



Athabasca
WATERSHED COUNCIL

Annual Report **2016-17**

ATHABASCA WATERSHED COUNCIL

0 25 50 100 150
Kilometers

Scale 1:2,250,000

- Athabasca County
- Brazeau County
- County of Barrhead No. 11
- Lac La Biche County
- Lac Ste. Anne County
- M.D. of Big Lakes
- M.D. of Greenview No. 16
- M.D. of Lesser Slave River No. 124
- M.D. of Opportunity No. 17
- Parkland County
- Sturgeon County
- Thorhild County
- Westlock County
- Woodlands County
- Yellowhead County
- Improvement District
- Specialized Municipality

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Coordinate System: NAD83 10TM AEP Forest
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983

Prepared By: IRMP, Resource Analysis
Project: 14-049-ATHABASCA_WATERSHED_COUNCIL
Date of Completion: Wednesday, July 23, 2014

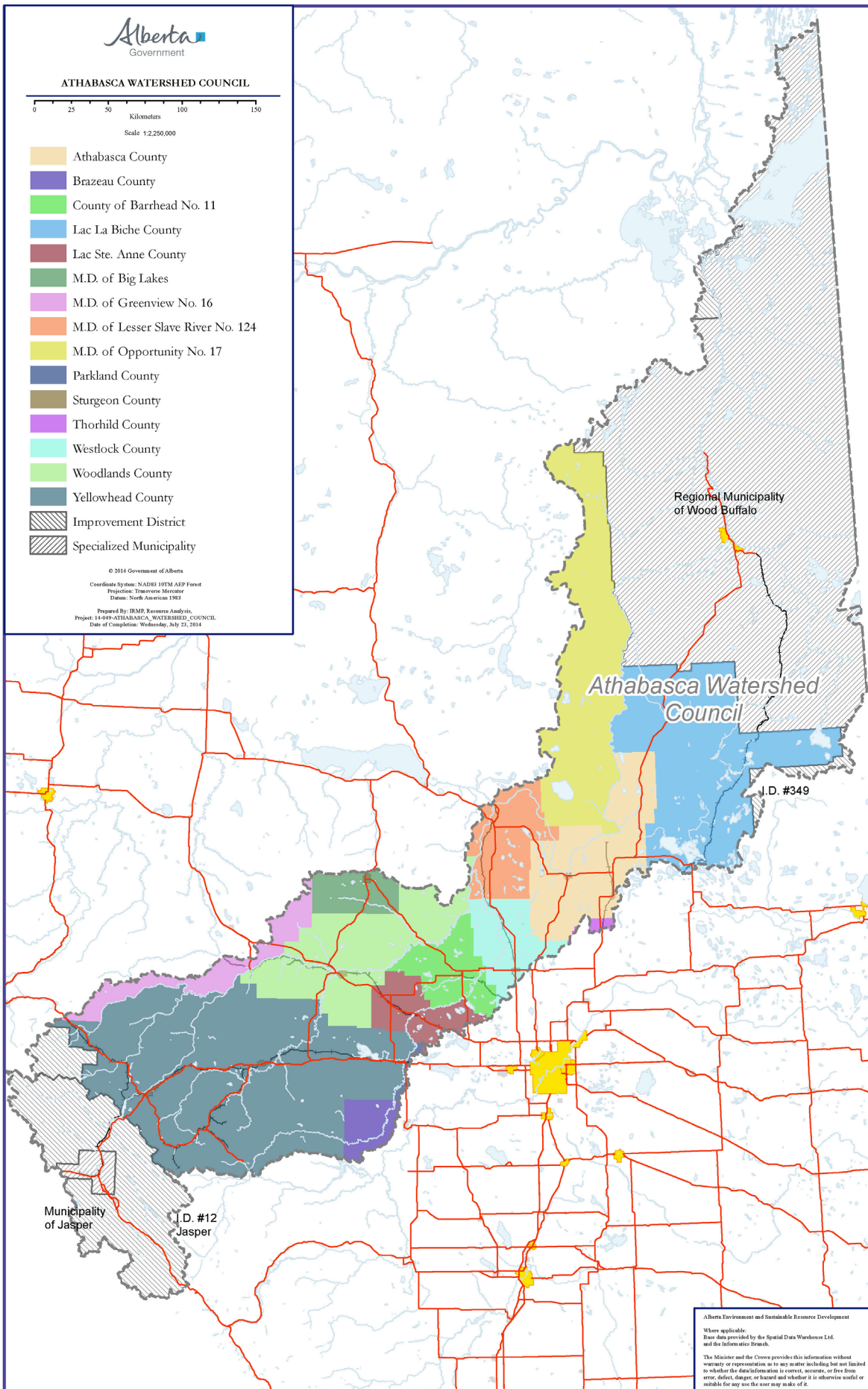


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About the Athabasca Watershed Council



Water For Life

In 2003, the Province of Alberta created its *Water for Life* strategy, an ambitious document that stated three goals:

1. Safe, secure drinking water
2. Healthy Aquatic Ecosystems
3. Reliable, quality water supplies for a sustainable economy

The Provincial government renewed its commitment to these goals in 2008.

Our History

The *Water for Life* strategy called for the creation of Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils (WPACs). In 2009, the Athabasca Watershed Council was formed and recognized as the WPAC in the Athabasca River watershed.

After a period with no staff, we hired a full-time administrative coordinator, Jason Ponto, in March 2016. Shortly thereafter, the AWC-WPAC moved into its new office in Athabasca. After an open competition, Jason became our Executive Director in June 2017.



Our Mission

We work with stakeholders throughout the watershed to facilitate informed decision-making by providing timely and credible information about the Athabasca River watershed.

Our members include individuals and organizations from academia, indigenous peoples, industry, environmental and stewardship groups, various levels of government, communities, and citizens.

The Athabasca Watershed Council promotes, fosters respect, and plans for an ecologically healthy watershed by demonstrating leadership and facilitating informed decision-making to ensure environmental, economic, and social sustainability.

Our Vision

The Athabasca Watershed is ecologically healthy, diverse, and dynamic.

Board of Directors and Staff



About the Board of Directors

To ensure that the AWC-WPAC is representative of voices from across the watershed, the Board of Directors is comprised of elected seats representing specified stakeholder groups.

As outlined in the Board of Directors Terms of Reference, the Board of Directors has a maximum of 21 members (including the past-chair-person) representing specified positions for industry (5 seats), non-governmental organizations (5 seats), government (5 seats) indigenous peoples (3 seats), and members-at-large (2 seats).

Board of Directors (2016-17)

Brian Deheer, *Chair*: Stewards of Lac La Biche Watershed

Terry Sheehan, *Vice-Chair*: Agricultural Producer

Janice Pitman, *Secretary*: Small Agricultural Producer

Tim Polzin, *Treasurer*: Member-at-Large

Abdi-Siad Omar: Alberta Environment and Parks

Carolyn Campbell: Alberta Wilderness Association

Dan Moore: Alberta Newsprint



Left to right:

Larry Armfelt, Garry Horton, Robert Holmberg, Brian Deheer, Janice Pitman, Tim Polzin, Jamie Giberson, Marv Fyten, Jason Ponto

Missing:

Abdi-Siad Omar, Carolyn Campbell, Dan Moore, Doug Kariel, Janice Linehan, Morris Nesdole, Terry Sheehan.

Staff

Doug Kariel: Member-at-Large

Garry Horton: MD of Lesser Slave River

Jamie Giberson: Aspen Regional Water Services Commission

Janice Linehan: Suncor Energy

Larry Armfelt: Athabasca County

Marv Fyten: Health and Environment

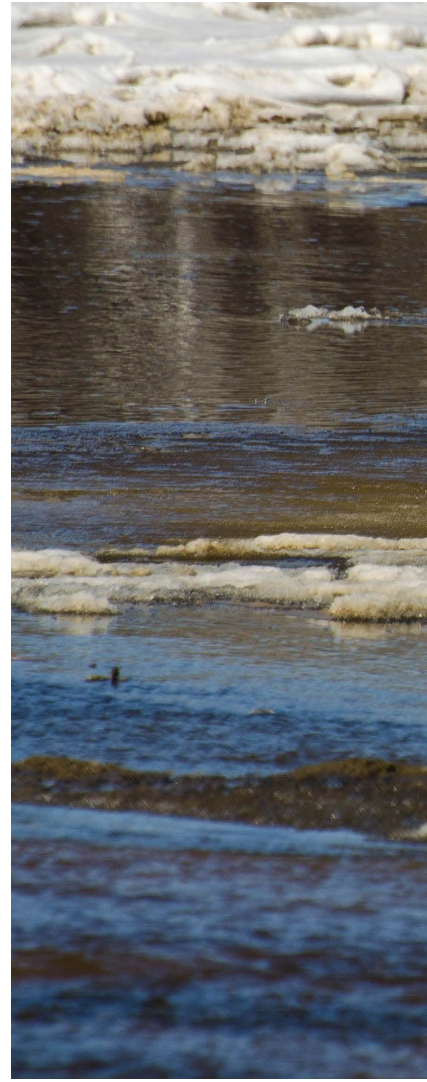
Morris Nesdole: Baptiste and Island Lakes Stewardship Society

Robert Holmberg: Athabasca University

Jason Ponto (Executive Director)

Jason joined the AWC-WPAC as the administrative coordinator in a part-time capacity in March of 2016 and began full-time work later that summer. He began work as the Executive Director in June 2017. When he's not representing the AWC-WPAC at events throughout the watershed, Jason enjoys hiking, paddling, and camping. He defended his doctoral dissertation in April and was awarded a PhD in Sociology from the University of Calgary in June 2017.

Message from the Board Chair



Year in Review

We are pleased to report some important successes over the past year. This has been a year of building on our foundations. Through our several accomplishments, we are now in an excellent position for the coming year.

First, it was most evident as we started the year, that we needed to expand our staffing. Our Administrative Coordinator, Jason Ponto, was extremely helpful to the Board, but we soon realized that, in order to accomplish more, we would need an Executive Director and additional staff. To this end, we established this new position, with the responsibility of hiring and managing any additional staff.

After an open competition process, we have hired Jason Ponto to this position.

Second, it was also evident that we needed to expand our financial resources, both from Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) grant funding, as well as from other sources. In preparation for our AEP grant application, we have reviewed and improved both our Strategic Plan and our Annual Work Plan. This process included a review of our Communication and Community Engagement Plan. Partly as a result of this foundation-building work, we have received increased funding from AEP. We have also made some initial steps towards seeking funding from municipalities and industry, and



A pair of geese test the frigid spring waters at the confluence of the Tawatinaw and Athabasca Rivers, about 400m downstream from our office.

we hope to develop this as part of our fund-raising strategy over the coming year.

Third, we have been working on a Summary Report of the findings of our State of the Watershed (SoW) Reports. These five SoW documents contain much valuable scientific and traditional information, and they are large documents. Our Summary Report, which is near completion, will present the key findings of these reports in a more concise and reader-friendly way. This Summary Report will make our watershed information more accessible, and will help us as we move into public engagement and watershed planning.

Finally, guided by our revised Strategic Plan, Communications and Community Engagement Plan, and Work Plan, we are excited to focus on outreach and engagement, further building our capacity, and ultimately watershed planning. We look forward to visiting you in your community, and building relationships throughout the watershed.

Sincerely,
Brian Deheer, Board Chair

Brian represents the Environment sector. He lives in Lac La Biche and has been championing environmental stewardship there for over two decades. He's been involved with the AWC for four years, including three years as a Board member, and he's served as Board Chair for the last two.

Watershed Planning and Collaborations

The Athabasca Watershed Council is committed to engaging stakeholders from across the basin and representing our members in a number of important collaborative projects. We collaborated on the following projects in 2016-17:

Alberta WaterSMART's Athabasca River Basin Initiative (ARBI)

The ARBI is a modeling project that combines climate models, hydrologic models, landscape models, and river system models to help planners and stakeholders find answers to “what if?” questions. The AWC-WPAC participated as a member of the Working Group to help refine the model and ensure that it accurately captures the concerns and needs of stakeholders

from across the basin. This work will continue in 2017-18.

The Alberta Energy Regulator's (AER) Area Based Regulation (ABR) Panel

The AER's ABR pilot project is a collaborative, consensus-based approach to regulating the orderly development of natural resources. The pilot brought together a panel of stakeholders (including the AWC-WPAC) to make recommendations on a range of issues pertaining to the health of aquatic ecosystems and water-use in the MD of Greenview. Specifically, the panel made recommendations intended to enable the use of alternatives to high-quality non-saline water by the oil and gas sector.





Heather Leschied, from Living Lakes Canada, proudly holds up the product of several hard days of work mapping shorelines on Lac La Biche.

Living Lakes Canada's Sensitive Habitat Inventory Mapping Project

The AWC-WPAC teamed up with Living Lakes Canada to undertake work on their Sensitive Habitat Inventory Mapping (SHIM) project at Lac La Biche. The project, which seeks to identify sensitive habitats around the lake, will be a valuable tool for policy-makers and citizens.

Alberta Health Services' (AHS) Recreational Water Management Protocol

AHS is developing an assessment tool that will help beach site operators assess health hazards at their beaches. The AWC-WPAC participated

in the development of the protocol at the pilot phase.

UNESCO World Heritage Committee Reactive Monitoring Mission

Wood Buffalo National Park is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In 2014, the Mikisew Cree First Nation submitted a petition to UNESCO's World Heritage Committee requesting an assessment of the state of conservation of the park and an investigation of potential threats to its Outstanding Universal Value. The resulting reactive monitoring mission examined many aspects of the Peace-Athabasca Delta. The AWC-WPAC participated in the Mission's round-table meeting with environmental NGOs.

Education and Outreach

The Athabasca Watershed Council strives to engage stakeholders and provide education about watershed science to anyone that lives, works, or plays in the Athabasca River basin. Our participation in the following events highlight our achievements in 2016-17.

Events Hosted by the AWC-WPAC

In August, we hosted “Watershed Education for Children,” in partnership with the Alice B. Donahue Library and Archives in Athabasca. This informative program taught Athabasca-area children about watersheds through fun-filled games and activities.

In November we hosted an Open House during Athabasca’s Moonlight Madness event. This annual event, organized by Athabasca’s Chamber of Commerce, features fireworks and parade, and brings a festival-like atmosphere to Athabasca’s downtown.

In January, we teamed up again with the Alice B. Donahue Library and Archives to host another Open House event. We encouraged people to “Learn about Athabasca River’s past while we discuss plans for its future.” The event featured archival material of the Athabasca River’s historical uses and reinforced the importance of well-informed watershed planning.





A group of children makes a 'watershed' at the AWC-WPAC's "Watershed Education for Children" event, which was put on in partnership with the Alice B. Donahue Library and Archives in Athabasca.

Presentations Given by the AWC-WPAC

To make our message heard, we often give presentations to specific organizations or during events. Here are some of the presentations that we made in 2016-17:

- Athabasca County Council (June 14, 2016)
- Aspen Regional Water Services Commission (August 2, 2016)
- Baptiste and Island Lakes Stewardship Society Open House (August 13, 2016)
- Long and Narrow Lakes Stewardship Society Open House (September 5, 2016)
- WPAC Summit (October 27, 2017)
- Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, District 3 (January 16, 2017)

Our Participation in Other Events

We engage with stakeholders and represent our members at events throughout the basin.

Here are some of the events we participated in this year:

- Wetlands Policy Workshop (April 14, 2016)
- North American Lake Management Society (NALMS) International Symposium (November 1-4, 2016)
- 2016 Oil Sands Science Symposium (November 22-23, 2016)
- 2017 Alberta Ecotrust Environmental Gathering (February 22-25, 2017)

AWC-WPAC in the News

Print media is an excellent medium for sharing news and information about watershed planning. The AWC-WPAC was featured prominently in the following news stories:

- "Protecting the Water." *Town & Country* (January 17, 2017)
- "New Funding Flows: Watershed Councils get \$11.8 Million from Province." *Town & Country* (March 28, 2017)
- "Watershed on the Rise: Athabasca Watershed to get more involved with stakeholders along Athabasca River." *Natural Resources* (special insert to *Town & Country*) (March 28, 2017)

Financial Statements



Photo by David Dodge (Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society)

Statement of Assets and Liabilities

	2016/17 Actuals
Financial Assets	
Cash	\$60,704
Accounts Receivable	\$9,428
Prepaid Expenses	\$1,883
Total Assets	\$72,016
Capital Assets	
Computer Equipment	\$1,207
Liabilities	
Total Liabilities	\$6,150
Net assets as of March 31, 2017	\$73,222
General Fund Balance	\$79,890

Statement of General Fund Operations

	2016/17 Actuals	2016/17 Budget
Revenues		
Province of Alberta Grant	\$132,294	
Other Income	\$6,743	
Interest Income	\$43	
<i>Total Revenue</i>	<i>\$139,080</i>	
Expenses		
Meeting Expenses		
Board of Directors Meetings	\$14,450	\$31,000
2016 Annual General Meeting	\$976	\$5,000
Other Meetings	\$5,369	\$2,000
Sub-committee Meetings	\$492	\$10,500
General and Admin Expenses	\$31,184	\$29,240
Staffing	\$62,394	\$75,000
Outreach & Project Funding	\$21,762	\$29,250
<i>Total Expenditures</i>	<i>\$136,397</i>	
Net Revenue less Expenses	\$2,683	



Acknowledgments

Our watershed is big. Really big. It covers almost a quarter of the province. Collecting and sharing information about the Athabasca River watershed is impossible without the help of countless friends, volunteers, and partners.

We would like to thank our friends at the other 10 WPACs in Alberta. Their knowledge, experience, and support has been invaluable as our organization grows.

Thanks also to Dave Mussell, whose infectious enthusiasm and timely insights have been tremendously beneficial for us.

We recognize the generous contributions of the members of our Technical Committee and our Communications and Community Engagement Committee. Special thanks to Jana Tondy, Marilou Montemayor, and John O'Connor for their help.

Finally, we are grateful for the long hours that the members of our Board of Directors have invested into our organization. Their hard work, dedication, and enthusiasm keep our ship afloat.

Thank you!



*Photo by
Charles Peterson*

Collaborations and Partnerships

We are grateful for the financial contributions and shared expertise of our primary partner, the Government of Alberta's department of Environment and Parks.



We also gratefully acknowledge the support and contributions from the following partners, without whom we could not function.

- Alberta Culture and Community Spirit
- Alberta Newsprint Company
- Alberta Wilderness Association
- Alice B. Donahue Library and Archives
- Aspen Regional Water Services Commission
- Athabasca County
- Athabasca Heritage Society
- Athabasca University
- Baptiste and Island Lakes Stewardship Society
- Baptiste Lake Tree Farms
- MD of Lesser Slave River
- Suncor Energy

We want to hear from you!

Fill out this page, take a picture of it, and email it to us at: admin@awc-wpac.ca

Where in the watershed do you live, work, or play?

What is your vision of the Athabasca Watershed?

What are some of the biggest challenges to achieving your vision in your area?

What are some potential opportunities or solutions to those challenges?

What can the Athabasca Watershed Council do to support your sector or community?

Is there anything else that you want to tell us?

Notes



Athabasca

WATERSHED COUNCIL

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