



INFORMATION SHEET #1

MUNICIPAL FORUM—FEBRUARY 2011

The Athabasca Watershed Council provided a brief introduction to the mandate and goals of the organization and an invitation to all Athabasca Municipalities to work with the Council on achieving a healthy watershed that supports community sustainability.

Reeve Pat Alexander of Clearwater County provided an important introduction to how Municipalities have worked with the Watershed Planning and Advisory Council for the North Saskatchewan watershed, and how this participation has provided excellent information for Municipal planning related to water and watershed concerns.

A key focus of the Forum was to hear from the Municipalities to learn more about the innovative programs and initiatives already underway in communities and counties in the Athabasca watershed. Lac La Biche County, County of Barrhead and the Town of Hinton presented a variety of innovative solutions for both county and community water or watershed related issues. These projects included riparian set-back stewardship groups and their water quality improvement projects; local creek restoration initiatives; and innovative eco-industrial developments that raise the bar for more sustainable water consumption and improved waste-water treatment.

Group discussions in the afternoon brought forward valuable suggestions for future engagement between the AWC-WPAC and municipalities. These suggestions included visits and presentations directly to Municipal Councils to create solid relationships and encourage meaningful dialogue between Council members; encourage watershed education programs in schools; share new information and innovative ideas regarding watershed stewardship with Municipalities; and encourage dialogue across all sectors in the Athabasca Watershed. Working together, we can make a positive difference to the long-term health of the Athabasca watershed.

Attending this Forum:

- Athabasca County
- County of Barrhead
- County of Lac St. Anne
- Lac La Biche County
- Town of Athabasca
- Town of Edson
- Town of Hinton
- Town of Mayerthorpe
- Town of Westlock
- Town of Whitecourt
- Westlock County
- Woodlands County
- Yellowhead County



Jean Anne Fraser from the Town of Hinton addresses the AWC-WPAC Municipal Forum

What We Heard from the Municipalities:

Water/watershed concerns in municipalities – priorities, key issues:

Lack of enforcement of set-back policy
Agricultural run-off
Water withdrawal/releases
Wetlands protection
Potable water quality reliability
Preserving Tawatinaw River Ecology (unique sensitive area)
Sewage systems around our lakes.
Treating wastewater to a better standard.
Agriculture practices re: cattle, chemicals fertilizer.
Gravel extraction
Stressed water aquifers.
Non-operating landfills and lagoons
Water allocation
Quality of storm water
Potable consumption
Water supply
Erosion caused by quads, clearing, livestock
Development of recreation areas; ATV's, mud bogging, large motor boats
Chemicals – farm and urban.

Strategies from municipalities – plans and initiatives to address key issues.

Create a historical /traditional knowledge bank.
Suitable notification of proposed development that will impact health of the watershed (e.g. destruction of wetlands)
Provide funding /sponsorship to newspapers across watershed to share relevant issues (bulletin board for watershed stewardship).
Incorporate environmental liaison (like Lac La Biche).
Regional water system. New water plant.
Regional planning.
Education programs to encourage stewardship
Get rid of fluoridation.
Implement commercial water supply and sewage disposal.
Area structure plan for gravel – bring all to table.
SRD – report non-preferred areas for gravel mining on Athabasca Basin.
Storm water management – control runoff.
WPAC—work with municipalities to find balanced approach, and keep people informed.
Surveys
Plan to show Municipalities getting 'bang for their buck'
Scientific water monitoring: establish baselines
Groundwater monitoring around Edson for their aquifer
Have water meters for residents that are on our water treatment systems—monitor discharge from our lagoons
Work with our neighbours
Inter-municipal servicing agreements
Education and Awareness