



## Three-Year Strategic Plan: 2019-2022

Approved January 11, 2019

## Contents

Executive Summary .....	3
About the Athabasca Watershed Council.....	4
Water for Life.....	4
Our Vision .....	4
Our Mission .....	4
Our Values: .....	4
About the Athabasca River Watershed .....	5
Figure 1. The Athabasca River Watershed.....	5
Figure 2. Map of territory under the mandate of the Athabasca Watershed Council.....	6
Figure 3. Municipalities in the Athabasca Watershed Council’s territory. ....	7
Our Strategic Plan for 2019-2021 .....	8
About this Plan .....	8
Five Long-Term Goals: An Overview.....	9
Long-Term Goal 1: Highly reputable and credible authority .....	9
Three-Year Outcomes.....	9
Long-Term Goal 2: Enhancing Watershed Literacy and Building Relationships .....	10
Three-Year Outcomes.....	10
Long-Term Goal 3: Integrated Watershed Management Plan .....	10
Three-Year Outcomes.....	10
Long-Term Goal 4: Organizational Reputation and Professionalism .....	11
Three-Year Outcomes.....	11
Long-Term Goal 5: Watershed Governance in the Basin.....	11
Three-Year Outcomes.....	11

## Executive Summary

The Athabasca Watershed Council (AWC) is a provincially designated Watershed Planning and Advisory Council (WPAC) working in partnership with the Government of Alberta to achieve the three goals outlined in the *Water for Life* strategy. This strategic plan highlights the AWC's planned contribution to that partnership in the pursuit of the three goals of *Water for Life*.

This document outlines the AWC's five strategic goals, as identified at a strategic planning session held by the Board of Directors on November 16, 2018. These are long-term goals can be thought of as goals to be achieved over the next few decades.

**Long Term Goal 1:** *AWC is a highly reputable and credible authority on the Athabasca watershed and earns recognition for its leadership and expertise.*

**Long Term Goal 2:** *Stakeholders and Indigenous peoples throughout the Athabasca River watershed understand basic watershed science, are knowledgeable about the condition of the watershed, and are actively engaged with AWC in putting into action the resources and commitments to achieve defined outcomes.*

**Long Term Goal 3:** *Basin stakeholders have defined the desired outcomes for the Athabasca Watershed that will form the basis for the Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP) and the AWC has healthy and active relationships with the stakeholders in meeting these outcomes.*

**Long Term Goal 4:** *AWC has a reputation for organizational professionalism, balanced representation, sustainability, effective and efficient use of resources and makes strategically wise and evidence-based decisions.*

**Long Term Goal 5:** *AWC understands and informs the Stakeholders and Indigenous Peoples about the alignment (or misalignment) of the various Acts, Bylaws and Policies (eg. the Public Lands Act, the Water Act, the municipal bylaws, source water protection, wetland policies) that exist relating to the achievement of the 'Water for Life' goals and approaches.*

For each of these long-term goals, the Board of Directors has identified several three-year outcomes. These outcomes are strategic in nature, and are realistic outcomes based on available and expected resources. By pursuing these outcomes over the next three years, the AWC will effectively and efficiently move towards the achievement of its long-term goals.

This strategic plan has been developed, reviewed, and approved by the AWC's board of directors. It is an open-ended and adaptive 'rolling plan' and will be updated annually. The plan is meant to be adaptive, in that the occurrence and timing of initiatives may vary to suit the needs and situations encountered by the organization and in the watershed.

By reviewing and updating this rolling, three-year strategic plan on an annual basis, the AWC will ensure that it operates in a constant state of preparedness, enabling effective and efficient actions as it pursues the three goals of the *Water for Life* strategy.

## About the Athabasca Watershed Council

Established in 2009, the Athabasca Watershed Council (AWC) is a designated Watershed Planning and Advisory Council (WPAC) that works in partnership with the Government of Alberta to achieve the goals outlined in the Provincial Government's *Water for Life* strategy.

### Water for Life

The three goals of *Water for Life* are:

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

### Our Vision

The Athabasca watershed is ecologically healthy, socially responsible, and economically sustainable.

### Our Mission

The Athabasca Watershed Council demonstrates leadership and facilitates informed decision-making in the Athabasca watershed by bringing stakeholders and indigenous peoples together to promote, foster respect, and plan for an ecologically healthy watershed that supports social responsibility and economic sustainability.

### Our Values:

- We value integrity, trust, and transparency.
- We respect all points of view.
- Water is a blessing and gift and is essential for environment, society, economy, and the spirit.
- We respect the environment and people.
- We believe in consensus decision making.
- We respect economic responsibilities.
- We value a high standard of achievement and conduct in the WPAC.
- We value ecological health as foundational to all life.
- We value timely responses to issues.
- We value and respect the communities, cultures, and knowledges of indigenous peoples in the Athabasca watershed.
- We value inclusivity.
- We value creativity, innovation, and organizational risk taking.
- We are responsible and accountable to all members, partners, stakeholders, indigenous peoples, and the general public.
- We are purpose driven.

## About the Athabasca River Watershed

The Athabasca River flows from the Columbia Icefield located in Jasper National Park in Alberta, Canada. When that glacial water reaches the river's terminus Lake Athabasca, it will have travelled 1,231 km. From there, those waters eventually drain into the Arctic Ocean. The Athabasca River is the second largest river in Alberta and its watershed covers nearly a quarter of the province.

The Athabasca River watershed spans all or part of forty-five municipalities. Almost one out of every twenty Albertans call the watershed home. Many of those residents are employed by the numerous industries that operate in the watershed, including those in the agriculture, forestry, mining, and oil and gas sectors. The watershed is also home to indigenous peoples, many of whom utilize components of the ecosystems contained in the watershed for traditional uses.

There are many strains on the watershed, including, but not limited to, surface and groundwater allocations to industry and municipalities, linear disturbances like roads and pipelines, pressures on wetlands and riparian areas, and the many other human activities that may adversely impact the diverse ecosystems contained in the watershed. Because of the increasing pressure on the watershed, it is necessary to prudently manage the watershed in a way that is ecologically healthy and socially sustainable.

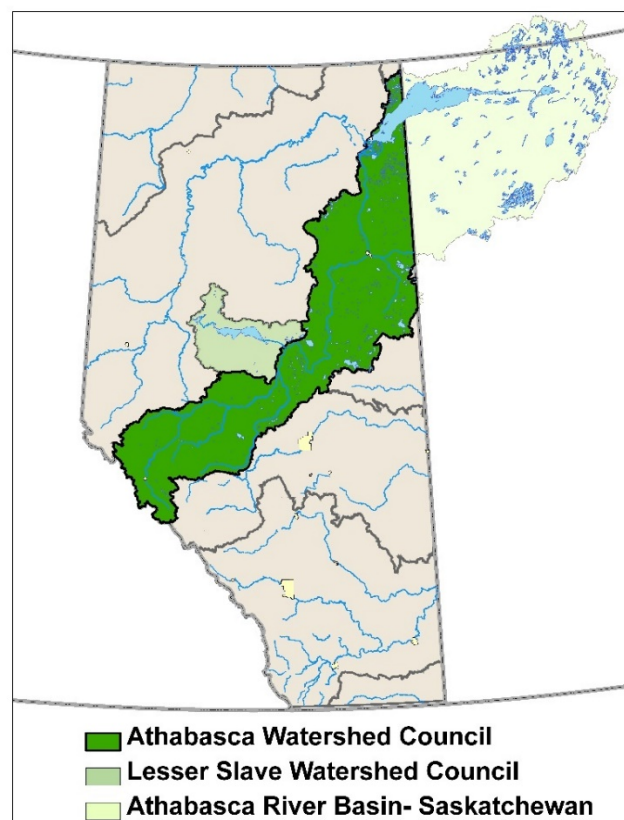


Figure 1. The Athabasca River Watershed

### Three-Year Strategic Plan (2019-2021)

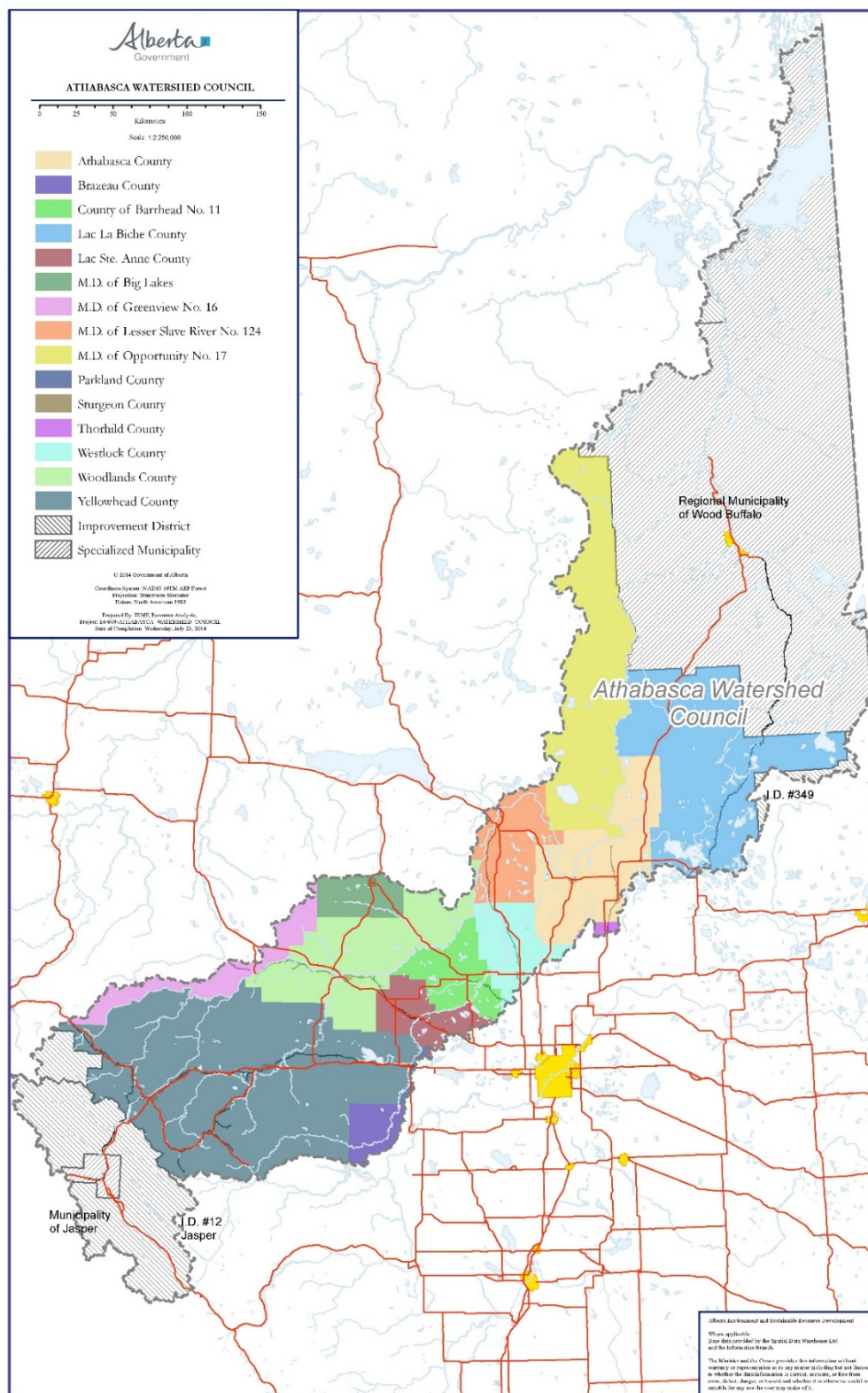


Figure 2. Map of territory under the mandate of the Athabasca Watershed Council.



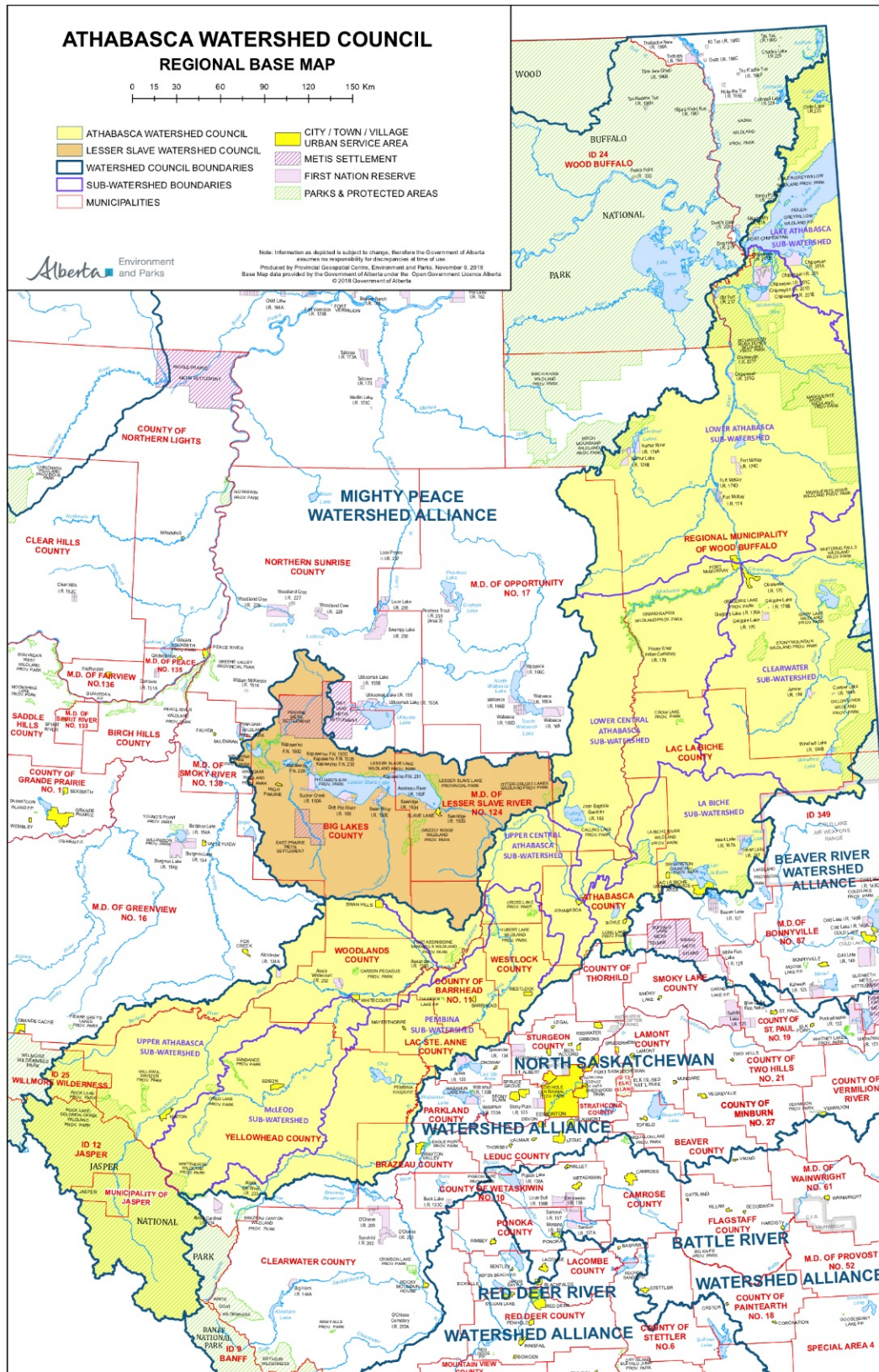


Figure 3. Municipalities in the Athabasca Watershed Council's territory.

## Our Strategic Plan for 2019-2021

### About this Plan

This plan outlines the AWC's long-term goals, the specific outcomes that we plan to achieve in the pursuit of those goals over the next three years, and the strategies that will be used to achieve those outcomes.

This plan is a living document; it is open-ended and adaptive—but sets clear overarching goals and outcomes. It will be reviewed and updated annually by the Board of Directors to reflect any new challenges or opportunities foreseen for the upcoming three years. This year, the plan looks toward the three-year period of 2019-2021, with an emphasis on the AWC's activities in 2019-2020. Next year, the plan will look toward 2020-2022, with an emphasis on 2020-2021. The plan is meant to be adaptive, in that the occurrence and timing of initiatives may vary to suit the needs and situations encountered by the organization and in the watershed.

By reviewing and updating this rolling, three-year strategic plan on an annual basis, the AWC will ensure that it operates in a constant state of preparedness, enabling effective and efficient actions as it pursues the three goals of the *Water for Life* strategy.



## Five Long-Term Goals: An Overview

The AWC-WPAC has identified five long-term goals:

**Long Term Goal 1:** *AWC is a highly reputable and credible authority on the Athabasca watershed and earns recognition for its leadership and expertise.*

**Long Term Goal 2:** *Stakeholders and Indigenous peoples throughout the Athabasca River watershed understand basic watershed science, are knowledgeable about the condition of the watershed, and are actively engaged with AWC in putting into action the resources and commitments to achieve defined outcomes.*

**Long Term Goal 3:** *Basin stakeholders have defined the desired outcomes for the Athabasca Watershed that will form the basis for the Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP) and the AWC has healthy and active relationships with the stakeholders in meeting these outcomes.*

**Long Term Goal 4:** *AWC has a reputation for organizational professionalism, balanced representation, sustainability, effective and efficient use of resources and makes strategically wise and evidence-based decisions.*

**Long Term Goal 5:** *AWC understands and informs the Stakeholders and Indigenous Peoples about the alignment (or misalignment) of the various Acts, Bylaws and Policies (eg. the Public Lands Act, the Water Act, the municipal bylaws, source water protection, wetland policies) that exist relating to the achievement of the 'Water for Life' goals and approaches.*

The next five sections focus on each of these five long-term goals. Each section outlines the outcomes that will arise over the next three years from the pursuit of these goals. These outcomes are strategic in nature, and are realistic outcomes based on available and expected resources. By pursuing these outcomes over the next three years, the AWC will effectively and efficiently move towards the achievement of its long-term goals.

Additionally, each section highlights specific strategies for achieving each of the three-year outcomes. These strategies are presented in a way that demonstrates the temporal priority of their implementation.

## Long-Term Goal 1: Highly reputable and credible authority

**Long-Term Goal 1:** *The AWC is a highly reputable and credible authority on the Athabasca watershed and earns recognition for its leadership and expertise.*

### Three-Year Outcomes

1. AWC is a credible source for information as demonstrated by an annual increase in website visits, newsletter recipients and social media engagement.
2. All seats for the Board of Directors are filled and each sector has at least one alternate.
3. Every Municipality and Indigenous Community in the basin is an organizational member of the AWC.
4. The AGM and AWC events are well attended by all sectors with attendees from across the basin.

## Three-Year Strategic Plan (2019-2021)

5. The AWC has developed and enacted a plan that establishes and maintains mutually respectful relationships with stakeholders and indigenous peoples.
6. The AWC's website is a primary source of watershed-related information for members, stakeholders, Indigenous peoples, and the general public.
7. The AWC's social media accounts facilitate timely and relevant information sharing amongst members, stakeholders, Indigenous peoples, and the general public.
8. AWC is asked to sit on Basin, Provincial, National and International committees related to the watershed or watershed issues.

## Long-Term Goal 2: Enhancing Watershed Literacy and Building Relationships

**Long-Term Goal 2:** *Stakeholders and Indigenous peoples throughout the Athabasca River watershed understand basic watershed science, are knowledgeable about the condition of the watershed, and are actively engaged with AWC in putting into action the resources and commitments to achieve defined outcomes.*

### Three-Year Outcomes

1. The watershed literacy of partners and the AWC's individual and organizational members is enhanced.
2. Partners and organizational members are aware of beneficial management practices relevant to their sector.
3. The watershed literacy of children across the basin is enhanced through in-class programming that compliments the provincial curriculum.
4. The public has an opportunity to enhance their own watershed literacy through educational materials hosted on the AWC's website and social media sites.
5. The Stakeholders and Indigenous peoples have the opportunity to be involved in a documentary that is an educational tool highlighting the Athabasca watershed and the desired outcomes to regional, national and international audiences.
6. The AWC acts as an information sharing hub and, through it, stakeholders, indigenous peoples, and the general public are able to share and receive information about relevant events, reports, processes, and conditions in a timely manner.

## Long-Term Goal 3: Integrated Watershed Management Plan

**Long-Term Goal 3:** *Basin stakeholders have defined the desired outcomes for the Athabasca Watershed that will form the basis for the Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP) and the AWC has healthy and active relationships with the stakeholders in meeting these outcomes.*

### Three-Year Outcomes

1. The Integrated Watershed Management Plan has been completed and accepted by the desired number of Stakeholders and Indigenous groups throughout the basin.
2. The major challenges to ecological integrity in the Athabasca Watershed are identified in the plan and a common understanding of ecological integrity is agreed upon by the identified partners.

## Three-Year Strategic Plan (2019-2021)

3. Cultural wisdom, traditional knowledge, local knowledge, and scientific knowledge are integrated and support planning decisions affecting the Athabasca Watershed.
4. Sectors and communities work collaboratively to determine and achieve shared environmental outcomes in the Athabasca watershed.
5. Practices that enhance or protect watershed health are shared and implemented by all sectors, communities, and governments.
6. The AWC is involved in regional planning initiatives.
7. The AWC regularly hosts and attends forums and other events to facilitate networking and information sharing amongst members.

## Long-Term Goal 4: Organizational Reputation and Professionalism

**Long-Term Goal 4:** *AWC has a reputation for organizational professionalism, balanced representation, sustainability, effective and efficient use of resources and makes strategically wise and evidence-based decisions.*

### Three-Year Outcomes

1. The communities and sectors that are represented on the Board of Directors are diverse.
2. The AWC is fiscally sustainable and responsible.
3. The Bylaws, Policies, and Terms of Reference are current, approved, and followed.
4. The AWC's designation and Society status are maintained.
5. AWC has achieved Charitable status.
6. The AWC is viewed as a credible and transparent organization.
7. The AWC has the internal capacity needed to achieve its goals.

## Long-Term Goal 5: Watershed Governance in the Basin

**Long-Term Goal 5:** *AWC understands and informs the Stakeholders and Indigenous Peoples about the alignment (or misalignment) of the various Acts, Bylaws and Policies (eg. the Public Lands Act, the Water Act, the municipal bylaws, source water protection, wetland policies) that exist relating to the achievement of the 'Water for Life' goals and approaches.*

### Three-Year Outcomes

1. The challenges to alignment (and misalignment) of the Public Land Act, the Water Act and other relevant acts are identified and shared.
2. AWC is a source of information to link stakeholders to watershed governance documents in the basin.
3. A common understanding of the governing acts and policies is known by the stakeholders and Indigenous peoples in the basin.
4. The AWC is involved in regional planning initiatives.