



Athabasca
WATERSHED COUNCIL

3-Year Strategic Plan

April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2024



Engaging Athabascans, from the mountain headwaters to the Delta lowlands...

Approved by the AWC Board: March 29, 2021

About the Athabasca Watershed Council

Established in 2009, the Athabasca Watershed Council (AWC) is a not-for-profit, charitable society guided by its vision, mission, and values. Additionally, the AWC is recognized by the Government of Alberta as a Watershed Planning and Advisory Council (WPAC) that works in partnership to achieve the goals of the Government of Alberta's *Water for Life* strategy.

Water for Life Goals

- Safe, secure drinking water
- Healthy aquatic ecosystems
- Reliable, quality water supplies for a sustainable economy

WPAC Roles

- Convenor and Collaborator (CC)
- Education and Literacy (EL)
- Policy and Planning (PP)
- Monitoring and Reporting (MR)

Vision

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

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.

Values:

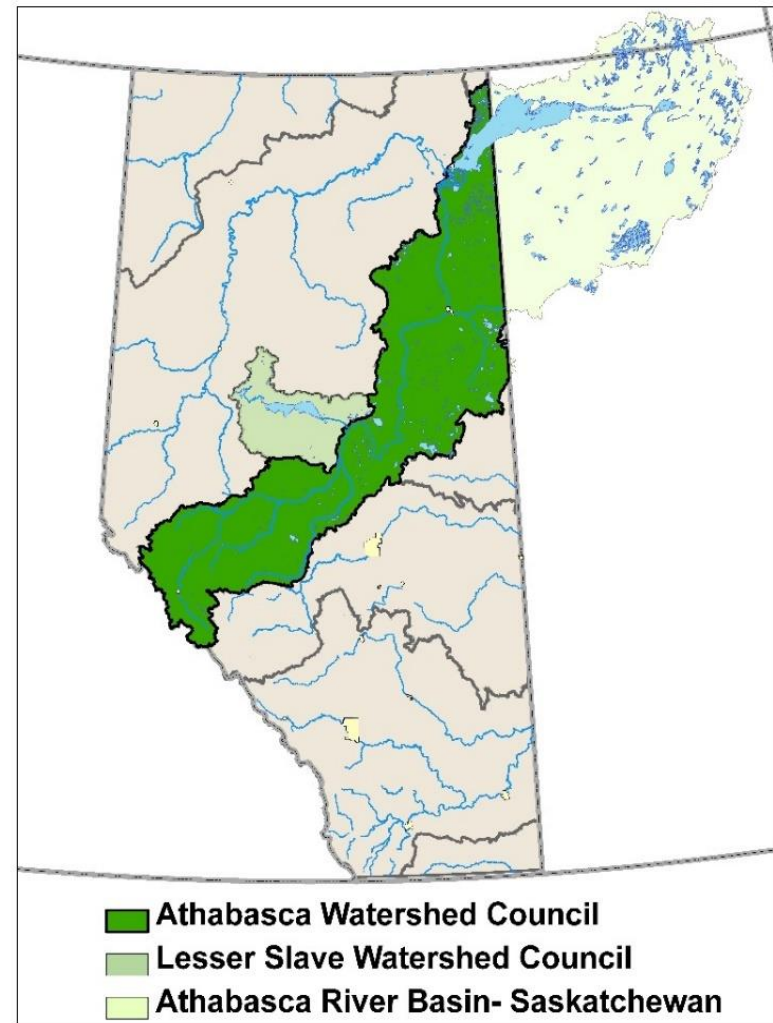
- We value integrity, trust, and transparency.
- We respect all points of view.
- Water is a blessing and gift and is essential for environment, society, economy, and the spirit.
- We respect the environment and people.
- We believe in consensus decision making.
- We respect economic responsibilities.
- 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.

Introduction

The Athabasca River is the second largest river in Alberta and its watershed covers nearly a quarter of the province. This area includes all or part of forty-five municipalities. Residents in this basin are employed by the numerous industries that operate here, including agriculture, forestry, mining, and energy sectors. The watershed is also home to Indigenous peoples, many of whom utilize components of the watershed for traditional uses. Find out more about the Athabasca River watershed by reading the State of the Watershed Summary or other AWC reports posted online at <https://awc-wpac.ca/resources/awc-reports/>.

To achieve WFL goals, as well as the vision that ‘the Athabasca watershed is ecologically healthy, socially responsible, and economically sustainable’, the Athabasca Watershed Council has identified five goals. Each goal is in turn supported by several desired outcomes and key activities, which in turn support the AWC’s role as a WPAC under the GOA’s *Water for Life* strategy. The implementation of activities and achievement of outcomes is dependent on AWC and partner capacity, as well as available resources.

This strategic plan has been developed, reviewed, and approved by the AWC’s Board of Directors. It is an open-ended, ‘rolling plan’ and will be updated annually. The plan is also 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. Annual review and reporting (Figure 1) will ensure the AWC operates in a relevant and timely fashion, enabling effective and efficient actions as it pursues the three goals of the *Water for Life* strategy and the five goals described in more detail below.



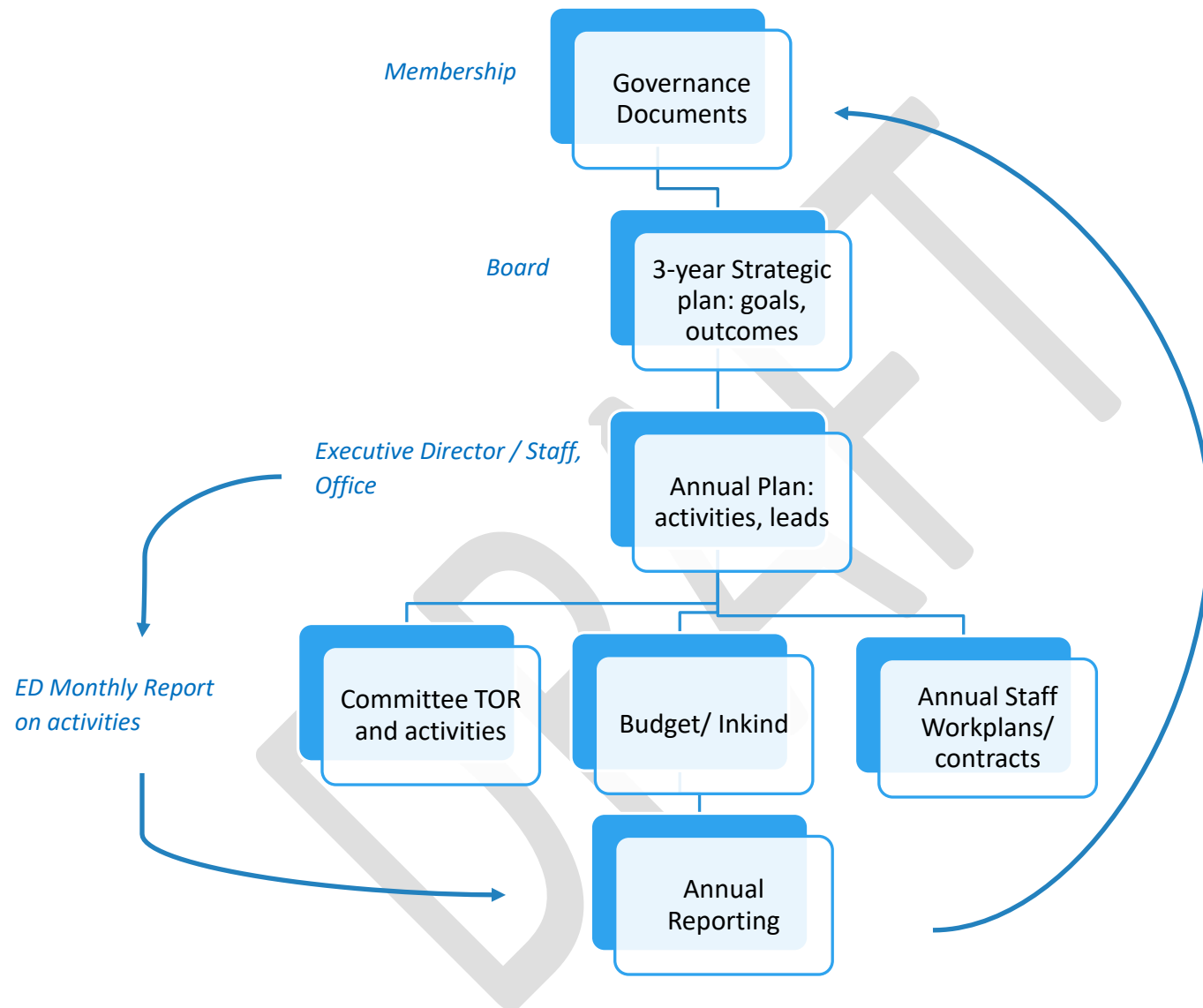


Figure 1. Diagram showing the Athabasca Watershed Council’s planning and reporting cycle.

Goal #1: The AWC is a credible authority on the Athabasca watershed and earns recognition for its leadership and expertise (internal knowledge-building).

Desired Outcomes:

1. AWC is a credible source for information:
 - The AWC’s website is a primary source of watershed-related information for members, stakeholders, Indigenous peoples, and the general public.
 - The AWC’s social media accounts facilitate timely and relevant information sharing amongst members, stakeholders, Indigenous peoples, and the general public.
2. The AWC has developed and enacted a Communications and Engagement plan that establishes and maintains mutually respectful relationships with stakeholders and Indigenous communities.
 - Every Municipality and Indigenous Community in the basin is an organizational member of the AWC.
 - The AGM and AWC events are well attended by all sectors with attendees from across the basin.
3. AWC is asked to sit on Basin, Provincial, National, and International committees related to the watershed or watershed issues.

Performance Indicator: survey? # of awards, news articles an annual increase in website visits, newsletter recipients and social media engagement; # of organizational members; attendance at events

Goal #1 Key Activities:	WPAC Role	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	Lead
1a. Update and populate the website with relevant content	EL	Update	ongoing	ongoing	Indah, contract
1b. Produce 12 e-newsletters per year	EL	refresh	ongoing	ongoing	Indah
1c. Organize social media campaigns as needed to increase participation in AWC events and to promote AWC products such as the IWMP	EL	As needed	As needed	As needed	Indah, CECE, Board members
2. Develop/update a communications and engagement plan with a focus on building relationships with stakeholders and Indigenous communities.	EL	Draft, approve	Implement	implement	Petra, Indah, CECE
3a. Participate in the WPAC Collective and provide a WPAC perspective to Alberta Water Council provincial policy and other initiatives, as an AWC Director, or as part of the WPAC Collective.	CC		Term ends		Petra, Morris, WPAC Managers Committee
3b. Ensure the AWC board is aware of other watershed, provincial, national, and international initiatives relevant to AWC work and where appropriate, establish relationships with these initiatives (e.g., Sarah – CABIN; Petra – PAD, WNC)	CC	ongoing	ongoing	ongoing	Petra, Sarah, Board

Goal #2: Stakeholders and Indigenous peoples throughout the Athabasca River watershed have access to information, are knowledgeable about the condition of the watershed, and are actively engaged with the AWC in mobilizing resources and commitments to achieve shared outcomes (external knowledge-building).

Desired Outcomes:

1. The watershed literacy and knowledge of partners and the AWC’s individual and organizational members is enhanced through access to state of the watershed and other types of information.
2. Children’s watershed literacy across the basin is enhanced through in-class programming that compliments the provincial curriculum.
3. Public watershed literacy is enhanced through educational materials hosted on the AWC’s website and social media sites.
4. Stakeholders and Indigenous peoples have the opportunity to be involved in a documentary that is an educational tool highlighting the Athabasca watershed and shared water outcomes to regional, national, and international audiences.
5. 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.
6. The AWC regularly hosts and attends forums and other events to facilitate networking and information sharing among members.

Performance Indicator: survey? # of state of and other documents on the website, # of collaborations, \$\$ and in-kind

Goal # 2 Key Activities:	WPAC Role	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	Lead
1a. Use AEP’s survey tool to benchmark and periodically measure changes in water literacy in the Athabasca River watershed.	EL	Initiate		Repeat	Indah, CECE
1b. Develop state of type reports about the condition of WFL goals in the Athabasca watershed.	EL, MR, PP	State of riparian	State of DW	State of...	Petra, Sarah, Tech
2a. Provide more children/student type information on the website.	EL	update	ongoing	ongoing	Indah, contract
2b. Provide outreach events for children/families.	EL	deferred			Sarah
3a. Enhance ‘watershed 101’ type information on the website; use the photo competition and calendar as a means to build watershed literacy.	EL	Refresh, calendar			Indah, contract
3b. Collaborate with other WPACs to produce a watershed video series.	EL				Laura, Brian
4. Produce an Athabasca watershed documentary.	EL	deferred			Funding?
5. Improve the website, use of social media, so that the AWC acts more as an information hub for disseminating information	EL	refresh			Indah, Petra, contract
6a. Find opportunities to network, share information including hosting events (e.g., Board meetings, AGM, WPAC Summit, presentations, Coffee talks, etc.)	EL, CC	AGM, Summit	ongoing	ongoing	all

Goal #3: Athabascans have defined desired outcomes for the Athabasca River Integrated Watershed Management Plan and the AWC has healthy and active relationships with Athabascans and others in meeting these outcomes (watershed focus).

Desired Outcomes:

1. The Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP) identifies shared social, cultural, economic, and environmental outcomes and has been completed and accepted by Stakeholders and Indigenous groups throughout the basin.
 - Aquatic ecosystem health and the issues that affect it are defined and identified in the IWMP and agreed to by IWMP partners.
2. Cultural wisdom, traditional knowledge, local knowledge, and scientific knowledge inform water and watershed management in the Athabasca Watershed and information gaps are addressed.
3. Sectors and communities work collaboratively to achieve shared watershed outcomes through implementation of the IWMP.

Performance Measures: outcomes are defined in the IWMP; # of IWMP presentations; # of IWMP collaborations; # of IWMP actions implemented.

Goal #3 Key Activities:	WPAC Role	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	Lead
1a. Do a final round of engagement; complete and approve the IWMP and post it to the website.	PP				Petra, Tech, Board
1b. Raise awareness of the IWMP as well as aquatic ecosystem health with stakeholders and Indigenous groups through presentations, social media, etc.	PP				Petra, Tech, Board
2a. Continue to fill IWMP data gaps (e.g., riparian, benthic Invertebrates, state of drinking water, performance measures, sub-basin initiatives)	MR				Sarah, Petra, Tech,
2b. Undertake initiatives that identify Indigenous perspectives relevant to WFL goals in the Athabasca watershed.	CC				Petra, Indigenous board members
3. Develop an IWMP workplan, implement and report on actions annually.	PP				Petra, Tech

Goal #4: AWC promotes the alignment and integration of land and water statutory and non-statutory policies, plans and program across jurisdictions where needed to achieve ‘Water for Life’ goals and a healthy Athabasca River watershed (land-water interface).

Desired Outcomes:

1. Areas where land and water policies, plans and programs are misaligned are identified and shared with appropriate agencies.
2. AWC is a source of information to help stakeholders understand land and water governance in the Athabasca River watershed and build a common understanding of the policies, legislation, plans and beneficial management practices in the basin.
3. The AWC promotes a watershed approach by connecting land and water planning initiatives and where practical, participates in provincial, regional, municipal and industry land use, water, resource, and beneficial practices initiatives.
4. Partners and organizational members are made aware of information relating to beneficial management practices around waterbodies relevant to their sector.

Performance Indicators: # of examples of integration

Key Activities:	WPAC Role	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	Lead
1. Undertake a policy and plan review to improve understanding of the state of land and water management in the Athabasca watershed. Phase 1 – focus on the Pembina River sub-shed.	PP				Contract, new funds required
2. Provide more information on the website about policies, legislation, regional, municipal, resource plans and beneficial practices.	EL, PP	refresh			Indah, Contract
3. Promote a watershed perspective by participating in and showcasing regional, municipal, and local planning engagement processes (e.g., LLB WMP-Brian, Sarah; BAILS WMP Implementation-Morris, Kendra; Calling Lake Community Society strategic plan- Petra)	PP	ongoing	ongoing	ongoing	Petra, Sarah, Individual Board members
4. Undertake projects that promote beneficial practices that enhance or protect watershed health (e.g., riparian fencing projects)	EL, CC, MR				Petra, Sarah, Tech

Goal #5: AWC has a reputation for organizational professionalism, balanced representation, sustainability, effective and efficient use of resources and makes strategically wise and evidence-based decisions (internal efficacy).

Desired Outcomes:

1. The Bylaws, Policies, and Terms of Reference are current, approved, and followed.
2. The AWC’s designation, Society status, charitable status and GOA mandate as a WPAC are maintained with reporting current.
3. All board seats are filled, the communities and sectors represented on the Board of Directors are diverse; the board meets at least quarterly.
4. The AWC is fiscally sustainable and responsible, follows standard accounting practices with Financial Statements and audit reports completed, approved and current.
5. The AWC has the internal capacity needed to achieve its goals; and all processes are documented such that transitions are smooth; staff meet regularly, and an ‘office’ (physical or virtual) is maintained and accessible to the public.
6. The AWC is viewed as a credible and transparent organization; meetings are open to the public, meeting minutes and other AWC documents are made publicly available in a timely manner, actions and decisions are tracked.

Performance Indicators: AWC reputation survey with stakeholders, board make-up, funding, board efficacy survey

Goal #5 Key Activities:	WPAC Role	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	Lead
1. Review and update governance documents as required in particular in light of transparency, inclusiveness, barriers, etc.	CC, MR	review	ongoing	ongoing	Petra, Committees
2. Keep records and file all reports needed to maintain status.		ongoing	ongoing	ongoing	Petra, Accountants
3. Recruit and retain a diversity of members and directors; learn about sector water use/needs by encouraging sector presentations; organize quarterly board and monthly executive meetings.	CC, EL	Fill vacancies	ongoing	ongoing	Petra, Executive, Board
4a. Maintain a three-year plan/budget and reporting process, track in-kind support.	MR	ongoing	ongoing	ongoing	Petra, Board
4b. Improve sustainability by researching an endowment fund, other funds.	PP				Petra, Finance
5a. Continue to raise funds and increase capacity to support AWC projects and activities.	CC	ongoing	ongoing	ongoing	Petra, Finance
5b. Maintain an office, equipment, etc.	PP, CC	ongoing	ongoing	ongoing	Staff
6. Build credibility by being more transparent; improve process/timeline of posting meeting minutes and other documents; host more open mic sessions with members, use survey tools to gather feedback, etc.	CC	Minutes, coffee talks	ongoing	ongoing	Staff, Committees, Board