, the participants were introduced to Plant ID. Some of our returners have gotten the hang of this and now are almost

teaching it themselves! Our second day was our long day where we took the participants out to the Writing on Stone Pasture for their plant ID quiz. We then continued onto an area where the participants got to learn about fossils, yucca and experience a taste of the Milk River Canyon. We returned to the hall to give the participants time to work on their Ranch Plans and to learn about soils. For an afternoon cool-off we set up a slip and slide out of silage plastic! The kids had a blast. We were able to host some of the sponsors for dinner and were impressed that a handful of participants volunteered to talk about their experience coming to YRDs.

The final day was spent at the King’s property learning about riparian areas and finishing up Ranch Plans and workbooks. After all this hard work, we as organizers always feel rewarded by seeing how much the participant’s sponge up. Our awards this year went to two kids who are so local they really didn’t need to camp at the hall. Our Top Hand award goes to the participant who doesn’t only do really well in their work book and ranch plan but also shows leadership and respect. This year we were happy to award Marly King who has been coming for years and has put in so much hard work. Our Green Hand award winner is chosen based off the work done by a first year attendee. This year we were happy to award Brahmer Gaehring.

We couldn’t pull this event off without our dedicated organizing committee and our sponsors. Without this support it would be impossible to provide this opportunity for the youth of Southern Alberta.


2019 MRWCC Summer Student ROBIN STELTEN

Working for the Milk River Watershed Council Canada this summer has allowed me to gain a depth of knowledge and understanding of this unique area that I would have otherwise not attained. I was able to experience water sampling for the first time outside of a classroom setting, perform riparian health assessments, and attend Youth Range Days for the first time, which allowed me to share the knowledge I gained! On top of all of this I was able to further engage with the material I learned through developing programs which I shared with visitors at Writing-On-Stone Provincial Park. Thus, this job has allowed me to better educate myself, along with others who are interested in learning more about the Milk River Watershed. Although the job was short term, it has been an incredible opportunity for me to understand what working in the field of Environmental Science is all about. Not only has this job made me realize my desire to treat our planet better but also to reach out and educate



as many other people as I can. This job has allowed me to see the importance of continuing to learn about the environment, ways to lessen human impact, and how to share that with the public.

This is the first summer I was able to put my college education to the test and I am so lucky that I got to do it in the town I grew up in. The knowledge I have gained in the past couple months is not only fascinating to myself, but invaluable as well. Working with the Milk River Watershed has allowed me to see local farmers implement new management practices on their farms with the help of the Milk River Watershed Council. Even though I have studied environmental science for the past couple of years, this experience has had a huge impact on my education. I learned real ways that farmers and ranchers are changing their ways to help the environment and that is so inspiring to see and be a part of. Educating people is something I would love to continue to do, especially when it comes to the environment.



Promoting Educational Programs

The new school year is well under way! Kandra continues doing school activities and will hopefully be getting out and presenting on “Wonderful Wetlands” as that is the theme for this year’s poster contest. Just a reminder that curriculum related programming is offered year round. Kandra is always excited to get out of the office and into the classroom. Until the weather gets warm again this means doing in class presentations on the watershed, habitats, species at risk, Caring for Our Watershed and point and non-point pollution (ask Kandra about the fun hands on activities for this one!). Once spring hits it is the perfect time to do a wetland or river study field trip. Please contact Kandra if you are interested in any of these programs or presentations.

FALL HIKE

tour report

Our Hike Tours are designed to get people out in some of the beautiful and often little known corners of our watershed. This year our friends at Writing on Stone Provincial Park suggested we take the opportunity to check out one of their little known areas, Haffner Coulee. Despite the horrible misleading weather forecast, we had a wonderful hike with great weather! It was a bit chilly compared to the days beforehand but still quite manageable with layers. Participants were in awe of the landscape and the almost frequent pop up of deer. We were fortunate to have a variety of knowledge shared with us from park staff, Aaron Domes and Megan Berry as well as MRWCC board members Ron McNeil and William King. It seemed like there was something exciting to discover around every corner! We had our lunch under some interesting rock art and continued our way down the coulee where we saw more interesting rock formations and found ourselves a very cold rattlesnake. It just wanted to hunker down and stay warm on the sandstone and had no interest in bothering us. We continued on our way along the Milk River and over to Poverty Rock. This was a great treat for those who have never paddled the Milk River to access it. Thank you to everyone who came out and spent this day exploring with us.



Please Save the Date!

4th Annual Community Appreciation Forum

March 19, 2020 • Milk River Civic Centre

2 pm - Registration • Meeting starts at 2:30 pm

The Milk River Watershed Council Canada is pleased to present the 4th Annual Community Appreciation Forum!

The Forum is an opportunity to celebrate the unique aspects of the Milk River Watershed and growing community involvement in managing the areas that are important to all of us.

We will share success stories of local stewards within the watershed and more! Community awards, Raffles, and Silent auction!

All watershed community members and stakeholders are invited to attend. Dinner will be served after the meeting.

Contact information: mary@mrwcc.ca or 403-647-3808.

An agenda will be sent later.

Milk River Watershed Council Canada
15th Annual General Meeting

May 14, 2020 • Milk River Town Office Council Chambers

Please Save the Date!

The meeting will start at 10:00 am

Call for Nominations!

The following Board of Directors seats are open for nominations:
Non-Government Organization - x2 (Environmental and General)

- Agriculture – Farmer • Agriculture – Rancher • Water Users
- Municipal District/County x2 • Provincial Government x2 (one must be Alberta Environment and Parks)
- Health • First Nations (Currently vacant)

For membership information, please visit our website at: www.mrwcc.ca
Nominations will be taken from the floor on May 14, 2020 or received in advance by contacting Tim:

Phone: 403-647-4342 • Email: tim@mrwcc.ca

Members are entitled to vote at the AGM.

For more information contact: mary@mrwcc.ca or 403-647-3808



POSTER
CONTEST



This years' theme is "Wonderful Wetlands". Though wetlands may not be as common in our dry region, the few we have are very important. Kandra will be doing school presentations to introduce the topic and do a fun activity with the students. Students who place will receive their prize at our Community Appreciation Forum in March.

MILK RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL CANADA
2020 POSTER CONTEST

Contest Rules:

Illustrate with artwork, using pencil, water-colors, crayon, pastels, acrylics
Please use 11 x 17 or 18 x 24 sized paper or poster board.

Please use your original artwork, no photos or computer generated pictures.
First, second and third place prizes will be awarded for the following Grades:

♦ Grades: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8

Theme:

"Wonderful Wetlands"

The Contest:

We would like you to draw a picture that illustrates the why wetlands are so important.

Please draw the artwork, using pencil, water-colors, crayon, pastels, and acrylics.

Winners will be awarded prizes at the Community Appreciation Forum in March 2020.

Drop entries off at your school office by February 12th, 2020

Thank you for participating!

For more information contact 403-647-4306 or email kandra@mrwcc.ca.
Interested teachers can book an in-class presentation on the topic for December and January.

Please include this slip of paper with your entry (Please print)

Name _____
Age _____
Grade _____
Teacher _____
School _____

Our Water - Our Legacy



7th Native Prairie Restoration/
Reclamation
and
5th Transboundary Grasslands
Workshops

February 25-27, 2020

Regina, SK

The Big Picture:
Planning and Partnerships

Keynote Speakers • Concurrent Sessions • Tradeshow
• Poster Session • Case Studies



Saskatchewan
Prairie Conservation
Action Plan

More information: Carolyn Gaudet, SK PCAP

306.352.0472 | pcap@sasktel.net | www.pcap-sk.org



Milk River Watershed Council Canada
2020 Heritage Tree Program

What is the Heritage Tree Program?

- The Heritage Tree Program identifies and records the location of heritage trees as well as details such as age, size, appearance and most importantly their cultural and historical significance. The stories and photos of recognized trees will then be featured on the MRWCC website.
- In addition, the identification of these trees enables the MRWCC and community-minded organizations to locate potential native seed/cuttings sources. Collecting these seeds will ensure the successional planting of legacy trees for future generations to enjoy.
- Identified trees will also be provided with a wildlife/livestock proof fence and recognition plaque.
- Planting new protected legacy trees will also be encouraged under the Heritage Tree Program.

What is a Heritage Tree?

- Notable because of its size, form, shape, beauty, age, rarity, significance, or other distinctive features;
- A living relic that displays evidence of significance;

Nominate a tree or trees for Heritage Tree recognition, whether it is located on your own property, a friend or family member's property, or in a public space (we will verify with the owner). To nominate or for more information please contact us at:

mary@mrwcc.ca • (403) 647-3808

240 Main Street, Box 313, Milk River, Alberta, T0K 1M0

www.mrwcc.ca

Nomination Deadline is February 7, 2020

Our Water - Our Legacy

- A prominent community landmark;
- A specimen associated with a historic person, place, event, or period;
- A representative of a farm or farmstead planted by ancestors within the community;
- A tree associated with local folklore, myths, legends, or First Nations traditions;
- A tree that you choose to plant in honour of a loved one that you will care for and watch grow over the years.

Objectives of the Heritage Tree Program

The Heritage Tree Program allows 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.



Executive Director's Report

The Milk River Watershed Council Canada has a diverse board of representatives from farming, ranching, irrigated water use, water co-op, urban/rural municipalities, NGO and ENG, as well as Provincial and Federal representatives. Our diversity is strength! The council does not always agree on every matter or course of action with our work, but through thoughtful and informed dialogue we can achieve balance among a thriving community, a healthy environment and a prosperous economy in the Milk River Watershed.

Lately, two issues in particular have challenged myself to evaluate how we interact and operate under the direction as a watershed planning and advisory council. Our world is changing, and hypersensitivities are both good in understanding others world view and dangerous in a sound-bite induced divisive nature. This is most visible in current politics, both Federal and Provincial, and with regards to social media, where 140 characters or often less can recirculate pseudoscience, or even sucker your Facebook 'friends' to buy into a direct marketing pyramid scheme!

The work our watershed council embarks on does not play to left or right narratives, and our interactions with both community members and in a social media world base actions in sound science. We have a well-respected track record of effective partnerships and sound science to navigate difficult issues and find common sense outcomes that achieve that goal. This winter the council will be reviewing our current strategic plan and conducting an implementation review for our Watershed Management Plan to ensure we are still on track with our targets and priorities set within our community.

Thank you to the staff and membership of the council for making all projects and events a success this past year. Please watch for future opportunities to help direct the future of management within our watershed, and feel free to stop by the office in Milk River anytime to have a chat and learn more about the projects and work of the MRWCC.


CONTACT US

Office Location:
We are located in the Milk River Town Office at 240 Main Street.


Address:
Box 313, Milk River, Alberta. T0K 1M0

Office Hours:
Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays 8am to 4pm
To reach us on Mondays and Fridays please contact us
We are closed weekends and holidays


Staff Directory:



Executive Director:
Tim Romanow
Phone: 403-647-4342
Email: tim@mrwcc.ca



Program Coordinator:
Mary Lupwayi
Phone: 403-647-3808
Email: mary@mrwcc.ca



Education Outreach Coordinator:
Kandra Forbes
Phone: 403-647-4306
Email: kandra@mrwcc.ca



Milk River Watershed Council Canada

2020 ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AWARDS

Nomination submissions should include this application form and written information about the nominee's environmental work/projects for consideration.

For detailed information, check out the Environmental Awards webpage at www.mrwcc.ca

Forward nomination form and written submission by mail or email at:

MRWCC
240 Main Street
Box 313
Milk River, Alberta
ToK 1M0

or

Email: mary@mrwcc.ca

NOMINATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY February 7, 2020

I would like to Nominate:

(Please Print)

Please mark an (x) for the chosen category

Individual _____

Family _____

Commercial Business _____

Environmental Group _____

Contact: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Phone (H): _____

Phone (C): _____

Email: _____

Please provide the following information. (Please print)

Nominator Name: _____

Nominator's Contact: _____

Phone (H): _____

Phone (C): _____

Email: _____

SELECTION PROCESS AND CRITERIA

Nominations will be assessed by a review committee chosen by the MRWCC Board of Directors.

To be eligible for an award, an individual, family, business, or environmental group must have been instrumental in demonstrating responsible environmental management practices by promoting public awareness, understanding and active concern for the enhancement and protection of the environment.

In addition, the review committee will also consider the nominees':

- long-term service and commitment;
- voluntary contributions; and;
- innovative approach.

SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENT

Describe in 400 words or less why your nominee deserves to win the MRWCC Environmental Stewardship Award. Ensure that your summary outlines how the nominee's efforts and achievements fulfil the award criteria as defined in this brochure. You are encouraged to include letters of endorsement and other supporting materials.



NOMINATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY February 7, 2020

The Milk River Watershed Council Canada (MRWCC) is looking for nominations to honour individuals, families, commercial businesses, and environmental groups that are good environmental stewards of the Milk River watershed. Nominations are in the following categories:

Individual • Family • Commercial Business • Environmental Group

Nominate anyone in the above categories that has demonstrated outstanding environmental and conservation efforts to sustain, protect, and enhance the environment within the Milk River Watershed. Self-nominations are welcome.

Milk River Watershed Council Canada
240 Main Street, Box 313 Milk River, Alberta T0K 1M0 or mary@mrwcc.ca (403) 647-3808