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FEBRUARY, 2012

Annual WFL Partnerships Newsletter

ISSUE ONE



About this Newsletter



The [AWC](#) has launched a special annual newsletter that highlights the *Water for Life* partners a small sampling of their success stories from the past year. Building on the work of the [Moving from Words to Actions project team](#), the partnerships newsletter helps to create more awareness of the partnerships and the good work being done in water management around the province.

Special thanks to the contributors of our first issue: Land Stewardship Centre of Canada, South East Alberta Watershed Alliance, Red Deer River Watershed Alliance, and Alberta Environment and Water.

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About the WFL Partnerships

Water for Life: a strategy for sustainability is the Government of Alberta's guidance document for water management. The strategy was launched in 2003 and renewed in 2008 and a new action plan was released in 2009. The renewed strategy continues to identify partnerships as a key mechanism for achieving the goals and outcomes. Three types of partnerships were identified in the strategy: local [Watershed Stewardship Groups](#) (WSGs), regional [Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils](#) (WPACs), and provincial [Alberta Water Council](#) (AWC). The AWC provides a forum for sectors and Water for Life (WFL) partners to come together to discuss and find innovative solutions to shared water management issues.

water for life

The WFL partnership system is composed of the provincial AWC, 11 WPACs and approximately 140 WSGs. The partnerships typically include stakeholders representing governments, industries, and non-government organizations. At present, more than 1,000 Albertans are working directly under the banner of WFL.

Wetlands, Trees and Forests Day

On May 2 2011, 155 students and their teachers from five schools in the Iron Creek sub-watershed



gathered at the Killam Community Hall for a Wetlands, Trees and Forests Day. The event is designed to teach kids from grades 4-6 about watershed issues, and empower teachers to continue that education in the classroom.

Wetlands, Trees and Forests Day was created nearly ten years ago by the Iron Creek Watershed Improvement Society (ICWIS), and has developed into a model for successful community engagement and collaboration.

ICWIS, a Watershed Stewardship Group, partnered with the Battle River Watershed Alliance (BRWA) to plan the event, and ICWIS Chair Don Ruzicka credits Nathalie Stanley (BRWA Outreach and Education) for helping to make it a success. "Every couple of years someone contacts me to ask about the best value for grant dollar. Without a doubt, it's this event," offers Ruzicka.

When asked for his recipe for success, Ruzicka responds "Collaboration. That's what we have to do more and more." And collaborate they did. Aside from the two planning partners, this event brought together representatives and gained support from Flagstaff County, Battle River Research Group, Town of Killam, Alberta Beef Producers, Alberta Health, the Battle River School Division, and the [Alberta Stewardship Network](#).

Most importantly, Wetlands, Trees and Forests Day is an energizing experience for all who participate. The number of kids, teachers, and partner representatives who attend is consistently high, which creates a rewarding experience for everyone. It truly is a community event that involves a diversity of sectors, while promoting watershed stewardship through education and networking. As Ruzicka says, "The awareness goes home with the kids, and it's there at the table at dinner time."

To learn more about the Wetlands, Trees and Forests Day, contact Don Ruzicka at ruzickadon@hotmail.com.

Clear Water Landcare

Established in 1999, the Watershed Stewardship Group named Rocky Riparian was formed in response to a series of surveys in Clearwater



County which revealed stream bank degradation. Recognizing that watershed problems are often the result of combined land use practices, this group of dedicated individuals has worked with the community for over a decade to address issues on a landscape level. In recent years however, it has become apparent that the group faces some challenges to achieving their goals due to public misconceptions about what they do.

The word 'riparian' led many to believe that only landowners on riverbanks could participate or access support from Rocky Riparian. In practice, the group encourages involvement from all who have an impact on the landscape and are interested in stewardship. There was also a perception that the significant level of agency and government support for Rocky Riparian meant that the group was a government regulator masquerading as a community group.

"The best way to achieve community trust is as a multi-stakeholder group. No one agent could do it alone," explains Kim Nielsen, former Manager of Agriculture Services with Clearwater County and one of the founding members of Rocky Riparian. While it is true that the group was founded with the support and guidance of a number of different government and non-government agencies, such as Clearwater County, it is not involved in implementing regulations and has always been dedicated to community-driven initiatives.

It is in this context that, in 2011, Rocky Riparian decided to change its name to Clear Water Landcare. Nielsen adds, "The change was not because we didn't feel we were whole-community-driven, because we always felt that we were. The change was for ease of understanding of what we are about."

Photo Credit: L. Wagner

SEAWA - Collaborative Watershed Governance

The Executive Director of SEAWA (South East Alberta Watershed Alliance), Bob Phillips, was an invited paid speaker at the international conference held January 26th and 27th, 2012 in



Vancouver, BC. Watershed groups from across Canada and Washington State met to discuss new collaborative governance approaches. Bob was joined by Don Pearson, General Manager, Conservation Ontario; and Anna Warwick Sears, Executive Director, Okanagan Basin Water Board to discuss "What is Happening on the Ground". They led off the conference and had feedback that they were inspirational! Three hundred participants spent two days learning how to build best practices in collaborative watershed governance.

Some of the excellent points made by speakers:

- the future is shared decision making and collaborative watershed governance - not if but when;
- water and functioning watersheds are strategic assets increasing in importance and absolutely fundamental to community and economic prosperity;
- if climate change is the shark...water will be its teeth!;
- watershed governance improves the connection between citizens and decision makers;
- for success collaborative processes need to be open, transparent, inclusive and consensus based;
- build broad consensus among competing interests;
- build scientific consensus for action;
- don't ignore importance of public review process;
- don't try to control by declaring your bottom line at outset;
- put your feet first in other moccasins and show that you have listened;
- search for the collective wisdom of all interests in the room;

Inspiration for the new name came from the highly successful Landcare Australia program, which encourages communities to find local solutions for local issues in their environment.

For Clear Water Landcare, the new name serves the following specific purposes:

1. To communicate that anyone interested in caring for the watershed is welcome to get involved, and
2. To demonstrate a commitment to community-driven stewardship, as a part of the international Landcare movement.

Clear Water Landcare continues to build on past accomplishments, and looks forward to enjoying the benefits that their new name will bring. "As we begin to evolve, we see groups take on projects that they would not have done under the previous name," says Nielsen. A greater diversity of landowners is showing interest in the programs they provide to support stewardship, and the group is confident that this trend will continue and have a positive impact on the landscape.

For more information on Clear Water Landcare contact Clear Water Landcare Coordinator Gary Lewis at glewis@clearwatercounty.ca. For more information on the international Landcare movement, visit Landcare Australia.

Photo Credit: S. Sly

RDRWA - Watershed Ambassador Program

As one of Alberta's eleven WPACs, in September 2011, the Red Deer River Watershed Alliance (RDRWA) initiated a Watershed Ambassador



Program. Monthly since, it has been using the program for recognizing and celebrating the passion for stewardship existing in the Red Deer River Basin. In just 5 months, the program has recognized over 40 Watershed Ambassadors, the youngest 17 years old, for contributions to watershed health.

In every community there is a spirit of volunteerism, and the watershed community is no different. The

- and remember the importance of taking a stand and communicating it well.

It was interesting to learn the different approaches various provincial governments have taken with respect to funding and delegating responsibility to community watershed groups and councils. Probably the most useful exercises were the many breakout room sessions where we actually started to plan for future collaboration. Stay tuned for the Collective Watershed Governance Initiative (CWGI).

For more information on the conference:

<http://poliswaterproject.org/sites/default/files/A%20Water%20Gathering%20-%20Solutions%20Forum.pdf>

Photo Credit: L. Wagner

Message from AEW Minister Diana McQueen

The work of partners like the Alberta Water Council is not only appreciated, but is an integral part of collaborative water management and planning. I want to thank the Council and its members for their hard work and significant contributions to our understanding and management of Alberta's water resources.



Indeed, there's nothing more fundamental to life than access to a safe and secure water supply. The recent re-naming of Alberta Environment and Water is testament to how vital this finite resource is to the well-being of our province.

We need to ensure that the quality and quantity of water that's required to support the environmental, economic and social needs of Albertans remains sustainable and protected - this means taking a careful look at water allocation, wetlands, groundwater and monitoring.

I am proud of the work to date on water management in Alberta - we have a proven record of effective conservation and protection thanks to the cooperation of Albertans, industrial and municipal partners and water stewardship organizations.

The success of Alberta's Water for Life strategy has been captured in a recently released progress report.

RDRWA has strategically risen to the challenge of focusing this spirit, celebrating and re-kindling it through public recognition - using it to drive watershed management initiatives. The RDRWA is achieving this through its engaging, and unique, Watershed Ambassador Program!

The RDRWA Watershed Ambassador Program is all about promoting watershed management by publicly recognizing and thanking its watershed's stewards. Through this initiative, the RDRWA is actively collaborating on an ongoing basis with WSGs, non-government organizations, government and individuals. Together all are promoting and advocating for improving watershed management practices by recognizing such related accomplishments, both large and small.

One cannot help but be struck by the emotion and passion of the program's breakfast attendees and ambassadorship recipients for our precious water resources. The events are truly becoming a cause for celebration! Being designated an Ambassador of the Red Deer River Watershed is signifying watershed community support through recognition. It is celebrating the personal commitment of many individuals to Beneficial Watershed Management Practices that are in keeping with the RDRWA vision, mission and goals.

Check out the Red Deer River Watershed Alliance website: www.rdrwa.ca, become a friend on [Facebook](#) or follow us on [Twitter](#).

AEW Releases WFL Progress Report

The Government of Alberta wants to ensure the quality and quantity of water that's required to support the environmental, economic and social needs of Albertans remains strong for the future, which is why we have in place the Water for Life strategy.



The recently released Water for Life Progress Report highlights many of the successful initiatives and activities currently underway as part of the Water for

The report details key projects and activities that support our work to strike the right balance between the needs of the environment and those of growing communities, the agricultural sector and the economy.

Key initiatives already underway in Alberta include the creation of a new, comprehensive and integrated monitoring program for the entire province, starting in the oil sands region. We are also reviewing and renewing Alberta's water allocation system, creating a made-for-Alberta wetlands policy, and continuing work on the South Saskatchewan River Basin water management plan.

Proper stewardship of our water resources is a shared responsibility. Through informed, capable, and committed partnerships we will continue to ensure Alberta's water resource remains protected for current and future generations. I look forward to continued collaboration with our province's water stewardship partners.

Photo Credit: L. Wagner

Life strategy. Additionally, the progress report covers specific actions outlined in the 2009 action plan during the period of December 1, 2008 to March 31, 2011.

Not every activity is listed; however, a number of individual projects and initiatives are showcased, which demonstrates the scope and variety of work currently underway in the province. Most importantly, the progress report details how this work relates to the overall action plan. Keep in mind that the completion of an action doesn't necessarily indicate its ultimate end. In fact, frequently the knowledge gained from a short-term action, such as a study or an assessment becomes the foundation for future studies, initiatives and even policies.

Please take a moment to read about the success of the Water for Life strategy and the Government of Alberta's ongoing commitment to ensuring a safe, secure water supply for all Albertans. The [Water for Life](#) website is an excellent source of information about water conservation, water management and water safety.

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