

# 13th Milk River Watershed Council Canada Annual General Meeting Report

The 13th MRWCC Annual General Meeting was held on May 24, 2018 in Milk River Town Council Chambers. John Ross, the MRWCC Chairman started the business meeting by welcoming and thanking everyone for their attendance. He went on to talk about the importance of water in the area and the impact of the diversion infrastructure issues that Montana is facing and the effect this has on Alberta. In an effort to resolve this problem, John met with the Minister of AEP, Hon. Shannon Philips who unfortunately, advised that Alberta is not in a position to fund a U.S. project despite it helping Alberta producers and wildlife in the watershed.

Dan Bosters, Senior Manager, KPMG Enterprise presented the MRWCC Financial Statements for year ending March 31, 2018. He concluded that based on their review, nothing has come to their attention that causes them to believe that the financial statements do not present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Milk River Watershed Council Canada as at March 31, 2018, and its results of operations, changes in net assets and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations.

Ken Brown led the election process and the following members were elected Board members for 2018 to 2020:

- Ed Sloboda - Non-Government Organization - General
- Ron McNeil - Non-Government Organization - Environmental
- Ken Miller - Agriculture – Farmer
- John Ross - Agriculture – Rancher
- William Lindeman - Water User
- Ross Ford - Municipal District/County
- Joan Hughson - Municipal District/County
- Brian Hills - Provincial Government
- Dennis Spackman - Provincial Government
- Kristen Dykstra - Health
- First Nations – Vacant. This seat will remain open until filled.

Check out the Board of Directors' Corner for more information about the elected Board members.

Tim Romanow, Executive Director of the MRWCC gave a brief activity report of the Council.

He thanked the Board for their support and stated that as a transboundary watershed, the



2018 AGM by Kandra Forbes

MRWCC continues to work and engage with partners in Montana and Saskatchewan. He went on to present the 2017/18 program highlights:

- WPACs' role as conveners and collaborators
  - Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) has changed how Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils (WPACs) in Alberta are recognized, with an emphasis on what we do well: As conveners and collaborators within our communities, educators, and condition monitors. This is a move away from the traditional role of state of the watershed reporting and developers of watershed management plans.
- Highlighted the Transboundary River Rendezvous tour in conjunction with Milk River Watershed Alliance in Montana to showcase work done across Montana and Alberta
- Facilitated Water Users meetings between the community and Alberta Environment and Parks to improve lines of communication which resulted in the formation of the Milk River Water Users Association
- Monitoring and Reporting Programs:
  - Worked on habitat enhancement work
  - Conducted water quality monitoring
    - Thanks to municipal partners and Alberta Environment and Parks for their support and involvement
  - Conducted invasive mussel monitoring in conjunction with AEP staff. No mussels were found, though we need to continue diligence with detections in Montana.

- Research work
  - Completed the overwintering fish habitat and stewardship projects aimed to understand winter habitat availability, the species that are using the winter habitat, winter habitat conditions and to identify critical winter habitat within the Milk River
    - Thanks to community members who helped identify sites of fish pools and the Government of Canada for funding the project
- Planning and Policy
  - Implementation of the Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program (WRRP) phase 1 projects:
    - 13 watering systems installed within the watershed
    - Over 40 km of riparian corridor fencing constructed on several operations adjacent to the Milk River and Red Creek
    - Riparian restoration planting projects on selected erosion prone areas along the Milk River and Red Creek
- Transboundary Grassland Workshop in Glasgow, Montana to promote transboundary partnerships and communication and create an achievable work plan with clear direction
- Education and Literacy
  - Held successful Youth Range Days program
  - Presented the first MRWCC Science Forum for the community
  - Youth Engagement programs which

- reached 370 students this year alone
  - Community Involvement
    - Worked in collaboration with the local Museum
    - Involvement in Bonanza Days
    - Eastern Watershed bus tour
    - Hike tours
    - Canoe tour
      - Thanks to John Ross and Ken Brown for their help to ensure the tour went smoothly
  - Strategic Management Planning
    - Held a 2-day Strategic Management Planning session, summing up the priorities as water, water, and water
      - Secure water supply
      - Source water protection
      - Conservation species diversity and continue to work with partners
    - Still waiting for funding approval with Alberta Environment and Parks to complete proposed projects such as:
    - Compiling a summary of existing water investigations,
    - Whiskey Valley Aquifer Source Water Protection, and
    - Research and Science Notes
- Amendments to the bylaws were presented for ratification.
- The past fiscal year, council had accrued over \$213,000 of in-kind support. We wish to thank Board members and other volunteers for their invaluable support.



## St. Mary and Milk Rivers International Apportionment Update, 2018 Season

By Alberta Environment and Parks

As many MRWCC members are likely aware, the St. Mary and Milk Rivers are apportioned by the International Joint Commission (IJC), who calculate the apportioned shares of the waters of the two rivers according to the Boundary Waters Treaty, and 1921 Order. The 1921 Order specifies the shares for each country, and a Letter of Intent (LOI) between the two countries allows specific time periods where deficits in delivery of water are allowed to occur. The U.S. is allowed to be in deficit early in the season on the St. Mary River, and Canada is allowed to incur an off-setting deficit on the Milk River later in the season.

The first conference call regarding the LOI was held on Friday May 4th. These calls involve several provincial, state, and federal agencies—USBR, USGS, Water Survey of Canada, Alberta, Montana, and Saskatchewan. IJC accounting of river flows and respective shares shows no deficits on either the Milk or St. Mary rivers to the end of April. The current forecast is that there will not be a U.S. deficit to Canada on the St. Mary River by the May 31st deadline specified in the LOI. This is due to a number of factors: primarily high flows on the St.

Mary River and secondarily, high flows in the lower Milk River basin and high water levels in Fresno Reservoir. These factors contribute to a lack of both capacity and need in the U.S. system to incur an LOI deficit.

When the U.S. is not in deficit on the apportionment accounting early in the season, no St. Mary River water is owed to Canada. Later in the season, based on our experience in 2015 and 2017, the U.S. is unlikely to be able to take more than their share of St. Mary flows. A good portion of the water diverted to the St. Mary canal is water that was stored in Lake Sherburne in the spring, and already accounted for in the apportionment at that time. As inflows to Lake Sherburne (from Swiftcurrent Creek) recede, there is also limited opportunity for additional water storage to occur. This means that, in 2018, Alberta Milk River irrigators will have to irrigate from the natural flow of the Milk River.

Staff in Alberta and Montana is currently finalizing the joint recommendations report under the Montana-Alberta St. Mary and Milk Rivers Water Management Initiative (the Initiative). The purpose of the Initiative is to explore and evaluate options for improving both Montana's and Alberta's access to the shared water of the St. Mary and

Milk Rivers, and to make joint recommendations on preferred options to both governments for their consideration and approval. The Initiative explored creative options, such as U.S. credit for surpluses, which could present additional flexibility in making water available to Milk River users.

Milk River natural flows modelled for the Initiative at Eastern Crossing (for the 1959-2003 period) averaged 0.68 cubic metres per second (cms). However, the average flow over July and August are much lower in dry summers, such as 1985 (0.19 cms) and 2001 (0.12 cms). The 25 percent Canadian share of 0.12 cms over July and August is 145 dam3 or 118 acre-feet. In 2017, the natural flow was zero for the entirety of July and August, for the first time in the historical record.

Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) continues to support the technical staff of the IJC in the improvement of the international natural flow models and communications material. In addition, some work is beginning on simple forecasting tools. AEP will also work with the Milk River Watershed Council Canada to translate and communicate the technical information quickly to stakeholders.



# Attention Milk River Watershed Residents and Agricultural Producers!

## More Funding Available for Phase 2 Stewardship Project Implementation!

The MRWCC is currently accepting applications from residents and agricultural producers located along the sand-bed reach and select tributaries across the entire watershed. (See map provided below). Projects need to demonstrate a direct benefit to maintain or improve the health and resiliency to flood or drought along the Milk River. Project applications are reviewed by a producer panel and awarded based on merit of the project and priority. All projects need to be maintained for a minimum of three years to the standards outlined in your application. If changes are to be made beyond the existing agreement, they need to be approved by the MRWCC. This grant is funded through Alberta Environment and Parks, Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program (WRRP) to initiate riparian restoration and stewardship programs. This

is a three-year funding, from April 2017 to March 2020 and will provide financial incentive to landowners along the Milk River by implementing projects that improve the riparian health of the basin and build resiliency to both flood and drought impact within the watershed. Please apply early as this funding is available on a first come first serve basis.

**Project Type and Funding Availability:**

- Wetland enhancements:
  - 10 Watering systems / Alternative water developments:
    - One per individual operation at \$10,000/each (maximum grant)
  - Riparian Corridor / Exclusion fencing:
    - 9 sites at \$5,000/site (maximum grant)
  - Riparian plantings
    - 5 sites at \$2,000/site (maximum grant)

- Wintering site management projects:
  - Portable windbreaks /calf shelters/winter watering system
    - 5 sites at \$4,000/site (maximum grant)

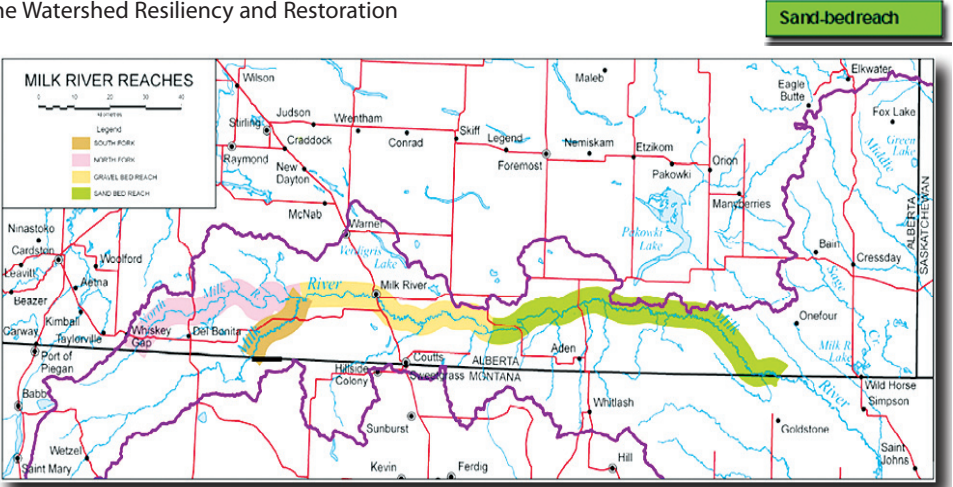
Please note that this is a cost-share funding opportunity where the MRWCC will be responsible for material procurement and landowner will be responsible for construction and all in-kind costs. All projects to be completed by March 2020

Please visit our website at [www.mrwcc.ca](http://www.mrwcc.ca) for a complete funding guideline and application form or call Tim at 403-647-4342 if you have questions.

This year we completed the first phase of the Watershed Resiliency and Restoration

Program for residents and agricultural producers located along the North Fork Milk River (Reach1), the Milk River gravel-bed reach (Reach3), and the Red Creek tributaries. We are please to inform the public that this funding enabled installation of 13 solar watering systems, completed over 40 km of riparian corridor fencing, and various riparian restoration planting projects.

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



## CELEBRATING OUR SUCCESS

### The MRWCC 2nd Annual Community Appreciation Forum!

The forum was held on March 27th at the Milk River Civic Center. This denotes the second year the Council has presented the event and each year it gets better! The Community Appreciation Forum presents an opportunity to celebrate the unique aspects of the Milk River watershed and acknowledge growing community involvement in managing areas that are important. During the event, participants had an opportunity to hear success stories of local stewards within the watershed and witness award presentations of community members who were recognized for their outstanding conservation efforts to sustain, protect, and enhance the environment within the Milk River watershed.

We are pleased to announce that during this event we were able to raise funds through raffles and a silent auction. Thanks to all sponsors, over \$6,000 was raised. The MRWCC is a not-for-profit, charitable organization. These donations are essential to leverage the important work that the Council does to support watershed planning, monitoring, and stewardship within the community. (Please see list of sponsors at

the bottom).

Thanks to over 150 participants who attended, including students from local schools. A big thank you to the following speakers who took time from their busy schedules to inform the participants on these various topics of interest:

- David Samm, Executive Director, Battle River Watershed Alliance: A Central Alberta Approach to Watershed Management and Community Vitality,
- Megan Berry, Archaeologist, Writing-On-Stone-Provincial-Park: Understanding and Managing the Cultural Landscape of Writing on Stone,
- Holden Hepler, Student, Warner School: Devil's Coulee Dinosaur & Heritage Museum Program,



- Laura Wills and James Wills: Snakes of the Milk River watershed,
- Courtney Taylor, Youth Range Days 2017 Top Hand Winner, and
- Pete Coppolillo, Working Dogs for Conservation, Montana: Conservation Detection Dogs, working to protect wildlife and wild places

### Funding Acknowledgement

The Milk River Watershed Council Canada wishes to thank all those who have made donations that have allowed us to accomplish community driven watershed stewardship initiatives. Individual and corporate donations go a long way in leveraging project funding from other sponsors. Without your support much of this accomplishment would not be possible. The MRWCC is committed to ensuring that your gift is used efficiently in supporting watershed planning, monitoring, and stewardship within the community.

If you would like to donate to MRWCC, please visit our website at [www.mrwcc.ca](http://www.mrwcc.ca) or contact us.

The following is a list of the MRWCC donors in 2017/18 fiscal year:

Government of Alberta has been the main funder since the Council's inception in 2006.



Platinum Level Sponsor (\$500.00 and over)	Gold Level Sponsor (Over \$100.00 to less than \$500.00)	Bronze Level Sponsor (Less than \$100.00 or Silent Auction Item)
<div>John and Kathy Ross Milk River Cattle Company</div> <div>GRANITE OIL CORP.</div> <div> </div> <div>JaCar Energy</div> <div>Desert Ranches</div>	<div> </div> <div> </div> <div> </div>	<div> </div> <div> </div>
Robin Ross Ann Tollestrup Professional Corp Judy O'Shea Mary Lupwayi Southern Alberta Outdoorsmen	Ken and Nora Balog Linda Cerney Wendy Sloboda Palliser Environmental Services Ltd. William King	Barry and Barb Snow Laura Balog Catering Services Tim Romanow Darcy and Robbie Wills Milk River Home Hardware Triwell Oilfield Construction
Milk River Rocky Mountain Equipment (Case) Kristen Dykstra Verna Taylor Ed Sloboda Mane Street Hair Styles	Riverside Market (AG Foods) Alberta Beef Producers Elise Walker Ken Brown Warren and June Cunningham Kyle Horvath	



Environmental Stewardship Award

The 2018 Environmental Stewardship Award recipient is Ken & Wendy Brown of the Milk River Raft Tours for being an important part of the Milk River Watershed experience for those visiting the Milk River and area. Not only have they provided a wonderful experience for those who may not have otherwise been able to experience floating on the Milk River, but in the process, they have been an important steward for the area. Ken and Wendy Brown and their family are a living example of community members who are passionate about where they live and wish to share their love of the place with others. Milk River Raft Tours allows people of all ages to experience the magic of the mystical Milk River, while also learning the importance of protecting it for future generations. As the award recipient, the Milk River Raft Tours received a sign below.

### Milk River Watershed Council Canada

#### ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AWARD RECIPIENT 2018




Ken & Wendy Brown  
Milk River Raft Tours

"In recognition of outstanding conservation efforts to sustain, protect, and enhance the environment within the Milk River Watershed."

Heritage Tree Award

The 2018 Heritage tree status was awarded to "Jesse Tree", a black cottonwood tree named after Jesse J. Audet, who transplanted this tree from the ranch riverbank when it was only 12 inches tall. Jesse spent hours nurturing and watering it to make sure the tree had a chance to grow in the semi-arid, harsh environment of Milk River. He did so, because he knows how precious a tree is on the Prairies. Though only a single black cottonwood tree on the edge of the Milk River, this new 4th generation planted tree represents the interplay between generations as the roots of family and place struggle to take hold and strive to create strong branches. Jesse received a sign shown below that depicts "Jesse Tree".

For more information on how to nominate a candidate for the 2019 Environmental Stewardship Award or 2019 Heritage Tree, please visit our website at [www.mrwcc.ca](http://www.mrwcc.ca) or simply call or email us.



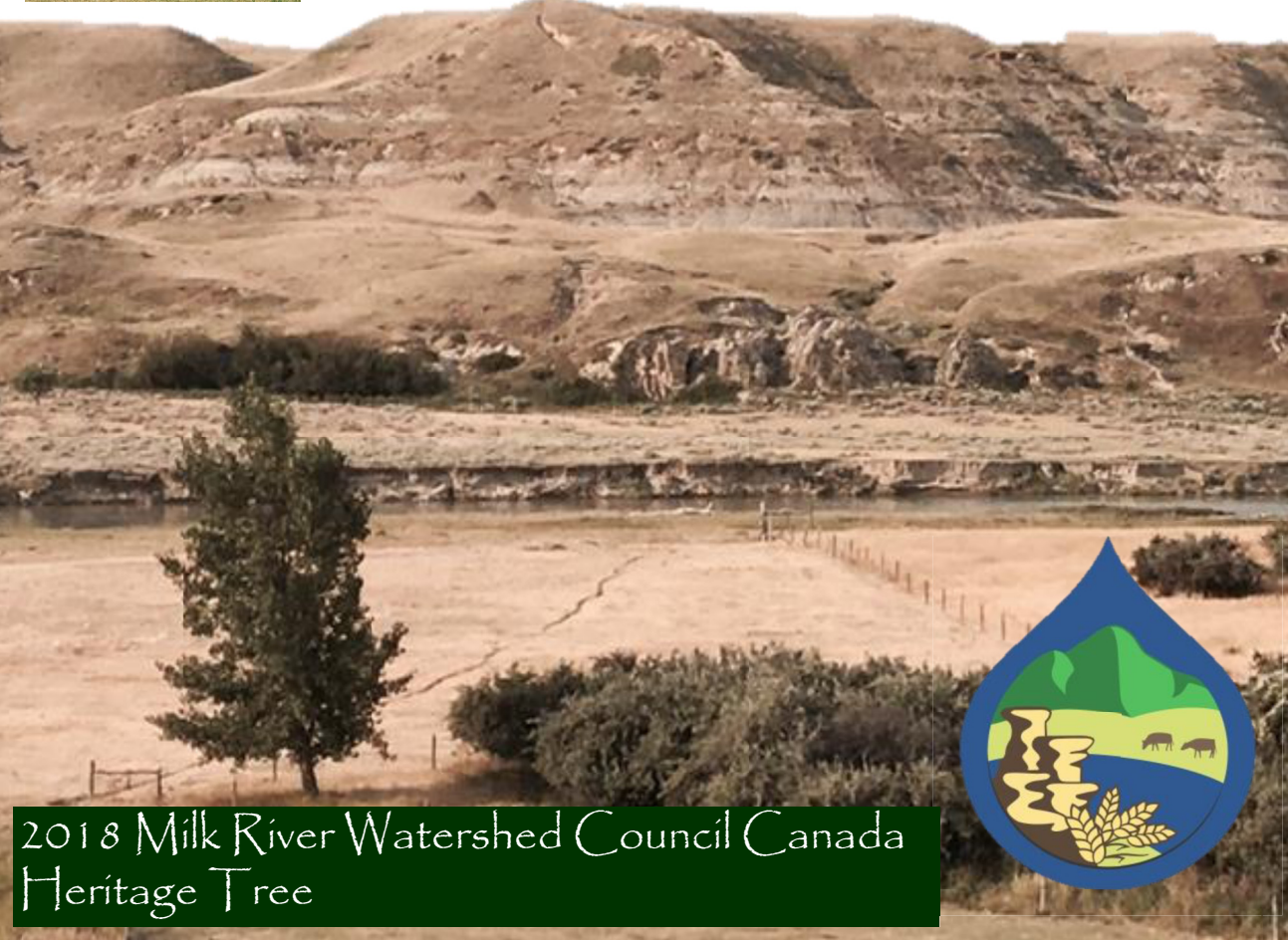
### Jesse Tree ~ Black Cottonwood Tree

*"Though all of our children's branches arch toward the sun and spaces of unknown places, well beyond our sight, their roots are stuck in the muddy sands of our Milk River valley.*

Though only a single Black Cottonwood tree on the edge of the Milk River, this new 4th generation planted tree represents the interplay between generations as the roots of family and place struggle to take hold and strive to create strong branches.

This tree was transplanted from the ranch riverbank when it was 12 inches tall. It is named after *Jesse J. Audet*, who spent hours nurturing and watering it to make sure the tree had a chance to grow in the semi-arid, harsh environment of Milk River.

He did so, because he knows how precious a tree is on the Prairies!"



### 2018 Milk River Watershed Council Canada Heritage Tree

# Announcing the MRWCC 2018 AWARD WINNERS!



Poster Contest Awards

The Milk River Watershed Poster contest was a success again this year. The theme was "Who makes their home in the watershed". This was chosen to highlight the biodiversity and species at risk that live in our watershed.

We had 75 students submit posters. The winners were given their prizes at our Community Appreciation Forum on March 27th. Thank you to ATB Financial and Alberta Emerald Foundation for your support! Congratulations to the youth who won prizes for their fantastic art work and thank you to the teachers who took the time to help inspire our young artists!



Top: Students receiving prizes - 2018 Community Meeting  
Below: Some of the 2018 winning posters



# Board of Directors' Corner

**2018 MRWCC Board Members (from left to right)**  
Scott McGarty, Ross Ford, Will Lindeman, Jim Willett, Suzanne Liebelt, Kristen Dykstra, Lorraine Nicol, William King, Joan Hughson, Brian Hills, John Ross, Ken Miller, Warren Cunningham, Ed Sloboda, and Ben Ellert  
**Missing from the photo:**  
Ron McNeil, Roy Audet, Darcy Wills, and Dennis Spackman



## Meet the 2018 Elected MRWCC Board of Directors

**EXECUTIVE BOARD OF DIRECTORS:**

**Chairman: John Ross (Agriculture – Rancher)**  
John was raised on the family ranch east of Milk River and is a 4th generation cattle rancher. He earned his pilot's license in 1978 and is also an advanced scuba diver. John attended SAIT and received a diploma in Architectural Technology. He returned home and has ranched full-time ever since and has been involved in many local initiatives including being the Deputy Chief of the Aden Volunteer Fire Department. He is also active as Director of EQUS Rural Electrification Association which is the largest member owned utility company in Canada. John was a member of the interim Steering Committee for the Milk River Watershed Council Canada and has been a member of the MRWCC Board of Directors since its inception in 2006 and currently serving as the Chairman.

**Vice Chairman: Ken Miller (Agriculture – Farmer)**  
Ken was born and raised near Milk River and is a 3rd generation farmer. Ken attended school in Milk River and completed his degree at the University of Alberta. He is actively involved in the National Board for the Canadian Seed Trade Association, in various school organizations, and is a member of the Recovery Team for Species at Risk. Ken was a member of the Local Advisory Board for storage on the Milk River. He is an active participant on the Montana-Alberta Water Management Initiative. Ken has been a MRWCC board member since its inception in 2006 and has served as a Vice Chairman on the Executive. He is the Chairman of the Water Supply and Management Team and was also the Chairman on the Integrated Watershed Planning Team which was finalized in 2015.

**Treasurer: Dr. Will Lindeman: (Water User)**  
Dr. Lindeman was raised on a farm southwest of Milk River. He has a bachelor's degree in Agriculture and a Doctorate degree in veterinary medicine. He married LaRae and set up his practice west of Milk River. Will and his wife LaRae have three daughters. He retired from his practice several years ago and continues to ranch southwest of Milk River. Will is a member of the Milk River West Water Co-op. In his spare time, Will likes to spend time canoeing on the Milk River and on other rivers in southern Alberta and elsewhere. Will has been a member of the MRWCC Board of Directors since 2010 and currently serves on the Executive committee as the Treasurer. He is also the Chairman on the Research and Monitoring Team.

**Secretary: Warren Cunningham: (Appointed Member at Large (Special Assignment))**  
Warren was born in High River and grew up in Calgary and Sherwood Park. He has a diploma in Soil and Water Technology and an A Bachelor's degree in Agriculture (Soils and Plant Pathology major). Warren has been actively involved in the 4-H program for over 20 years. He was also a member of the Southern Alberta Outdoorsman Association as an environmental and promotional chairperson. Warren also served as a Councilor for the County of Warner. Warren has spent the last 30 plus years ranching and grass seed farming along the Milk River. He has been a MRWCC board member since its inception in 2006 and currently serving as the Secretary on the Executive.

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS:**

**Brian Hills - Provincial Government (Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development)**  
Brian was born in Regina, Saskatchewan, but has lived in Alberta since the age of 6 and has lived in Lethbridge since 1991. Brian has a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science from the University of Lethbridge and a Diploma in Environmental Science from Lethbridge College. Currently he is a Resource Manager for the Southern Saskatchewan Region of Alberta

Environment and Parks. Brian has been involved with the MRWCC through participation on the State of the Watershed team, the pilot Milk River Water Use Metering project and supervises staff who are members of the Research and Monitoring team.

**Dennis Spackman - Provincial Government**  
Dennis grew up in a farming and ranching family east of Stirling. His family moved to Lethbridge where he continued his schooling. Dennis attended Lethbridge College and completed three diploma programs in General Natural Resource Management, Parks Management and Watershed Management. He attended the University of Lethbridge and obtained a Bachelor of Arts and Sciences in Physical Geography and Biology. Dennis has many years' experience around drinking water systems operated in Parks and he is certified by Alberta Environment for the operation of water treatment plants and water distribution systems. He has been employed by Alberta Parks as a Conservation Officer since 1982. Most of his career was spent working in the Boreal Forest Ecoregion in the Fort McMurray area. He also worked in the Pincher Creek area for about two years before transferring to Writing On Stone Provincial Park in February of 2013. A couple of notable achievements include involvement with the designation of the Clearwater River as a Canadian Heritage River and many years up north as a volunteer firefighter. His hobbies include travel, hiking, camping, reading and photography.

**Joan Hughson - County/Municipal District (County of Forty Mile)**  
Joan was born and raised just outside of Calgary on a farm. She moved south of Foremost in 1964 when she was married to Darrell Hughson. She still farms and ranches with her two sons and their families. She has been an active Councilor with the County of Forty Mile since October 2008. Joan has been a member on the MRWCC board of Directors since 2009.

**Kristen Dykstra – Health**  
Kristen was born in North Battleford, Saskatchewan, and was raised in a small village in the surrounding rural area. After attending the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon and obtaining a Bachelor of Science in Microbiology, she moved to Edmonton where she attended Concordia University and obtained an After-Degree in Environmental Public Health. Kristen worked in Medicine Hat as a Public Health Inspector for Alberta Health Services for over 6 years and has lived in Lethbridge since 2013. She is the covering Public Health Inspector for the County of Warner, as well as Magrath and Del Bonita. She is a member of the Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors. In her spare time, Kristen enjoys outdoor activities such as running, hiking, and kayaking. She views participation in the Milk River Watershed Council as being an excellent opportunity to learn more about the geography of the area and meet members of the communities.

**Ed Sloboda - NGO (General)**  
Ed Sloboda has spent his entire life within 9 miles of the Milk River and has always been interested in archaeology. Ed has worked with the Royal Tyrrell Museum since 1987 on various projects in Milk River from the west end just inside the U.S. side to the east end to where the river runs into the U.S. Ed was also the environmental representative on the Twin River Special Places 2000. He has been a MRWCC board member since 2010. Ed is currently the chairman of the Community Awareness and Involvement Team.

**Ron McNeil - NGO (Environmental)**  
Ron is a soil and land resource scientist and president of LandWise Inc., located in Lethbridge. Ron's formal education was Land Resources at Olds College and Physical Geography at the University of British Columbia. Ron

mainly specializes in natural resource inventories, ecological land classification, soil survey and interpretative products from inventories. Ron has lived and worked in the Counties of Warner, Forty Mile, and Cypress. Ron was instrumental in developing the link of soils and ecological range sites to native plant communities, which has been valuable for habitat management and species at risk. Ron was an external scientific advisor for the Grassland Vegetation Inventory (GVI). He has developed and provided many environmental training programs, including GVI certification, the use of resource inventory products, field tours, reclamation assessments, and prairie restoration. Ron also helped develop the 2010 reclamation criteria for native grasslands and cultivated lands in Alberta.

Ron is Past Chair of the Prairie Conservation Forum and both trans-boundary and prairie connectivity issues are his main interests. Ron also farms 1000 acres of black soils near Benalto, located west of Red Deer.

**Ross Ford - Rural Municipality (County of Warner)**  
Ross grew up on his family's farm east of Coutts along the Alberta/Montana border. He received his primary education in Coutts & Milk River, received a diploma in Vocational Agriculture from Lethbridge College, and has taken several courses in leadership & management. He worked for several years in the Ag service industry as a licensed Heavy Duty & Motor mechanic, and in 1989 began farming full time by purchasing some land and taking over the family farm with his brother. He first became involved with board governance through Agricultural Co-ops; Alberta Wheat Pool, Agricore United, & United Farmers of Alberta, serving as an elected member representative. He has also served on several community boards, was Mayor of the Village of Coutts, and is the current Reeve of the County of Warner. Through all of his experiences he has learned much about governance & how it impacts the success of an organization or community. Ross has served on the Milk River Watershed Council since it began in 2006. He supports Alberta's Water for Life Strategy and is a strong advocate for water storage and the benefits it brings to communities. Today he continues farming with his wife of 37 years, Jackie, daughter Katie, son-in-law Eric, grandchildren Scarlett and Langston.

**William King - Appointed Member at Large (Special Assignment)**  
William's Grandfather came to Aden area before Alberta was a province 5 generations ago. William was born on the road from Aden, along Deer Creek. He started farming and ranching in 1965 until 2011 when he moved into the Town of Milk River. William has been a member of numerous groups such as local Fish and Game Club since its inception and has received a lifetime membership award for over 40 years of service; the Grain Agricultural Society (founding member) in 1973 where he served as president 3 times over the years; Border Surface Rights in 1981 (founding member); Aden volunteer Fire Department for 20 years. William helped with the compilation of the Milk River Natural Areas and Kennedy Coulee Ecological Reserve Management Plan which commenced in 1990 to present time. He is also a member of the Wildlife and Nature Photography. Some of William's photographs are featured in the 2nd Edition Milk River Transboundary State of the Watershed Report. William loves the area and is eager to bring a worthy of knowledge and history of the East Milk River area to the board.

**Vacant - First Nations**  
We are currently taking nominations to fill the First Nations seat. Please nominate a candidate in good standing, who can provide expertise and knowledge that would be beneficial to the MRWCC organization to represent the First Nations.

More information on Board of Directors Membership can be found on our website at [www.mrwcc.ca](http://www.mrwcc.ca).



## MILK RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL CANADA Fall Hike Tour • October 5, 2018

- Tree Coulee:**
- **Original site for the Spite Ditch • Sundance Circle • Whoop-Up Trail**

Join us as we hike and navigate through while learning the history of the “Spite Ditch” within the Tree Coulee area!  
We will also visit the Sundance Circle with visible vision quest cultural sites.  
Lunch will be served within the Sandstone area  
Bus will leave Milk River at 10 a.m. and plan to get back around 3:30 p.m.

To register email: [mary@mrwcc.ca](mailto:mary@mrwcc.ca) or call 403-647-3808  
Cost of the tour: \$20 /adult and \$10 /child under 12 years. (Payment collected day of event)  
Registration deadline is October 2, 2018  
Space is limited to 30 people. Please register early to secure your spot.

**We hope you can join us!!**





## Canoe Trip - June 15, 2018

We are excited to be offering a Canoe Tour again this year. Last year we were lucky to see all sorts of wildlife including elk as well as stopping at some unique landforms and landmarks.

This year's canoe tour will be on the eastern reach of the Milk River, around the

Pinhorn Grazing Reserve area. While we are hoping for good weather, please note that this tour is weather dependent. In the event that we have unfavourable weather, the tour will be postponed and registrants will be notified.

This tour is one of our popular ones. We



had a limited amount of canoes available for rent and encouraged people to bring their own canoes or kayaks. It filled up in under a week.

Thank you everyone for supporting our explorations. We love being able to share

new places with you. Thank you to Ken Brown for making these tours possible.

Group Photo, Canoe Tour 2017  
Elk, Canoe Tour 2017

## MRWCC partnering with the Town of Milk River on a Xeriscape Project

What is xeriscaping?  
Xeriscaping is a landscaping philosophy that uses as many native, drought-resistant plants as possible and arranges them in efficient, water-saving ways. Some of the perks are:

- Spending less time maintaining your yard and more time enjoying it
- Using less water
- Showcasing the attractive flowers and shrubs that naturally grow in the prairies.
- Use less pesticides and fertilizers, which reduces the risk of polluting storm water (plus you save money!)

After the success of our xeriscaping tour a few years back, the Town has committed to change the Town Hall lawn to a diverse colourful xeriscaped space. This will build on the great yards of many town residents and inspire low maintenance, low water, beautiful plants. If designed properly, xeriscaping will look great and planned to always have something flowering throughout the seasons.

The MRWCC is happy to help the Town of Milk River implement this project. It will be conducted in two parts, the north side this season and the south side next. Keep an eye out for the beautiful transformation!



North part of the lawn at Town Hall 2018. Watch the process as the lawn transforms into a Xeriscape lawn.



One of the parents watching closely

## Education and Outreach Coordinator Report

I am excited to start my second year with the Council. I am enjoying getting to engage with local schools. I have had the opportunity to aid on a number of field trips including developing a field study for the Erle Rivers Bio 20 class. It is tough to do a field study in March, especially with the winter we had. I decided to focus on the struggles of the wildlife in our area in finding food. In this "Browse Utilization Study" we looked at where there is evidence of browse and how animals access food in harsh winters.

I have also been partnering again this year to deliver programs at Writing on Stone Provincial Park. It has been fun teaching kids about the watershed, including challenges faced by producers and managers within the watershed and why water quality is important.

I also had the pleasure of helping a couple students with their Caring for Our Watershed project proposal. It is amazing what sort of ideas students can come up with. I was very impressed with the ideas

brought forward by youth in our area, the program continues to expand across Alberta and I am looking forwards to promoting and assisting our students again next year. On the other hand, last years' project has tenants! This pair of Ferruginous Hawks has decided the one nest looked like a good place to raise a family. Thank you again to the sponsors, landowners, and students for making the CFW projects a success!

Kandra Forbes,  
Education Outreach Coordinator



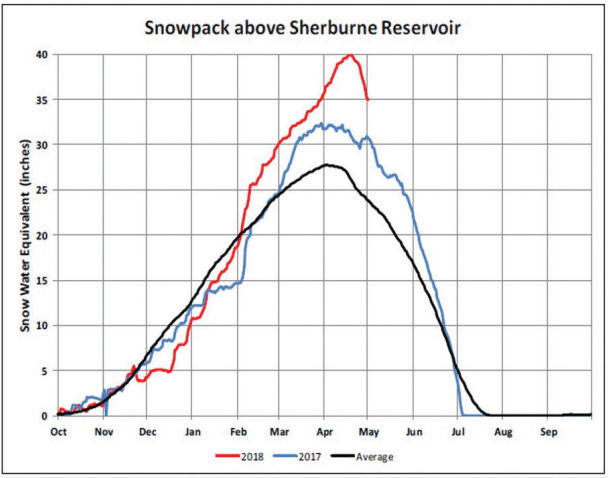
Hawk nest placement, Nov. 2017



Hawk on Nest April 2018

## Water Supply Forecast

Headwater snowpack resources have been between 120-160% of average coming into this spring season, the melt has been slow with few long duration warm rains at higher elevation which has allowed for a much-needed calculated recharge of storage structures across southern Alberta and North Central Montana. The "flash drought" of 2017 in combination with wetter than average conditions through the Montana highline communities outlined continued concerns with water security throughout our watershed. If summer rains continue to stall this year we could face similar challenges by August for water users in the Milk River Watershed. So far, the evaporative precipitation experienced in May has been timely for favorable growing conditions, let's hope this continues.





# Transboundary Grasslands - Connecting habitats across borders

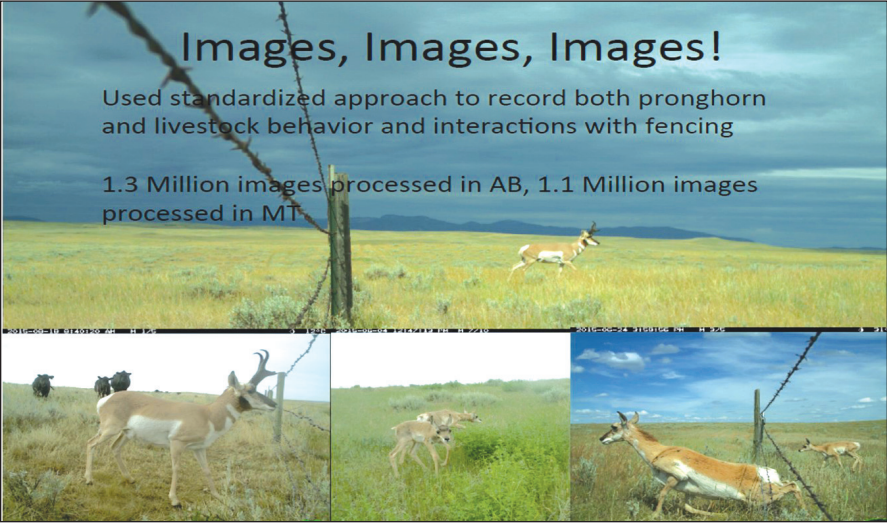
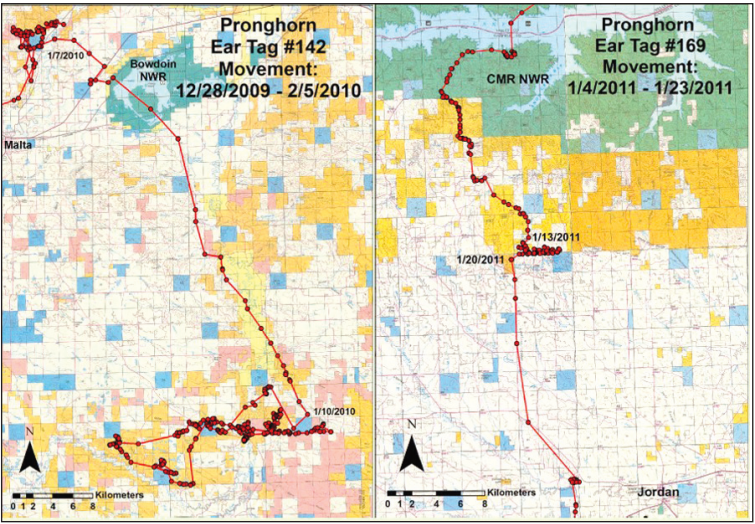
New research is helping us better quantify and refine our understanding of wildlife movement and connectivity of particularly important habitat for wildlife within the watershed across borders. Andrew Jakes has been researching migration patterns of pronghorn to understand variation in migratory behavior. “We have identified different movement strategies for pronghorn at the northern limit of the species’ range, and tested hypotheses for variation between migratory behaviors” says Jakes. “From 2003–2010, we captured 185 female pronghorns across Alberta and Saskatchewan, Canada, and Montana, USA. We identified discrete migratory behaviors, including seasonal migration, facultative winter migration, potential post-fawning migration, and the use of stopover sites. Fifty-five percent of individuals undertook seasonal migrations, and we recorded the longest reported round-trip migration for the species at 888 km.” Some (22%) seasonal migrations included 1 stopover sites, with significantly greater use of stopovers during spring for recovery than fall. Correspondence analyses revealed 3 groupings of migration behavior.

Spring migration was its own grouping, characterized by more sinuous and slower movements, consistent with the forage maturation hypothesis. Fall migration, facultative winter migration, and potential post fawning migration clustered in a single group that displayed linear, fast movements, consistent with being

influenced by ecologically limited resources such as severe winters or predation avoidance. Lastly, spring and fall stopover sites were grouped together as a means to use high-quality forage during migration, also consistent with the forage maturation hypothesis. At the northern periphery of pronghorn range, differences between migratory behaviors are influenced by various ecological factors, merit increased attention, and contribute to overall persistence.

This work is a first step in quantifying the value of connected habitats critical to all species movements and may help refine strategies such as rewarding producers for good stewardship of land in important areas, as well as reducing the burden of the impact of issues such as damaging Environmental Protection Orders on our community demonstrating disconnected island populations maybe impacted by factors outside of our jurisdictional control.

Understanding better the seasonal movement, timing, duration, and impact of pinch points such as poorly placed developments, roads, and fencing techniques will allow us to be more adaptive to reduce pressure on wildlife and resilient to ecological factors outside of our control.



# YOUTH RANGE DAYS

We are excited to be helping organize the 11th Annual Southern Alberta Youth Range Days. YRD celebrates our western heritage and provides a mentoring environment for youth ages 13-18 interested in the outdoors.

This program is an interactive event for youth and families interested in learning about working agricultural landscapes critical to environmental sustainability. Participants from all backgrounds are welcome!

This year’s event will be hosted in Cardston County at Rangeview Ranch. We have lots of activities planned and some awesome field trip locations. Activities include: learning about grasshoppers and other insects, bio-control

efforts of invasive species, range plants, wildlife habitat management, raptors and upland birds, trail riding, and more! Plus, every YRD isn’t complete without our fun Ranch Plans and water activities on the Milk River!

Spaces are limited. Please visit our website to find the link to register.

Courtney Taylor was our YRD Top Hand award winner last year and was given the opportunity to take part in the Society for Range Management High School Youth Forum in Nevada! Courtney represented Society for Range Management - International Mountain Section where she placed

first after competing against 27 other students from the United States.

She has been a returning Youth Range Days participant whose passion for her cows and her families operation is obvious to anyone that meets her. We are excited to see what’s next for her! Once again, Congratulations to Courtney for her accomplishments! One of many of our YRD alumni that continue to represent our community well on a grander stage!

Thanks to Prairie Conservation Forum for helping sponsor her travel and all our community sponsors of the YRD program!



# Southern Alberta Youth Range Days 2018

July 10-12<sup>th</sup> 2018

Ages 13-18

Families are welcome!



Location:

Rangeview Ranch  
(Cardston County)

## Trail riding, river sports, grasshoppers, birds and much more!

The Southern Alberta Youth Range Days program is an interactive event for youth, and families, interested in learning about rangelands, watersheds, wildlife, and other topics related to natural resource management.

Youth from all backgrounds including farm and ranch, city, acreage or town, are welcome to attend.

Registration link is available at [www.mrwcc.ca](http://www.mrwcc.ca) • Cost: \$75 per participant



Southern Alberta Youth Range Days

For more information contact: [youthrangedays@gmail.com](mailto:youthrangedays@gmail.com) or  
Stephen Bevans (Cardston County): 403-634-9474  
Kandra Forbes (MRWCC): 403-647-4306





# Milk River Over-Wintering Habitat Project

Work is wrapping up on a unique project the MRWCC has undertaken with funding from Environment Canada's Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk. Last winter, contractors with the MRWCC conducted video surveillance of overwintering pools identified first by community members then field verified. These larger 'holes' are low winter flow pinch points for multiple fish species along the Milk River. By studying presence/absence of fish species at risk we can help better understand life histories during sensitive time periods. In addition to the habitat studies, we worked with adjacent landowners and leaseholders to develop stewardship projects that will

continue to reduce pressure on the river system adjacent to these sites. Overall, fish of almost every species found in the Milk River were found at almost all sites! These included the Western Silvery Minnow in the lower reaches, and Rocky Mountain Sculpin in the western end of the river. Larger game fish species were found in a few of the locations, co-habiting with some of the smaller species at risk. We would like to thank all the landowner/manager cooperators for access and for the good work of maintaining these areas, few sites showed significant channel modification and impact from adjacent land use. Two projects have since been implemented with a combination of relocation of wintering/cav-

ing sites, improved corridor management with riparian fencing, two remote watering

systems installations and a small habitat planting project to help reducing accelerated

erosion and improve riparian fringe health above a public location. For more informa-

tion on the project check out [www.mrwcc.ca](http://www.mrwcc.ca) or stop by the office.



## 2018 Surface Water Quality & Invasive Mussel Monitoring

The MRWCC continues to monitor surface water of the Milk River and major tributary sites along the mainstem Milk River and select tributaries of the Milk River. A partnership with Alberta Environment and Parks has allowed us to modify our program as we work diligently to maintain the integrity of the program to provide some of the most complete pictures of Water Quality of any major watershed within the province of Alberta. Adjustments based on new more affordable DNA analysis technology are being incorporated into beach monitoring that more accurately reflect actual human health risk within the watershed that if positive monitoring trends continue will result in fewer more accurate health advisories along the Milk River in 2018. Annual summaries of trends with Water Quality are available on the MRWCC website at [www.mrwcc.ca](http://www.mrwcc.ca)

and by request within our office. Building on our aquatic invasive species monitoring work in 2017, and in response to the discovery of invasive quagga mussels within the Tiber Reservoir east of Shelby Montana, the MRWCC is working with Alberta Environment and Parks to monitor substrate sampling for quagga mussels at our mainstem sampling locations. If any irrigators or water managers within the watershed have suspicious looking aquatic organisms attached to a hardened surface or intakes, please contact either the MRWCC or environmental reporting hotline with Alberta Environment and Parks. Monitoring efforts in Montana have been elevated for 2018, and to date no additional quagga detections have been confirmed.







# Call for Proposals for the Milk River Watershed Science Forum

NOVEMBER 8, 2018 - MILK RIVER CIVIC CENTER

The Milk River Watershed Council is inviting proposals for presentations on Research or Monitoring studies done in the area.

The Milk River watershed is a small, semi-arid and trans-boundary watershed. Climate in the Milk River watershed is unique in comparison to the rest of Alberta. The semi-arid environment has influenced not only the soils, vegetation and wildlife that are found there, but it has also shaped the people, industry and economic growth in the region.

This science forum is a way to showcase scientific research that has taken place in the Milk River watershed. This forum provides a stage for researchers to share their findings with engaged com-

munity members and stakeholders.

Please submit a proposal outlining a short description of your research in 500 words or less. (Follow the format below).

If accepted, presentations should be no longer than 20 minutes with panel questions at the end of each session.

Poster presentations are also accepted.

**Deadline for proposal submission is October 26, 2018.**

All community members, and school groups are invited to attend and participate in the Science Forum. Watch for further announcements and a full listing of topics this fall! For more information or to submit your proposal please email [mary@mrwcc.ca](mailto:mary@mrwcc.ca)



2017 Science Forum presentations can be found on our web at [www.mrwcc.ca/index.php/events/past-events/](http://www.mrwcc.ca/index.php/events/past-events/)

## Executive Director's Report

The Milk River Watershed Council Canada has taken pride in our organization's understanding of the challenges facing all stakeholders in the watershed. We balance perspectives to find solutions to challenging situations. Not everyone will agree 100% of the time on outcomes, but we cannot be paralyzed by fear of action as is too common with provincial and federal governments. Our role is to set strategic direction and in many cases be the advocate for our community and watershed beyond our boundaries.

Water, habitat, and education continue to be our focus for the next three-year strategic plan. We are grateful for the continued support from our key partnerships and funders particularly the Government of Alberta and Ministry of Environment and Parks. As a key partner under the Water for Life Strategy we look forward to renewed focus on the core areas of safe secure drinking water, healthy aquatic and terrestrial environments, and

economic prosperity which really for us, boils down to a functional rural community.

The MRWCC will continue to support voluntary stewardship measures for the management of biodiversity on private lands and supports leaseholders throughout our watershed in developing and implementing grazing management strategies to reduce the impact from linear fragmentation and invasive species encroachment. Through the completion of the MRWCC Integrated Watershed Management Plan we continue to work on implementation of voluntary projects that align with the community priorities associated with biodiversity and Species at Risk within the Milk River Watershed.

The MRWCC has supported the development of programs that improve resilience to drought and flood management including the development of a multi-year drought management toolkit and planning package for small urban and rural municipalities to help identify challenges and plan for response to the inevitable challenges of prolonged drought in our communities.

The MRWCC continues to provide programming that

improves our knowledge of the watershed and assists watershed managers in maintaining or improving our environment. Our outreach and education programming builds common understanding of our watershed and helps ensure the social license for industrial partners, and the agricultural community that are equally reliant on our working landscapes. We have expanded our program delivery with Writing on Stone Provincial Park and are sharing the good work of area producers to audiences from beyond our community.

Transboundary relationships with our watershed partners in Montana and Saskatchewan are becoming increasingly important to deal with issues such as landscape and habitat connectivity for species at risk and we will continue to support this work that improves knowledge and communication. We are also continuing work to help residents better understand the complex waterworks and fragility of our river system with our Montana counterparts. A film on the watershed that helps to demonstrate this will be completed this year.

Feel free to contact us or stop by the office in Milk River if you are interested in learning more.

Tim Romanow  
Executive Director,  
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 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
To reach us on Mondays and Fridays please contact us  
We are closed weekends and holidays

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