

The River Current

Spring/Summer 2018



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

The Dammed Rivers! ***PFSRB Annual Water Conference***

Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin and the Canadian Water Resources Association, Saskatchewan Branch, are pleased to announce that our annual conference will be held in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, **October 1 to 3, 2018**, at the Park Town Hotel. The theme for this year's conference is "The Dammed Rivers!"

A multitude of dams are found along our rivers throughout the Prairie Provinces – rivers both large and small. Dams are constructed for a variety of reasons – to create reservoirs to use for electrical generation, water use and recreation, dams to create wetland areas for waterfowl and wildlife, and dams to control water drainage.

These dams change the landscape in many ways, altering stream flows, creating lakes, and creating wetlands. All construction affects the landscape in some way and therefore the way that we humans interact with our surroundings.

General themes for the conference include: the History of Dams and Projects in the Prairie Provinces; Cultural/Social Considerations; Environmental Aspects; and

the Status of Projects and Future Plans.

The conference will bring together experts from many fields related to the existence of dams. Please join us October 1 to 3, 2018 in Saskatoon to hear about how the presence or lack thereof of dams affects our everyday lives.

The conference is being held at the Park Town Hotel. This hotel is located directly across from the beautiful South Saskatchewan River. Please call the hotel directly to register your stay, informing the registration staff that you are attending the Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin conference to receive the conference rate of \$139/night (1 Queen room), plus taxes.

Guests must specify Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin Conference when reserving to access the negotiated rate. Group rate expires August 31, 2018, so book your room soon!

Park Town Hotel

924 Spadina Crescent East
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7K 3H5

Reservations: 1-800-667-3999

email: reservations@parktownhotel.com

The dedicated conference website is www.dammedrivers.com. Please go here to find out more information and to register for the conference. Early bird registration closes August 31, 2018.



PFSRB Annual General Meeting

The next Annual General Meeting for PFSRB will be **June 22, 2018**. The meeting will be held in the boardroom at the Meewasin Valley Authority, 402 Third Avenue South, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, starting at **12:00 pm** Saskatoon time. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Prescribed Burns Maintain Health of Grasslands

Carefully laid fires manage ecosystems, Renny Grilz and Matthew Braun
Saskatoon Star Phoenix, May 15, 2018

Grass fires are inevitable in Saskatchewan, as seen by the fires recently in the Dundurn and Lumsden areas. The landscape that defines this prairie province is dry and windy.

Wildfires can start a number of different ways and are frightening, dangerous and potentially destructive. Prescribed fires, however, are a relatively safe way to manage a natural ecosystem in Saskatchewan.

Fires were a larger part of life on the Prairies before roads and fields broke up the sea of grass that is the Prairies. Early settlers did their best to protect their homes and families from wildfires. Indigenous peoples used fire to influence bison movement.

Research has shown that during the roughly 10,000 years before colonization, fire happened every five years to about every 12 years. Many factors have led to a significant reduction in the number and size of wildfires in Saskatchewan in the last 100 years. Annually cropped fields that do not burn as readily have replaced much of our native grasslands. Saskatchewan's 150,000 plus kilometres of gravel roads reduce the spread of fires that do start. Livestock producers have been key stewards of the prairie, and without them more native prairie would already have been converted to crop land. Most remaining grasslands are managed for annual livestock grazing, which removes grass and reduced the livelihood of wildfire.

New research is showing that a combination of grazing and fire is needed to maintain the health of Saskatchewan grasslands for the plants and animals found there. Without regular five-to-12-year disturbances, some birds and plants that prefer vegetation structure created by fire are decreasing in abundance. Native prairie is considered the most endangered ecosystem in the world, and many species that call grasslands home are endangered or at risk.

Prescribed fire is a management tool designed to recreate some of the effects of fire while minimizing the risks. Prescribed fire, as its name implies, achieves specific results under specific conditions. Organizations like Meewasin Valley Authority, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Saskatchewan Parks Service, Environment and Climate Change Canada, Canadian Wildlife Service, University of Saskatchewan and Parks Canada (Grasslands National Park and Prince Albert National Park) use prescribed fire to improve wildlife habitat, control unwanted plants and reduce the risk of wildfire.

Prescribed fires are successful because of planning, training and equipment. Agencies planning a prescribed fire look at the amount of grass in an area, the direction of the winds, nearby infrastructure, where the smoke will go and many other factors, depending on the desired outcome. Fireguards of mowed grass and wetted grass help control the spread of fire, in addition to natural guards like wetlands. Fires are lit only during very specific wind and moisture conditions. Each planned burn unit has a specific outcome in mind and precise weather factors that will achieve that outcome.

These measures dramatically reduce the chance of fire escaping. The result is often a very precise square of burned grass exactly where it was intended.

Meewasin follows a strict set of weather conditions (wind speed and direction, temperature and relative humidity) to determine whether they do a prescribed burn. Meewasin has postponed all prescribed burns until bans are lifted and all grassland birds are finished nesting. We will only use prescribed fire when the exact burn plan parameters are met. It is important to remember as we travel across our province this spring and we see plumes of smoke that not all fires are the same.

Prescribed fires are controlled burns set under specific conditions to safely achieve very specific goals, often with conservation in mind. Wildfires are started unintentionally or escape accidentally.

Renny Grilz is the resource management officer for the Meewasin Valley Authority and Matthew Braun is the manager of conservation science and planning for the Nature Conservancy of Canada.

PFSRB and Meewasin Valley Authority Announces New CEO

Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin and the Meewasin Valley Authority are delighted to announce the hiring of a new Chief Executive Officer (CEO), following the completion of an extensive recruitment process. The new CEO officially started on May 7, 2018. The Meewasin Valley Authority is the managing partner of PFSRB, and therefore the organizations have the same CEO.

"We are pleased to announce that Ms. Andrea Lafond was the successful candidate in our search for a new Chief Executive Officer," says Colin Tennent, Chair of the Meewasin Board of Directors. "Ms. Lafond brings over 18 years of successful and progressive leadership in roles across profit, non-profit and charitable organizations. She has led many high level multi-year strategies, most recently at the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies where she held the position of Vice-President Operations."

Ms. Lafond has significant experience in a number of areas important in leading both organizations forward including fund development, strategic planning, finance and budgeting, leading people, advocacy, government relations and stakeholder engagement. And her experience at Wanuskewin Heritage Park Authority provided her with a deep respect for conservation and ecology, which is extremely important to both our organizations.

Congratulations Ms. Lafond! We are looking forward to working with you.

Fred Heal Graduate Award for the Saskatchewan River Basin

PFSRB is pleased to announce that the 2018 recipient of the Fred Heal Graduate Award is Mohammad Wajih Alam.

This award is open to students entering their first or second year of study in a Master's or Doctoral degree program in the Department of Civil, Geological and Environmental Engineering and who are conducting research with a focus on water quality and water management in the Saskatchewan River Basin.

Selection of recipients is based on the benefit of the research proposal (a 500-word application outlining the direction of the research project must be submitted) and academic achievement (a minimum academic average of 75% on core courses) as determined by the Awards Committee.

Selection will be based on recommendation by the Chair of the Environmental Engineering Division in consultation with the Dean, College of Graduate Studies and Research.

The award is offered in memory of Dr. Frederick A. Heal, B.A. 1965 and B.Ed. 1965.

Caring for our Watersheds

Caring for our Watersheds is an international program, with branches in Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and Saskatchewan, as well as the United States, and Argentina, dedicated to encouraging students to care about the health of their local watershed and brainstorm ideas on what they can do to ensure that health. Open to all grade 7 to 12 students who live in areas where Nutrien has operations, individuals or groups of up to 4 students are asked to research their local watershed, identify an environmental issue, and offer a realistic solution to the question of, "What can you do to improve our watershed?"

While the final oral competitions have concluded, information concerning the finalists is not yet available. This information will be included in the next newsletter, or can be located on our website or the Caring for our Watersheds website.



For more information please go to the website: www.caringforourwatersheds.com.



Saskatchewan boasts over 100,000 lakes, but here's one that is unique in the western hemisphere. About 116km southeast of Saskatoon is a lake that refuses to let anyone drown in it. Little Manitou, located near Watrous, has a mineral density three-times saltier than the ocean. The salt enables swimmers to effortlessly float on their backs, perhaps reading a book as they do so.

Moopher's Amazing Facts

Moopher

Event Listings

CWRA National 2018 Conference

Our Common Water Future: Building Resilience through Innovation

May 28 - June 1, 2018

<https://conference.cwra.org>

Victoria, British Columbia

9th Annual Canadian Water Summit

June 20 - 22, 2018

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

Vancouver, British Columbia

ICID International Conference & 69th International Council Meeting

August 12 - 17, 2018

<http://www.icid2018.org/>

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

The Dammed Rivers!

Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin

October 1 - 3, 2018

www.dammeddrivers.com

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

National Water & Wastewater Conference 2018

November 4 - 7, 2018

www.nwwc2018.ca

Montreal, Quebec

If you have an event you would like to include under our listings, please email us at partners@saskriverbasin.ca.

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