



Athabasca Watershed Council - Newsletter, April, 2015

Our Vision: The Athabasca watershed is ecologically healthy, diverse and dynamic.

Athabasca Watershed Council

Annual General Meeting 2015

Saturday, May 23, 2015, 9:00 am- 3:00 pm

Athabasca University Governing Council Chamber

1 University Avenue, Athabasca, AB (map pg. 12)

(in collaboration with Athabasca River Basin Research Institute)

- 9:00 Registration, Coffee, Displays
- 10:00 Welcome and Introductions
- 10:15 Review and Adopt Agenda
- 10:20 Approve Minutes of 2014 AGM
- 10:30 Chair's Report and Annual Report, Q&A
- 10:45 Treasurer's Report, Audit, Member Auditors, Q&A
- 11:00 Technical Committee Report
- 11:05 Communications Committee Report
- 11:10 Special Resolutions - Proposed Bylaw Amendments
- 11:30 Nominations and Open of Voting
- 11:55 Introduce Interactive Atlas
- 12:00 Lunch / Interactive Atlas
- 12:50 Reminder of Voting Closure at 1:00 pm.
- 1:00 Keynote Presentation
- 1:30 Presentation of Volunteer of the Year Award
- 1:45 Announcement of the Election Results
- 2:00 Election of Chairperson
- 2:30 Determination of Membership Fee
- 2:40 Select Venue for 2016 AGM
- 2:50 Closing Remarks
- 3:00 Adjournment

Keynote speaker - Jana Tondy, Upper Athabasca Region Limnologist, Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development. **'Athabasca River synoptic survey, 2015, some preliminary data and discussion of water management in the Athabasca Watershed'**.



AWC Annual General Meeting 2015 – May 23, 2015

Call for Nominations for the Board of Directors 2015-2017 (two-year term)

The Athabasca Watershed Council is seeking nominations from knowledgeable individuals who will bring their sector perspectives to the AWC Board of Directors, and are committed to the mission, goals and values of the Athabasca Watershed Council. At the 2015 AGM, 13 seats are available on the Board of Directors for the following sectors:

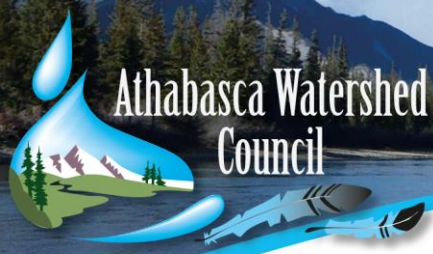
1. Member At Large
2. First Nation or Metis
3. Agriculture Producer
4. Forest Industry
5. Oil and Gas Industry
6. Mining or Utility Industry
7. Academia/Research
8. Health/Environment
9. Stewardship Group
10. Stewardship Group
11. Summer Villages Government
12. Municipality – Upper Basin (Jasper to Athabasca)
13. Municipality – Lower Basin (Athabasca to Fort Chipewyan)

If you are interested in serving on the Board of Directors to help the AWC achieve their vision, mission, and goals, visit: <http://www.awc-wpac.ca/content/awc-agm-2015> for all membership and nomination information. **Please note: nominations from the floor on May 23, 2015 will be not be allowed.**

Nominations for Board positions will be submitted to Doug Badger, Secretary at dbbadger@telus.net until May 15, 2015, close of business day.

Values of the Athabasca Watershed Council

- We respect all points of view.
- We value integrity, trust and transparency.
- Water is a blessing and gift and is essential for the environment, society, the economy and the spirit.
- We respect the environment and people.
- We believe in consensus decision making.
- We respect economic necessities.
- We value a high standard of achievement and conduct in the Athabasca Watershed Council.
- We value ecological health as foundational to all life.
- We value timely responses to issues.
- We value and respect the aboriginal communities, culture, and knowledge in the Athabasca watershed.
- We value inclusivity.
- We value creativity, innovation, and risk taking.
- We are responsible and accountable to all members.
- We are purpose driven



JOIN US for a fascinating day trip Pre-2015 AGM!

Tour of Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory & Bird Conservation Centre

A tour bus will be leaving Athabasca to take AWC members, volunteers and interested citizens to the Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory and Conservation Centre for a full day of bird watching and guided tours of banding operations and local ecosystems.

Date: Friday, May 22nd, 2015

Time: 8:00 am

Place: Bus will depart and return to the parking lot at River Front Park, Athabasca.

Cost: Registration is free and lunch is included.

Registration: Required to ensure lunch is prepared for all participants. Please call 780-675-5251 or email mashmead@mcsnet.ca no later than **May 12, 2015**. If you have food allergies, please advise us of your needs.

Athabasca Watershed Council – 3 Year Strategic Plan (2015-2018) to initiate the Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP) for the Athabasca Watershed

Overview

The Athabasca Watershed Council is moving forward in the 2015-16 fiscal year to complete and fine-tune governance and operations foundations in readiness for the next important step – a phased process to develop the Athabasca Integrated Watershed Management Plan – Terms of Reference (IWMP – TOR). A key goal for 2015-16 is to ensure that the AWC-WPAC is functional, sustainable and well-prepared for embarking on the IWMP TOR process.

The AWC-WPAC Three Year Strategic Plan lays out 3 important phases for completing the IWMP-TOR. It is important to note that while these phases generally relate to each successive fiscal year from 2015 to 2018, the process may or may not adhere to this timeframe, and some adaptive management adjustments may be required over time.

Phase 1 – Develop and implement a Community and Sector Engagement Strategy to provide a comprehensive and reciprocal sharing of information, foster understanding of watershed science and local knowledge, develop partnerships, listen to concerns and issues within the basin, list all concerns, and develop a list of key sector individuals and representatives to invite and develop a **Vision for the Athabasca Integrated Watershed Management Plan**. This phase is primarily about building relationships of understanding and engagement, gathering important foundational information for the IWMP process, and developing a Vision statement for the Athabasca IWMP.

Phase 2 – A watershed **risk assessment and priority goal setting** for the Athabasca IWMP. Using the best available science, local and traditional ecological knowledge, and working with Athabasca watershed communities, sectors and stakeholders, the AWC-WPAC will develop a priority list of concerns and issues that will be addressed in the Athabasca IWMP process. This phase will

engage watershed sectors, communities and people to research and include local and traditional ecological knowledge, to the extent possible, in the risk assessment and priority goal setting of the IWMP.

Phase 3 - This phase will integrate all the information gathered in Phases 1 and 2 to develop the **Athabasca IWMP Terms of Reference**. This phase will lay out priority goals, the context for these goals, and a road map for working on each of these goals to achieve the IWMP Action Plans that address each priority goal. The Draft IWMP-TOR will be shared, reviewed and revised through a sector and community engagement process before approval by the AWC Board of Directors and the Government of Alberta.

Following the development and approval of the IWMP Terms of Reference, development of Action Plans for each of the priority goals will set the course to engage and work with communities, sectors and people to achieve meaningful changes for watershed health in the Athabasca watershed. This will be long, careful, and committed work, and the AWC welcomes the participation, interest and support of the greater watershed community to realize the goals of an integrated watershed management plan that helps secure a healthy future for the Athabasca River and watershed. We invite and encourage all in the Athabasca watershed to join us for this important work – it is our watershed and our responsibility.



Wetland adjacent to the Athabasca River, Jasper National Park.
Photo: C. Simmons

Alberta WPACs



Alberta Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils (WPACs) What are they? Where are they? And what are they doing?

Alberta currently has eleven Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils (WPAC) that cover over 90% of the area of Alberta. (To learn more see: <http://www.albertawpacs.ca/>) The most recently formed WPACs are the Mighty Peace Watershed Alliance (2011) and the Athabasca Watershed Council (2009). All WPACs are unique, and reflect the ecological regions, cultures of the communities and people who live, work and play within their watershed area. They are also functioning at different stages of the watershed health assessment and integrated watershed management planning processes. Lets' see what Alberta WPACs are doing in 2015:

Alberta WPAC	
Mighty Peace Watershed Alliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a draft terms of reference for Integrated Watershed management Plan (IWMP) • Leading the public consultation in the Wapiti River Water Management for ESRD • Working on Watershed Restoration Projects on the Beaverlodge and Redwillow Rivers; work involves working with local farmers to develop best management practices and rehabilitation of the weir on the Beaverlodge River; projects are funded through Environmental Damage Funds
Lessor Slave Watershed Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inventory of watershed crossings and working on best practices with stakeholders • working to build strategic connections with the resource/land planning work being done by local industry and municipalities • identify resource management issues supported by stakeholder consultation to determine priority areas to be addressed within the IWMP
Athabasca Watershed Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • complete and fine-tune governance and operations foundations • phased process to develop the Athabasca Integrated Watershed Management Plan – Terms of Reference (IWMP – TOR) • develop and implement a Community and Sector Engagement Strategy to provide a comprehensive and reciprocal sharing of information
Beaver River Watershed Alliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • update the existing Beaver River Water Management Plan, water conservation objectives reviewed and refined • complete a sub basin index of vulnerability to determine sub basins that may require more management attention • nutrient loading study for Moose Lake to provide rationale to reduce nutrient load for the lake
North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continue participation in ESRD’s Industrial Heartland and Capital region Water Management Framework Implementation • NSWA has facilitated significant municipal engagement within sub basin watershed initiatives with the Sturgeon River Watershed Alliance, Headwaters Alliance and the Vermillion River Watershed Implementation Team that has contributed to enhanced partner investment in watershed management • Vermillion River Watershed Resiliency Project, supports flood/drought mitigation and identification of priority areas for restoration in conjunction with land owners • policy recommendations for a regional/provincial approach to lakes management • coordinate development of municipal storm water management plans for Blackmud and Whitemud Creek basins • hold educational forums on watershed management discussions on key issues including recreational access management and water quality management

<p>Battle River Watershed Alliance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> landowner extension programs that support flood/drought mitigation objectives and wetland policy implementation experiential education initiatives to engage communities and stakeholders in understanding and valuing their watersheds supporting implementation of the IWMP advice and guidance for Drought adaptation, Non-point Source Water Quality, Riparian and Source Water Management
<p>Red Deer River Watershed Alliance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> development and implementation of the water quality component of their IWMP in partnership with Alberta Ecotrust provide leadership and support to partners on flood and drought mitigation proposals and plans the IWMP contains technical reports and recommended actions that may inform the development of the Red Deer Regional Plan which may begin in 2015-16 education and outreach may support SSRP and RDRP initiatives Wetland Policy Implementation, the RDRWA technical report may be used to inform the development of regional wetland objectives improved natural flow estimates, water license uses ranked to ensure actual withdrawals being collected provide existing license holders with tools they need to self-regulate withdrawals
<p>Bow River Basin Council</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BRBC can provide leadership and support in flood resiliency and mitigation projects host two workshops to develop a process to identify hydrologically significant areas in the Bow Basin to support the SSRP Watershed Management Project may be involved in source water protection materials hosts Legislation and Policy Forum each year ESRD attendance is generally high continue participation in the Bow River Phosphorous Plan education and outreach Springbank Off-stream Storage Reservoir, proposed flood mitigation on the Elbow River, ensure project is integrated in the overall watershed plans McLean Creek Environmental Overview, identify impacts of the proposed McLean Creek Dam, invite public input potential mitigation diversions for the Highwood are currently being reviewed and assessed, possible involvement with the technical review and may have opportunity to lead public engagement and provide input into the two options being considered

<p>Old Man Watershed Council</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • last summer the OWC developed methodology for assessing the condition of roads and trails in the Dutch Creek sub-watershed and plan a pilot awareness program for the summer of 2015, this project will be aligned with the Linear Footprint Plan for the East Slopes and will be a good case study • development of a water quality action plan will begin late 2015 and will work well with the SSRP Management Framework • Cumulative Effects Watershed Assessment using a spatial modeling framework (NETMAP) • Headwaters Action Plan, the OWC and ESRD have shared values and interests, three indicators are closely tied to ESRD priorities, fish presence and abundance with the focus on native fish, density of roads and other linear features in watersheds, and aquatic invasive species • stakeholder engagement through the Partnership Advisory Network and the Headwaters Action Plan team • facilitating technical work through evaluation of linear disturbance in 4th order watersheds across the Oldman watershed headwaters
<p>South East Alberta Watershed Alliance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • land use analysis (GIS) project as part of the SEAWA IWMP, examining issues in accessing data • IWMP water quality phase
<p>Milk River Watershed Council of Canada</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working with ESRD on the development of an Approved Water Management Plan regarding restrictions on new water allocations and authorizing the use of water license transfers • providing input to the development of SSRP, Biodiversity Management Framework and Linear Footprint Plan including management strategies for native grassland • Groundwater Management Strategy input into SSRP

New Wetlands Research Project in Alberta

Selected drained wetlands will be filled with water in an innovative research project supported by Alberta Innovates Bio Solutions and launched by the Alberta Land Institute to better understand wetland restoration. The project will work in partnership with private land owners under the leadership of three researchers from across Canada. The multi-disciplinary team of natural and social sciences will work to improve scientific understanding of what wetlands contribute to watersheds while determining the economic costs of wetland restoration. The study will also address the question of compensation for landowners who agree to restore wetlands on their land, the project will test a market based system with land owners setting the price. The wetlands will be restored in such a way as to allow a variety of research for years to come. Alberta Innovates Bio solutions are a research agency funded by the Alberta Government.



Excerpts from Joint Canada/Alberta Implementation Plan for Oil Sands Monitoring (JOSM)

The implementation Plan

Second Annual Report 2013-2014

The overarching commitment is establishing a single, government-led monitoring program for the oil sands, which includes the following key commitments: funding, accountable administration and review, adaptive management, and transparent and accessible results. These key commitments help achieve a world class monitoring program that fulfills the following objectives:

- Support sound decision-making by governments, as well as stakeholders;
- Ensure transparency through accessible, comparable and quality-assured data;
- Enhance science-based monitoring for improved characterization of the state of the environment and collect the information necessary to understand cumulative effects;
- Improve analysis of existing monitoring data to develop a better understanding of historical baselines and changes, and;
- Reflect the trans-boundary nature of the issue and promote collaboration with the Governments of Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories

On December 31, 2013 the Oil Sands Environmental Monitoring Program Regulation came into force enabling the collection of monitoring fees from oil sands operators for the Implementation Plan, which were used to fund government-led monitoring activities in year two (2013–2014).

Industry is required by provincial and federal regulations to monitor source emissions and other environmental impacts resulting from their operations to demonstrate that their facilities are in compliance with predefined performance objectives. Much of this type of information has been collected by independent monitoring organizations; however, these responsibilities will be transitioned to government.

To facilitate this change, in December 2013 the Government of Alberta passed the Protecting Alberta's Environment Act (see Appendix D) creating the Alberta Environmental Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Agency (AEMERA). The legislation established AEMERA as the provincial organization responsible for environmental monitoring in Alberta. The Agency is governed by a board of directors, operated by a CEO, and accountable to the Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development. The AEMERA mandate is to provide open and transparent access to scientific data and information on the condition of Alberta's environment, including specific indicators as well as cumulative effects, both provincially and in specific locations. When AEMERA was proclaimed on April 28, 2014, it became responsible for leading the province's involvement in Joint Oil Sands Monitoring.

On April 22, 2013, federal Environment Minister Peter Kent and Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development Minister Diana McQueen launched the Canada-Alberta Oil Sands Environmental Monitoring Information Portal. The Portal provides transparent access to monitoring data, which are



posted as they become available, and information related to the Implementation Plan, including maps of the monitoring region and details of the monitoring sites. Feedback from stakeholders is informing improvements to the Portal, such as an improved search function, that will be implemented in year three (2014–2015).

JOSM Portal - www.jointoilsandsmonitoring.ca

AEMERA Science Advisory Panel Appointed

Six internationally recognized environmental science experts have been appointed to serve on a Science Advisory Panel to provide peer review and validate AEMERA's provincial environmental monitoring evaluation and reporting programs and activities. They are:

Dr. Alexander J.B. (Sascha) Zehnder – Founder and Director of Triple Z Ltd. and former president of the ETH Board and Professor Emeritus of ETH Zurich, Switzerland; Visiting Professor and member of the Board of Trustees of Nanyang Technological University in Singapore; and Scientific Director of Water Resources of Alberta Innovates – Energy and Environment Solutions Zurich, Switzerland
Boulder, Colorado

Dr. Jill Baron, Chair – Founder & Co-Director of the John Wesley Powell Centre for Earth System Science Analysis and Synthesis at Colorado State University
Fort Collins, Colorado

Dr. John Giesy – Faculty Member in the Department of Veterinary Biomedical Sciences, Faculty of the Toxicology Centre and Emeritus Distinguished Professor of Zoology at Michigan State University; and Professor and Canada Research Chair at the University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Dr. Joanne Nightingale – From the National Physical Laboratory in the United Kingdom, and a Research Scientist, Sigma Space Corporation Contractor in the Terrestrial Information Systems Branch at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Centre in Greenbelt, Maryland
London, UK

Dr. Reed Noss – Provost's Distinguished Research Professor, Davis-Shine Professor of Conservation Biology, and Pegasus Professor in the Department of Biology at University of Central Florida; and President of the Florida Institute for Conservation Science
Orlando, Florida

Dr. Russell Schnell – Deputy Director of the Global Monitoring Division of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

These scientists are leading experts in their fields and will provide independent oversight to AEMERA and validate the quality of AEMERA's science against global and leading-edge best practices. Full biographies and Terms of Reference for the Science Advisory Panel are available at www.aemera.org.

AEMERA will also be appointing a Traditional Ecological Knowledge Panel to provide advice and oversight and ensure traditional knowledge is integrated into its science and monitoring programs.

Group to Steward the Lac La Biche Watershed

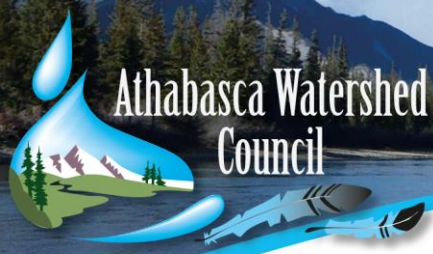


North east shoreline of Churchhill Island, Lac La Biche. Photo: Kyle Ashmead

Stewards of Lac La Biche Watershed is the newest watershed stewardship group in the Athabasca watershed. Two Athabasca Watershed Council (AWC) board members, along with support from Kirsten Harma of Living Lakes Canada and Greg Boorman of the Alberta Lake Management Association, have spearheaded the formation of the group. The group aims to include representatives from a cross-section of the community who share an interest in maintaining a healthy lake, and will work to develop a stewardship, monitoring and outreach program for the area.

A vision for the lake and the lands that drain into it has already been set out in the Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (ESRD) approved Lac La Biche Watershed Management Plan, released in 2009.

The goals of the Plan include:



- Help ESRD make water resource decisions in the Lac La Biche planning area,
- Assist the County of Lac La Biche, Athabasca County, Heart Lake First Nations and Buffalo Lake Metis Settlement to make informed water management and land use decisions,
- Address the sustainability of Lac La Biche lake, and
- Create guidelines and an overall plan for economic development, fisheries management, community health, agricultural management, commercial endeavors and industrial development.

The Plan calls for a number of specific short and long-term goals with a focus on accountability, resolving watershed and water quality issues through monitoring, analysis, regulation and policy, and education and awareness, as well as restoring riparian health and supporting wildlife management.

To date, many of these recommendations in the Plan have not been implemented. One of the objectives of the Stewards of Lac La Biche Watershed is to help achieve the vision of the Plan.

The Stewards group has been kick-started by funding from The EcoAction Community Funding Program and The Alberta Real Estate Foundation, with the fiscal sponsorship of Living Lakes Canada. This funding has permitted the Interim Steering Committee to hire a coordinator, begin the process of creating a Society, which will include the formation of a formal executive leadership, and set a summer work plan that will include environmental monitoring and assessment, as well as recruiting members and raising the group's profile in the community.

The Stewards are looking forward to working cooperatively with all stakeholders within the watershed to meet established goals. They are hoping to partner with First Nations, residents, industry and local business, local and provincial government, community groups and agricultural stakeholders, and any other stakeholders to support sustainable development and watershed integrity under the terms of the Water for Life strategy. Anyone interested in joining or supporting the Stewards of Lac La Biche watershed should contact the Stewardship Coordinator, Sean Gallagher, or any of the Interim Steering Committee members.

Sean Gallagher (info@laclabichestewards.ca)

Brian Deheer (bjdeheer@hotmail.com)

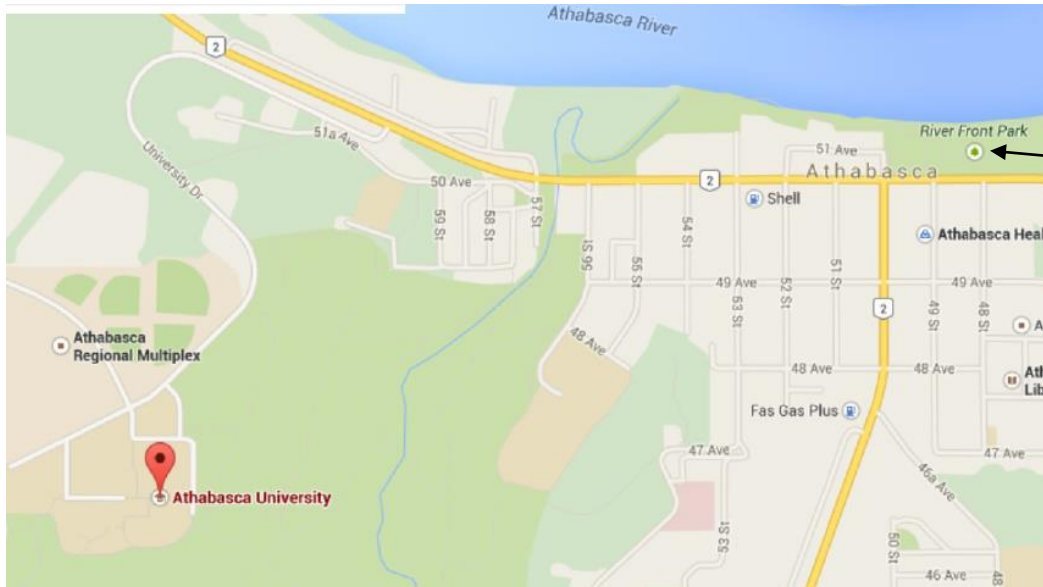
Tim Polzin (tim@polzin.ca)

Kirsten Harma (kirsten@livinglakes.ca)

Greg Boorman (lbw@naturealberta.ca)



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Bus Tour – Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory & Bird Conservation Centre.

Friday, May 22, 2015 8:00 am. Meet at the River Front Park parking lot.