

The Athabasca Dispatch

April 2012

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In this Issue:

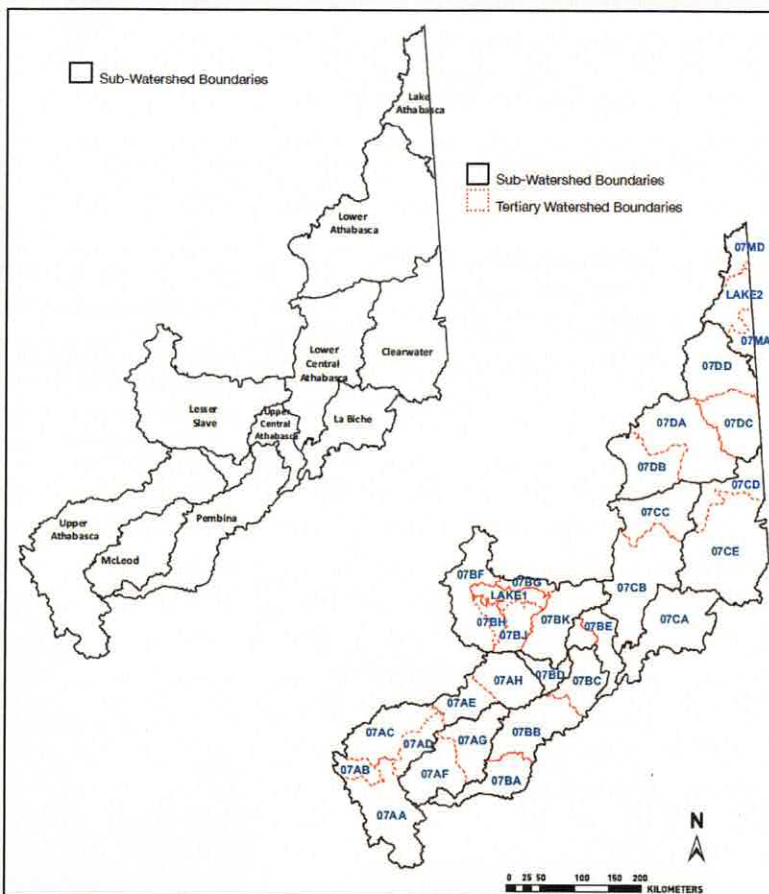
Pressure Rating Map.....	2
Relative Disturbance.....	
Classification Map.....	2
Talks with our Stakeholders.....	3
Conference Presentations.....	3
Foothills Stream Crossing.....	
Partnership.....	4
Save the Date.....	4

The Athabasca State of the Watershed Report Phase 2 is Complete

The Athabasca State of the Watershed Report Phase 2 (SoW P2) project was completed March 31, 2012. The SoW P2 project was prepared by Fiera Biological Consulting of Edmonton and supervised by the Athabasca Watershed Council Technical Committee, Science Advisory Team, and staff. The written document and the online Interactive Atlas will be available to the public by early May 2012 through our web-site: www.awc-wpac.ca.

The SoW P2 compiled the most current available watershed-wide data on various watershed condition and pressure indicators which were presented in a spatial (map) format at the tertiary watershed scale. The Athabasca watershed consists of 10 sub-watersheds which are further sub-divided into 31 sub-watersheds.

Out of a total of 32 indicators, only 15 indicators had watershed-wide data and were mapped (examples are on P. 2) and grouped as follows:



March 19-25
Canada Water Week
Healthy Rivers
Living Lakes

Athabasca Watershed Council - Annual General Meeting -Saturday, May 26, 2012

Barrhead Seniors Drop In Centre, 5437- 49 Street, Barrhead, AB

9:00 - 10:00 a.m. - Coffee and Registration

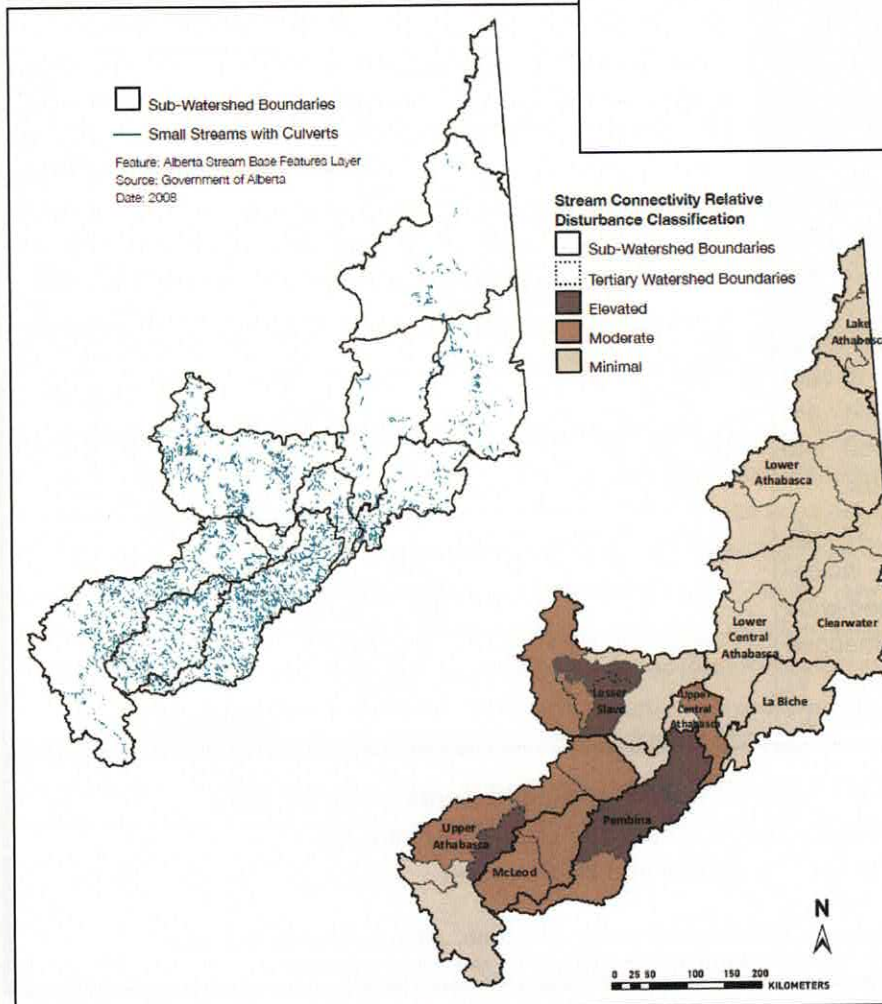
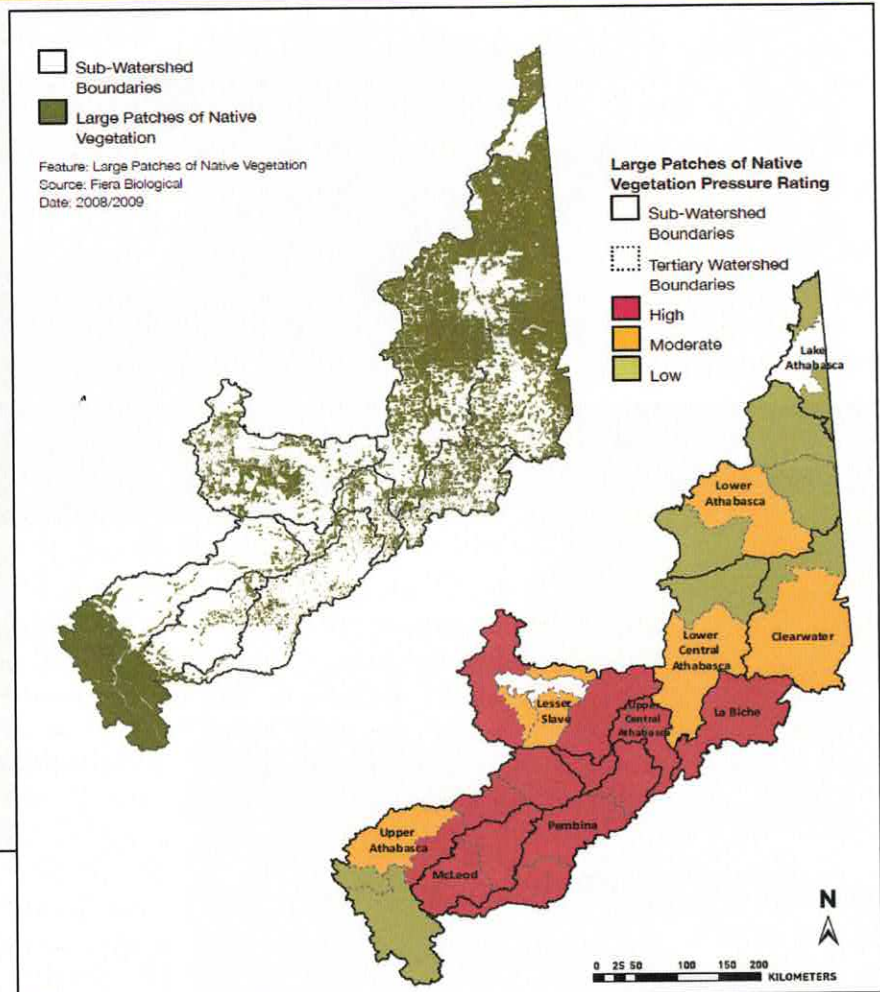
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Tel: 780-865-8223 (office) email: admin@awc-wpac.ca www.awc-wpac.ca

1. Indicators with science-based thresholds and data were ranked using "Pressure Ratings" (high, moderate, low):

- Road Density
- Seismic Line, Pipeline, Power Line, and Railroad Density
- Large Patches of Natural Vegetation (shown on the right)
- Stream Crossing Density
- Human Population Growth
- Human Land Use—Agriculture

2. Indicators with no science-based thresholds but data could be grouped into three "Relative Disturbance Classification" (minimal, moderate, elevated), relative to the ratings of tertiary watersheds using a statistical method:

- Stream Connectivity (shown below)
- Non-Point Source Contamination
- Potential Surface Water Use
- Potential Groundwater Use
- Human Land Use—Built Up Areas
- Land Conversion



3. Non-rated Indicators:

- River Water Flows
- Athabasca River Water Quality Index
- Point Source Contamination

March 22

UN WATER

World Water Day

2012

An update on Alberta Water Council's projects is available at:

<http://www.albertawatercouncil.ca/>

Click on: Publications

Talks with our Stakeholders

Athabasca River Basin Research Institute (ARBRI) - ARBRI Day

The Athabasca Watershed Council (AWC-WPAC) was invited to present at the Athabasca River Basin Research Institute's "ARBRI Day" event, at Athabasca University on March 14, 2012. ARBRI Day provided an introduction to this new and innovative and interdisciplinary research centre that will study the Athabasca River Basin and its people from a broad range of perspectives. Studies related to society, culture, and the environment will be part of the discipline specific research initiatives that will provide a deeper understanding of the complexities, realities and options for addressing issues of key regional importance.

The Athabasca Watershed Council provided an introductory presentation that outlined the purpose and goals of the Council, and also an update on the Athabasca State of the Watershed – Phase 2 Report. Partnerships and collaboration were key discussion points with many of the presenters – as sectors, communities, institutes and groups recognize the value of working together for the long-term health and sustainability of the Athabasca Watershed. The AWC-WPAC looks forward to working with ARBRI on goals of common concern in the future.

For more information on the Athabasca River Basin Research Institute visit: <http://arbri.athabascau.ca/>

or email: arbri@athabascau.ca

Alberta Environmental Monitoring Program – Lower Athabasca Watershed

The Athabasca Watershed Council (AWC-WPAC) was invited by Alberta

Environment and Water to participate in a workshop in Fort McMurray on February 1, 2012 to join in the discussion on governance options for the new Alberta Environmental Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting initiative. Several organizations participated, including Government, Industry, Airshed and Biodiversity Monitoring Groups, and Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils. The Monitoring program is intended to extend to include all of Alberta in successive phases of development. First Nations in the lower Athabasca region had been invited to participate in a similar workshop, held earlier in January 2012. Connie Simmons, Executive Director, represented the AWC-WPAC.

Workshop participants encouraged the Government of Alberta to ensure that the Monitoring System included scientific rigour, independence and transparency - and that time was of the essence, but not at the expense of setting this critical agency up properly and able to deliver on the critical need for world-class monitoring. For more information on the Alberta Environmental Monitoring System visit:

<http://environment.alberta.ca/03379.html>

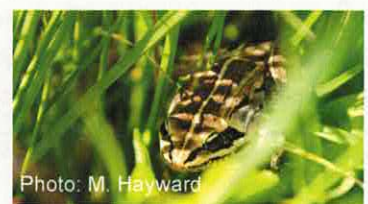
Presentations at Conferences

Connie Simmons, Executive Director, gave a presentation at the Annual Banff Conference of the Alberta Institute of Agrologists, April 3-5, 2012. She provided an introduction to the mandate of the AWC-WPAC and an update of the State of the Watershed Report Phase 2.

Marilou Montemayor, AWC-WPAC Watershed Science Coordinator, gave a presentation "The Importance of Mineral Soil Substrate in the Revegetation of Salinized Peat Fields" at the Alberta Soil Science Workshop in Edmonton, February 14-16, 2012. The presentation was based on her research in peatland reclamation in New Brunswick with potential application in northern Alberta.



Tawatinaw River at Athabasca

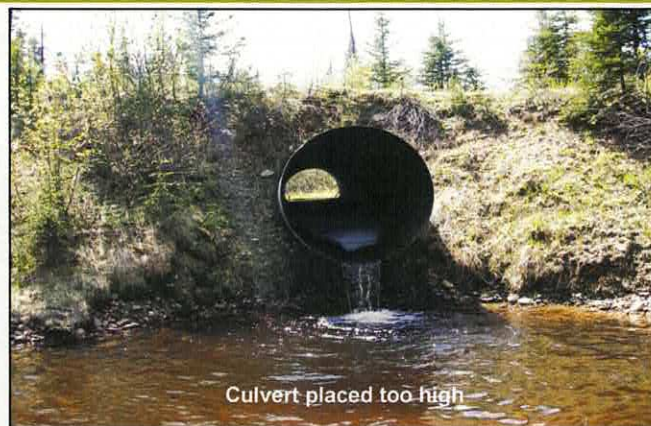


Wood Frog, Freeman River

Foothills Stream Crossing Partnership

The Foothills Stream Crossing Partnership (FSCP) is a multi industry partnership with the main objective of improving the condition and performance of stream crossings on the landscape. Since its inception in 2005, over 1300 crossings belonging to over 40 companies and government agencies, have been inventoried and prioritized into high, medium and low risk watersheds. All FSCP companies representing crossings in these high risk watersheds participate in the design of remediation plans that outline the strategies, timing and the justification for the order the crossings are mitigated. By working with other companies in the watershed FSCP members can plan to fix fish barriers in a sequential order moving up the watershed and address sedimentation problems from the top of the watershed down. The result is efficient use of resources while encouraging dialogue between stakeholders so that surrounding concerns in the watershed are taken into consideration and the priority of that crossing in particular. Our accomplishments:

- Widespread adoption of FSCP protocols has led to a coordinated approach for the inspection, monitoring, reporting and repair of crossings. The FSCP was able to address a large scale problem on the landscape using a priority watershed approach.
- Published a Stream Crossing Inspections Manual and developed and delivered water crossing and inspection courses in collaboration with Woodlands Operational Learning Foundation (WOLF).
- Demonstration site with signage highlighting innovative stream crossing technology, stream biology and partnerships along Hardisty Creek southwest of Hinton.
- Improvements to data capture and management have



Culvert placed too high

resulted in change from using data loggers to capture information to using tablets with camera, GPS and data input all in one unit.

Future plans:

- Apply process to the rest of eastern slopes
- Online mapping tool

For more information contact: jbauer@explornet.com or ngaio.basil@foothillsri.ca



A bridge allows passage for both fish and wildlife

Save the Date:

- ◆ Athabasca Watershed Council Annual General Meeting - May 26, 2012, Barrhead, contact: admin@awc-wpac.ca, 780-865-8223
- ◆ Community Planning Conference - April 16-18, 2012, Red Deer, www.cpaabiz/events.htm
- ◆ Earth Day Expo - April 22, 2012, Evansburg Arena, Phone: 780-325-2424, email: swinkeldairy@explornet.com
- ◆ AB Ecotrust AGM & Celebration of Achievement, April 19, 2012, Calgary, <http://www.albertaecotrust.com/>
- ◆ Film "Tapped"-about bottling & commodification of water - April 22, 2012, Calgary, www.waterlution.org/hubs/ab
- ◆ The Natural Step Level 1 Sustainability Course - April 27, 2012, Banff, www.naturalstep.org/en/canada/learning-programs
- ◆ Canadian Water Resources Association & Canadian Geophysical Union National Conference, June 5-8, 2012, www.cwra.org/
- ◆ The Third Annual Canadian Water Summit, June 28, 2012, Calgary, www.watersummit.ca
- ◆ 2012 Agricultural Service Boards Tour, M.D. Smoky River 130 & Northern Sunrise County, July 10-13, 2012, <http://2012asbtour.ca>
- ◆ The Annual Alberta Recycling Conference, Hosted by R. M. Wood Buffalo, Fort McMurray, September 5-7, 2012

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