

The River Current

Summer 2006



Our Mission: Promoting watershed sustainability through awareness, linkages and stewardship.

Climate Change and Water in the Prairies

Saskatoon, June 21-23 2006

by Brian McGaffigan (Battle River Alliance for Economic Development))

Climate change is real, occurring, and will continue. It will not be going away and will result in change to the stream flows. The trend is a 10% reduction in water flow which will elevate continuing socio-economic issues. The conference reinforced many concerns but also provided some cautious optimism. With increased research knowledge and planning, the issues can be managed.

The presenters not only detailed the issues but also sought to find solutions at both global and local levels. It was pointed out that as India and China continue their industrialization, emissions from those two countries alone will be equivalent to the emissions of all current industrial nations combined. Climate control will profoundly affect our world. Severe weather events are occurring. We cannot view climate change as an isolated issue but rather we must connect it through all socio-economic-political entities.

The studies presented from the South Saskatchewan River Basin (SSRB) brought forth issues in our own backyard. Detailed models were discussed, as were the economic impacts and legal frameworks for cooperative inter-jurisdictional actions. The future holds concerns for both the quantity and quality of our water supply. The magnitude of these issues will become clearer with time.

So how well positioned are we to cope? We have learned a lot and there seems to be a legal framework to cope already in place. With the understanding we have today, it appears that we are still ten years away from more certain predictions of the effects of climate change. In all of this, we need to develop flexible understandable systems although they will never be able to predict with 100% accuracy. There is great leadership developing from within the stakeholders of the SSRB, within which stewardship and shared responsibility remain a priority. Properly managing renewable resources and watershed planning was emphasized. Policies to manage the impact of water scarcity can help. One policy discussed included the pros and cons of pricing water as a marketable resource.

The conference closed with a panel discussion of issues the panelists felt were important as we move into the future: The need for nutrient management (Winnipeg Lake is deteriorating with nutrients coming in from the Red River, Lake of the Woods and SSRB); the potential for increased flood damage; water quality; education versus legislation; and building up an informed public.

There is a limit to growth as there is only so much water to sustain it. Thus there is the great need for balancing the environment and economic development. There is a sense of urgency to get on the right track. The question becomes: Is there the political will to pay for the costs as well as empower and entrust the communities to make decisions?

Having a better understanding of the issues is only as good as our ability to pass the information on to others.

This article is a summary of some of the information which Brian McGaffigan, BRAED, learned from the Climate Change and Water in the Prairies Conference. To contact Brian or to learn more about the BRAED visit www.braedalberta.ca.



***Entries now being recieved for the
Fred Heal Conservation Award
Visit www.saskriverbasin.ca for more informaiton***

1. Oldman River Watershed Council

by Leda Kozak

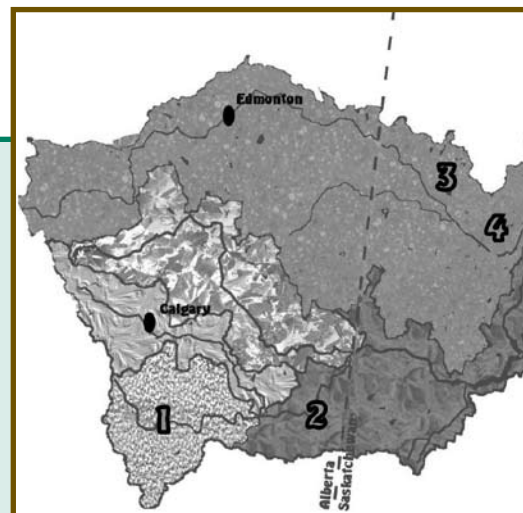
The Oldman Watershed Council (OWC) is a not-for-profit organization that is working in partnership with communities and residents to improve the Oldman River Watershed. Council members provide leadership and guidance in watershed planning and management, water quality monitoring and stewardship promotion.

The Oldman River Basin, located in southwestern Alberta, extends north to High River, east to Grassy Lake, west to the Crowsnest Pass in the Rocky Mountains, and dips south across the 49th parallel into Glacier International Peace Park in Montana.

The OWC was formed in September 2004, when Alberta's Water for Life strategy was released and the Oldman River Basin Water Quality Initiative merged with the Oldman Basin Advisory Council. These 2 groups combined to provide a diverse partnership knowledgeable in all areas of watershed management, including sustainable water management and land use practices in the Oldman Basin.

Our teams include the Board of Directors, the Communications and Outreach Team, the Urban Beneficial Management Practices Team, the Rural Team, the Data Collection and Integration Team, and the State of the Watershed Team. Our current projects include water quality monitoring of the Oldman River and rural tributaries, refining the watershed delineation and hydrocoding, developing surface and groundwater vulnerability maps, piloting an information portal (with Alberta Environment) for residents to access water quality and flow data from the basin completing applied research, promoting stormwater protection, installing a water-wise garden at Wilson middle school, developing interpretive signs for a constructed wetland, and producing a State of the Watershed Report.

For more information on the Oldman Watershed Council, visit our website at www.oldmanbasin.org.



2. Citizens' Water Study Group - Medicine Hat

by Martha Munz Gue

In November 2005, after environmental consultations by the City of Medicine Hat, a Citizens' Water Study Group was formed, "to continue the conversation". This group met monthly as an ad hoc committee of the Society of Grasslands Naturalists, to gather information about water, to share experiences, and to discuss appropriate responses to what we were learning. At one of our meetings Rob Wolf of Alberta Environment dropped in unexpectedly. He is closely involved with the Bow River Basin Council. After listening to our introductions and why we were participating, he encouraged us by saying we were already acting as a watershed stewardship group. Previous discussions with the Bow River Basin Council director had indicated that it is the stewardship groups that carry out much of the front line work of improving the quality of water through education and hands-on projects.

For World Water Day (March 22, 2006) we decided to have a water display at City Hall. One of our study group members is also a member of City Council, so that made it easier. We posted maps of our watershed, set up tables of literature about the need for a water policy for Canada (material from the Council of Canadians), responsible stewardship for shoreline property owners (material from the Living by Water Project), and the effects of using bottled water instead of public tap water (material from the KAIROS Ecumenical peace and Justice group). The big attention grabber was the equipment that can be used by households to save water: a front loading washing machine, a rain barrel, a 3 litre toilet (which actually flushed potatoes so the mechanism could be seen to work), a xeriscaping display, and lawn and garden equipment that use less water from a local lawn shop. The Cypress Watershed Stewardship Group set up a display of farm and ranch projects that are designed to improve the quality of water run-off into the Seven Persons Creek. In the City Hall display, we addressed both issues of water quality and water quantity.

That event built further enthusiasm in the water study group, and it was decided to form a society; so the group was renamed, "Prairie River Stewards". This group set up a display in Kin Coulee Park and participated in the Alberta Water Quality testing during the three days of Spectrum – a sunshine festival at the beginning of June. A Prairie River Steward display was mounted at the mall on June 10 as a part of the Environment Week Displays.

The group has had 20 to 25 volunteers, from Grasslands Naturalists, churches and the urban and rural community at large. Anyone interested in learning about water is welcome to attend the meetings which are held on the first Wednesday of each month. Contact the Nature Centre (529-6225) for information on the next meeting.

3. Stewards of Jackfish & Murray Lakes Inc.

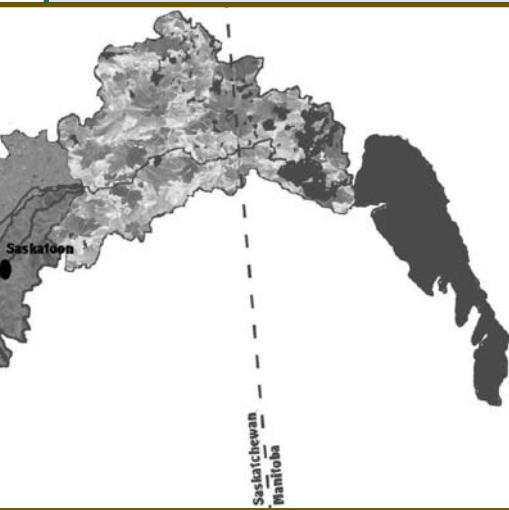
by Valerie Holowach

It has been ten years since the first meetings of what was to become the Stewards of Jackfish & Murray Lakes were held. In 1998 we were incorporated by SaskWater. From the beginning, dedicated volunteers have worked on various projects designed to protect our watershed, and several have assisted with water sampling six times a year. As well, in the winter of 2004 they assisted with lake bottom coring and analysis.

Jackfish and Murray Lakes dropped to new low levels in 2004, which caused great concern for all residents. Our water testing indicated increased chemical concentrations but also showed that water quality, with exceptions, remained stable for bathing and water sports. The spring runoff in 2005 and 2006 has worked miracles, and all water tests show a remarkable improvement. The lakes are now full.

We have just released the 2006 edition of our Newsletter and held our AGM on June 7, 2006 with information on conservation easements in Saskatchewan, and the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority's Lake Stewardship program. We have a busy summer planned, attending beach association meetings and two trade shows in our area, monthly water sampling, a special public information meeting in August, and have launched a photo contest with the theme Enjoying the Waterin the Jackfish & Murray Lakes Watershed.

We invite everyone to come and enjoy our beautiful part of Saskatchewan.



4. Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve

by Andrew Hawrysh

Biosphere Reserves represent key ecosystems of the globe (the biosphere) and are designated by UNESCO as sites to demonstrate innovative and practical approaches to conservation and sustainable development. The Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve (RLBR) was designated on the basis of its unique landscape and social component of its area. This area covers 112,200 hectares and provides habitat for nine endangered species, as well as over 180 species.

In the last year the RLBR has had its displays redeveloped to represent its entire watershed, define Biosphere Reserves and their roles, and how Redberry is aligned nationally and internationally. We are currently working to develop educational materials for educational programming in our research centre and at Hafford School which is designated as part of the UNESCO Associated School Project Network.

The RLBR hosted the 2006 Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Biosphere Reserves Association (CBRA) from June 8-11. In attendance were representatives from all 13 Canadian Biosphere Reserves, as well as the Rhone Biosphere Reserve in Germany, and a guest from France. The Grand Reopening of the RLBR Research & Education Centre highlighted Saturday's events. At this time the work of the 'Youth' of Biosphere Reserve's across Canada was recognized.

Beginning in March of 2006 the RLBR has taken on the role of housing and managing The Redberry Lake Watershed Agri-Environmental Project (AEGP). This is a 'Group Environmental Farm Plan' initiative in the Redberry Lake watershed area that includes the RM's of Blaine Lake, Great Bend, Mayfield, Douglas, Meeting Lake and Redberry. Producers from within this area chose riparian area management and livestock wintering site management as the key best management practices (BMP) categories that they wished to implement in an effort to improve the practices on their farms. The Redberry Lake AEGP hired John Kindrachuk, a local resident, to help producers assess environmental risks on their farms and help them prepare their plans for implementation. Some examples of BMP's include remote watering systems to manage livestock, grazing management in surrounding uplands, fencing to manage grazing and improve riparian condition, portable shelters and windbreaks, and native rangeland restoration.

The Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve Research and Education Centre are located in the Redberry Lake Regional Park, a few minute drive east of Hafford Sask. Come check out our displays to find out more interesting details.

For more information visit www.redberrylake.ca or email Andrew Hawrysh at hawryshcreek@sasktel.net.

Meewasin Finalist in "Nobel Prize" for Saving Rivers

July 18, 2006

Meewasin Valley Authority, the managing partner for the Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin, is one of four finalists for the 2006 International Thiess Riverprize award for excellence in river and waterway management. In its application, Meewasin included the work of the Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin.

The prestigious International Thiess Riverprize, recognized as the 'Nobel prize for saving rivers,' is a global award presented annually for outstanding achievements in river repair and management. Projects usually demonstrate a combination of successful restoration, education, management and scientific initiatives.

The prize of AUD 225,000 and the International Thiess Riverprize trophy are funded by the International Riverfoundation, which was established to advocate protecting and restoring the world's rivers and waterways for future generations. Winners are honoured at a special September 2006 award ceremony during the International Riversymposium in Brisbane, Australia.

Four large river restoration projects – Kissimmee River (USA), Lake Macquarie (Australia), South Saskatchewan River (Canada) and Sha River (China) – are finalists for this year's International Thiess Riverprize.

For more information contact Jennifer Nelson at 306-665-6887 or visit www.riversymposium.com; www.riverfestival.com; www.internationalriverfoundation.com.au.

Employment Opportunity: MANAGER (PART-TIME)

Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin promotes awareness, linkages, stewardship, knowledge and respect for the basin. Since 1993, this association has encouraged sustainable use of the basin's resources through its basin-wide membership. Its reach covers some 3 million people. This is a part-time job with flexible hours at a minimum of half time.

The Manager has overall responsibility, including:

- formulation of plans, policies and programs
- management of staff
- budget control
- evaluate and report on performance
- various entrepreneurial/consulting activities
- secretariat to the Partners' Board of Directors from Prairie Provinces
- revenue generation, including membership, grant writing and reporting

The successful candidate will have the following qualifications:

- a university degree in natural science, education, or a related discipline
- progressive responsibility in resource management, public education, or a related field
- management experience, including project management, budgets, and human resources. Must negotiate and manage contracts with consultants and suppliers
- superior communication skills and the ability to represent Partners with public and private groups

Please apply in writing to the address below by noon August 21, 2006:

Director of Operations
Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin
402 Third Avenue South
Saskatoon, SK
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www.saskriverbasin.ca

PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT NUMBER 40025238

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The River Current is published quarterly by Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin. Articles and news items will be considered for publication. For further information about Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin Project, or to submit items, please contact us.

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