

Annual Report

2010 – 2011



YOUR WATERSHED

YOUR VOICE

March 31, 2011

NORTH SASKATCHEWAN WATERSHED ALLIANCE SOCIETY

ANNUAL REPORT 2010 – 2011

The North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance (NSWA) is a multi-stakeholder watershed planning partnership that was formed in 1997. The organizations that originally aligned to form the NSWA were:

- EPCOR
- Trout Unlimited Canada
- The Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA) of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
- TransAlta
- The City of Edmonton Drainage Services Planning Branch.

The NSWA was incorporated as a non-profit society in 2000, and now provides a forum for sharing information about issues affecting the North Saskatchewan River (NSR) watershed in Alberta. It also supports and initiates activities that positively impact the watershed. The NSWA is comprised of both individual and organizational members including: municipalities; federal and provincial governments; industries; utilities; agriculture producer groups; environment and conservation groups; recreation, culture, and tourism groups; education and research institutions and individual citizens.

In 2005, the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance was appointed by the Government of Alberta as the Watershed Planning and Advisory Council (WPAC) for this river basin. As one of the partnerships under *Water for Life: Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability* (2003), the NSWA was given a mandate by the government to prepare an Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP). The IWMP will provide watershed management advice to address issues raised by stakeholders and to achieve the three goals of the *Water for Life* Strategy: safe, secure drinking water; healthy aquatic ecosystems; and reliable, quality water supplies for a sustainable economy.

ORGANIZATION VISION AND MISSION

VISION

"People working together for a healthy and functioning North Saskatchewan River watershed – today and tomorrow."

MISSION

"To protect and improve water quality, water quantity and the health of our watershed by: seeking, developing and sharing knowledge; facilitating partnerships and collaborative planning; and working in an adaptive management process."

NSWA MEMBERSHIP

The NSWA continues to engage with as many stakeholder groups as possible and views it important that all sectors, user groups and interested citizens from across the watershed be encouraged to become involved in the watershed management planning process. The NSWA made a concerted effort during 2010-11 to contact and brief individuals, jurisdictions and stakeholders throughout the basin on our various projects and activities. As of March 3, 2011 NSWA had 48 individual and 79 organizational members on record.

Board members are elected at the Annual General Meeting and commit to two years of service from the date of the AGM. The following individuals served on the NSWA Board during 2010-11. We acknowledge and appreciate their dedicated efforts to support watershed planning in Alberta.

Position	Name	Sector Representation
President	Dr. Les Gammie	Utility
Vice-Pres	Pat Alexander	Municipal
Treasurer	Ted Bentley	NGO
Secretary	Candace Vanin	Government of Canada
Director	Sid Lodewyk	City of Edmonton
Director	Bill Fox	Agriculture
Director	Tracy Scott	NGO
Director	Jamie Wuite	Alberta Government
Director	Andrew Schoepf	Alberta Government
Director	Dr. Naomi Krogman	Member at Large
Director	Aaron Rognvaldson	Petroleum
Director	Vacant	Métis
Director	Vacant	First Nations
Director	Dr. Laurie Danielson	Industry
Director	Rod Kause	Utility
Director	Bob Winship	Forestry
Director	Patrick Gordeyko	Municipal
Director	Robert Kitching	Municipal

NSWA STAFF

The NSWA continued to employ six staff for most of 2010-11: David Trew (P. Biol.), Executive Director; Tom Cottrell, M.A., IWMP Coordinator; Billie Milholland, B.A., Communications Manager; Gordon Thompson (P. Eng.), Technical Program Coordinator. Graham Watt, M.Sc., Basin Planner, moved to BC in February and has transitioned to contract work with NSWA in

order to complete his remaining projects. Jayme Nelson, B.Sc., Basin Technologist, moved to Calgary to begin work with Alberta EcoTrust during summer 2010. We acknowledge their dedicated work at NSWA and wish them both well in their new endeavours. Ms. Meghann Matthews, BBA, Administrative Assistant, began work in November 2010, and Ms. Melissa Logan (P. Biol.), Basin Planner, commenced work in February 2011.

IWMP STEERING COMMITTEE

We acknowledge the long and dedicated work of the IWMP Steering Committee, under the Chair of Sharon Reedyk. The work of the Committee from 2005 to 2010 led to the development of the *Discussion Paper for the Development of an Integrated Watershed Management Plan for the North Saskatchewan River Watershed in Alberta*, which was released in 2011. The following table summarizes the individuals and their respective affiliations who were members of the Committee during 2010-2011:

Position	Name	Sector Representation
Chair	Sharon Reedyk	Federal Government
Member	Dave Mussell	Alberta Government
Member	Patrick Gordeyko	Municipal
Member	Stephanie Neufeld	Water/Wastewater
Member	Denise Verreault	First Nations
Member	Robert Kitching	Agriculture
Member	Enneke Lorberg	Community Awareness/Education
Member	Tracy Scott	NSWA Board of Directors
Member	Andy Boyd	NGO
Member	Dave Christiansen	Alberta Government
Member	James Guthrie	Largest Allocation
Member	Lyndon Gyurek	Urban Municipal
Member	Vacant	Industry
Member	Vacant	Metis

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

An audited financial statement for the fiscal year April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2011 was prepared for NSWA by Gadowsky Lim and Associates, Edmonton.

The NSWA began the fiscal year on April 1, 2010 with \$856,433 in total assets, and completed the fiscal year on March 31, 2011 with \$529,833 in total assets. Full details are available in the audited financial statement, which has been posted to www.nswa.ab.ca.

PARTNER CONTRIBUTIONS

We thank Trout Unlimited Canada and the City of Edmonton for continuing to provide significant in-kind support to NSWA operations during 2010-2011. These contributions provided payroll and benefits administration, office space, furniture, equipment and computer support for our operations. Members of our Board of Directors, IWMP Steering Committee, Technical Advisory Committees and the Vermilion River Watershed Management Plan (VRWMP) Steering Committee also provided in-kind support in terms of their time, expertise and travel costs. NSWA gratefully acknowledges the contributions of these individuals and their respective organizations. Total in-kind support to NSWA in 2010-11 has been estimated at approximately \$235,000.

We also thank: Alberta Environment; Alberta North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) Partnership; EPCOR; the City of Edmonton; Alberta Beef Producers; Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada; Alberta Ecotrust Foundation; Ducks Unlimited Canada and Rural and Urban Municipalities throughout the basin for providing direct cash contributions to support both NSWA operations and projects during the past fiscal year. NSWA also appreciates the continued commitment from our volunteers to support our work.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Major NSWA strategic initiatives in 2010-11 included:

- Preparation of the *Discussion Paper for the Development of an Integrated Watershed Management Plan for the North Saskatchewan River Watershed in Alberta* (the Discussion Paper) and *A Workbook to Share your Views on Developing an Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP) for the North Saskatchewan River Watershed* (the Workbook) (<http://nswa.ab.ca/iwmpdiscussion>)
- Extensive IWMP public consultation and stakeholder engagement efforts, including regional watershed forums, meetings, briefings and distribution of the Discussion Paper and Workbook
- Participation in the Industrial Heartland Water Management Framework
- The Vermilion River Watershed Management Project
- The development of a new atlas for the North Saskatchewan River Watershed
- An improved website, Twitter feed, Facebook page and newsletter for the membership
- Province-wide interaction with other *Water for Life* partnerships

INTEGRATED WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN (IWMP)

Through the collaborative efforts of the IWMP Steering Committee, Board, staff and Abells Henry Public Affairs, NSWA completed the *Discussion Paper for the Development of an Integrated Watershed Management Plan for the North Saskatchewan River Watershed in*

Alberta and A Workbook to Share your Views on Developing an Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP) for the North Saskatchewan River Watershed in January 2011. These documents were distributed to over 1,000 individuals, organizations, political figures and municipalities across the watershed since February 2011. It has also been made available on the NSWA website for electronic download and submission via email. Public forums have been held in downstream, central and upstream portions of the watershed in June, July and September 2010. In between these sessions, representatives from NSWA have been traveling extensively and completing a cross-sectoral, regional consultation process, which has included briefing county councils, urban municipalities, industry groups, and other stakeholders on the IWMP, obtaining feedback and assisting groups in completing the Workbook. Over 50 briefings were provided in the winter of 2011. The NSWA also provided the Discussion Paper and Workbook to all First Nations bands and offered council briefings.

During 2010-11 NSWA continued to become better informed about the policy, planning and assessment initiatives of other authorities in order to understand how best to integrate the recommendations in our IWMP with the results of these other initiatives. Of particular relevance are: the *Water Management Framework for the Industrial Heartland and Capital Region*; Alberta Environment's *Cumulative Effects Management System*; a forthcoming project to develop the North Saskatchewan Regional Plan under the *Alberta Land Use Framework*; and the *Capital Region Growth Plan*. NSWA staff and Board members worked to align with these various initiatives during 2010-11.

NSWA heavily increased the number of presentations delivered to municipalities, industry and community organizations in 2010 – 2011 (see *Outreach Highlights* below). The NSWA hosted Regional Watershed Planning Forums in June, July and September, 2010 to present the IWMP Discussion Paper. The Downstream Watershed Planning Forum was held in Elk Point on June 3, 2010 was attended by participants representing a variety of sectors including: forestry; oil and gas; rural municipalities; and regional NGOs. The Upstream Watershed Planning Forum took place in Rocky Mountain House on July 7, 2010 and was attended by participants representing a similar mix of sectors. A central region forum was held on September 9, 2010 at the Prince of Wales Armouries in Edmonton.

WATER MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR THE INDUSTRIAL HEARTLAND and CAPITAL REGION (IH-WMF)

Water quality planning and management recommendations will form an important component of the IWMP. The cumulative effects of all human activities, superimposed on the natural characteristics of the watershed, are reflected in the resulting chemistry, biology and physical attributes of the NSR mainstem. Therefore, water quality management provides a practical template for integrating watershed planning recommendations at the basin scale. Water quality management at the sub-basin scale provides the same opportunities.

The NSWA and the IH-WMF compliment and support each other; the focus of the IH-WMF is

the management of industrial and municipal point sources. NSWA is represented on the Implementation Steering Committee of the IH-WMF by Dr. Les Gammie and on the Baseline Science and Engineering committees by Gordon Thompson, P. Eng. During 2010-11 the NSWA participated in detailed discussions regarding waste load allocation from municipal and industrial point sources in the Capital Region. Involvement with these committees required attendance at monthly meetings. An engineering study of five municipal/industrial water supply and wastewater treatment/reuse options is at the final draft stage. Results of the study will be used to select two options for more detailed evaluation. Alberta Environment will employ water quality modeling to compare the two options for their potential to improve river water quality in the Devon to Pakan reach of the North Saskatchewan River (NSR). Recent work under the Baseline Science Committee has included additional monitoring of contaminants and aquatic ecosystem health indicators. Work has begun on requirements for integrated monitoring, evaluation and reporting systems for the Capital Region. There is an effective multi-stakeholder forum for implementation of the IH-WMF and ongoing cumulative effects management in the Capital Region.

During the IH-WMF process in 2010-11 stakeholders were encouraged to review NSWA's proposed water quality objectives for the NSR and evaluate their implications to current and future development. The NSWA proposes that water quality objectives also be set for the major tributaries, as more data become available.

VERMILION RIVER WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PROJECT

The Vermilion River Watershed Management Project (VRWMP) is a collaborative initiative between the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance, the Alberta North American Waterfowl Management Plan Partners (AB-NAWMP) and the North East Alberta Water Management Coalition (NEAWMC). The project was initially conceived under *Water for Life: Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability* as an opportunity to integrate watershed management concepts and activities at a sub-watershed scale. The Vision for the VRWMP is that *"the Vermilion River Basin is a healthy and sustainable watershed"*, and the mission of the VRWMP is to *"Complete a locally-developed and supported watershed plan that balances social, economic, and environmental needs of the watershed community."*

A local Steering Committee for the VRWMP was established with participation from: four rural municipalities (Beaver County, Minburn County, Two Hills County, and County of Vermilion River); two urban municipalities (Town of Vegreville and Town of Vermilion); the Vermilion River Operations Advisory Committee; Holden Drainage District; Alberta Environment Water Management Operations; Alberta NAWMP; Lakeland College; and the NSWA. The NSWA is providing coordination, funding development, technical assistance and Board oversight to the project, and will integrate the VRWMP into the NSR-IWMP process.

NSWA was present at all monthly steering committee meetings for the project during 2010-11. During spring 2011, the VRWMP-SC completed a document entitled *"Vermilion River*

Watershed Management Plan: Draft Plan for Discussion", which will be released for public review in summer 2011. The NSWA will assist in plan completion during 2011 and will support the forthcoming review process, plan finalization and implementation planning through 2011.

ATIC PROJECT

Land use and vegetation are important drivers of watershed health. However, there is an urgent need for comprehensive data and information systems to support monitoring, modeling, and decision-making.

The Alberta Terrestrial Imaging Centre (ATIC) at the University of Lethbridge is working with NSWA and the Vermilion River Watershed Management Project to develop a monitoring system for riparian, wetland and non-cultivated areas. This system will use remote sensing (satellite data) to provide current data and allow regular, on-demand updating of vegetation and land cover information. The project is now in year two of the pilot phase, focusing on the Vermilion River watershed. By next year the project expects to provide updated land cover maps and data, and have a prototype system in place for updating information on areas of interest. Funding for the project comes from the Agriculture and Food Council, Ducks Unlimited Canada and NSWA.

NORTH SASKATCHEWAN RIVER BASIN ATLAS PROJECT

The NSWA continues to work toward understanding the full range of watershed management issues in the North Saskatchewan River Basin. In order to communicate these issues and to increase stakeholders' understanding of watershed geography, we have created a draft atlas depicting themes including hydrology, terrain, land cover, land use, population, wastewater sources and planning jurisdictions. The first of these maps were presented at the 2008 AGM, and a final selection of maps and accompanying will be printed as an atlas in summer of 2011. This project was made possible by the financial support of Alberta Beef Producers, Alberta Ecotrust and Petro-Canada, and by the diligent efforts of Candace Vanin at AAFC and Graham Watt at NSWA.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEBSITE

In 2010, NSWA staff began using social media to raise more awareness about the organization's activities. The NSWA Twitter feed was started in May 2010, and by March 31, 2011 the organization had accumulated 436 followers, ranging from environmental organizations, non-profit groups, individuals and other WPACs. The Twitter feed has been used to disseminate news from other local environment groups, raise awareness about activities within the watershed and to encourage participation in the Workbook process. A new monthly newsletter entitled *InStream* has been created and posted to our website as a further initiative at keeping NSWA members better informed of issues, events, and activities.

The NSWA website has been continually updated to include our events and news, and the Workbook and Discussion Paper were posted electronically as well, making it available for email submission. The NSWA has compiled an anthology in DVD format of all NSWA reports and publications for distribution in 2011.

PROVINCIAL ACTIVITIES

The NSWA continues to work with the other key partnerships established under *Water for Life: Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability*. The NSWA is currently serving as the alternate WPAC representative on the Alberta Water Council, and assumed the seat in 2010. The NSWA was also active on a number of project teams of the Alberta Water Council, including: the Conservation, Efficiency and Productivity (CEP) team; the AWC-WPAC-WSG Communications team; and the Non-Point Source Runoff team. The Executive Directors of all WPACs meet quarterly to discuss mutual progress, operational concerns and to organize the Annual WPAC Summit. The NSWA actively contributes to discussions regarding watershed planning mandates and capacities in Alberta, and hopes to contribute significantly to forthcoming regional planning activities under the Land Use Framework.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

The NSWA Board of Directors and staff have completed a new three year Strategic Plan (April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2014) for the organization. This Strategic Plan provides goals and strategies required to achieve the Vision and Mission of the NSWA. A more detailed operational plan is developed annually for the organization. The four major Strategic Goals for the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance, for the period 2011-14, are as follows:

1. Demonstrate leadership in regional watershed planning through the provision of well supported information and advice.
2. Facilitate watershed research to address issues and enable management actions within the basin.
3. Establish an ongoing collaborative planning and management framework for the basin.
4. Establish a strong operational model in which the NSWA is sustainable, has clear governance, capacity and funding.

The NSWA's primary initiative for 2011-14 is the completion and implementation of an *Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP)* for the North Saskatchewan River basin. The development of the IWMP has been a complex undertaking and is aimed at the integration of land and water management to ensure the long-term supply and quality of water resources for future generations. Terms of Reference for this work were developed in 2005. The NSWA is aiming to submit the final plan to stakeholders and government in late 2011.

Implementation of the IWMP will involve the cooperation of all stakeholders and government agencies, and a 7-year implementation plan is being developed by the NSWA, outlining

timelines and responsible parties for the implementation of the actions contained in the IWMP. The 61 actions contained in the Discussion Paper will be discussed and only actions for which consensus is achieved will be selected and prioritized for implementation. Once the actions have been decided upon, a work plan and funding plan will be developed for implementation.

Full details on this and other initiatives please refer to the Strategic Plan, which has been posted to www.nswa.ab.ca.

OUTREACH HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING MARCH 31, 2011

APRIL 2010

- Attended and presented at the **County of Two Hills Agricultural Services Board public meeting**
- Met with North Saskatchewan River fishing guides
- Presentation to **Capital Region Board and Planning Advisory Group**
- Presentation to **Strathcona County Council**
- Presentation to **County of Minburn** on IWMP and VRWMP
- Presentation to and participation in workshops at the **Alberta Farm and Ranch Show**, Edmonton

MAY 2010

- Attended the **Capital Region Board Land Use Committee** meeting
- Presentation to **NCIA**
- Tour of Industrial Heartland; hosted by **Sierra Club**

JUNE 2010

- Hosted and presented at the **Vermilion Project & Downstream Watershed Forum in Elk Point**
- Hosted and presented at the **NSWA AGM** in Edmonton
- Hosted the **Upstream Stakeholder Meeting** for the IWMP
- Attended the Board Meeting for the **Beaver Hills Initiative**, Sherwood Park
- Attended the **WPAC Forum**, hosted by Alberta Environment, Nisku
- Attended The Way We Green workshop, **City of Edmonton**
- Presentation to Joint meeting of **Councils of Town of Smoky Lake and Council of Smoky Lake**

JULY 2010

- Hosted the **IWMP Headwaters Watershed Forum**
- Meeting with **City of Edmonton** - The Way We Green staff

AUGUST 2010

- Attended the **Vermilion Project & NSWA / Elk Point Agricultural Fair**

- Presented to the **Vermilion River Operations Advisory Committee**

SEPTEMBER 2010

- Attended the tour and meeting hosted by the **County of Two Hills Agricultural Services Board, Highland Feeders Limited** as part of the Vermilion project
- Hosted and presented at the **IWMP Central Public Watershed Forum**, Edmonton

OCTOBER 2010

- Presentation and GIS projects with students at the Kings University College for the VRWMP
- Attended the **WPAC Summit**
- Attended the **Cypress Hills Provincial Park Board Meeting, Beaver Hills Initiative, Sherwood Park**

NOVEMBER 2010

- IWMP presentation to the **City of Fort Saskatchewan Council**
- Fall Water Workshop, **Agri-Environmental Partnership of Alberta**, Red Deer
- Low Impact Development Information Session, **City of Edmonton**
- Board Meeting, **Beaver Hills Initiative**, Sherwood Park
- Public Meeting with speakers, **North Saskatchewan Riverkeeper**, Edmonton
- Attended the Energy Conservation Tour, **Parkland Conservation Farm**, Vermilion
- Presentation, University of Alberta, Dr. Peter Boxall's Water Policy class

DECEMBER 2010

- IWMP presentation to the Town of Drayton Valley Council
- Workshop on Transfer of Development Credits, hosted by **Beaver Hills Initiative, Strathcona County and Alberta Innovates Technology Futures**, Edmonton
- IWMP Presentation to Council, **Town of Drayton Valley**
- Attended workshop on Farm Water wells and Dugouts, **Parkland Conservation Farm**, Mundare

JANUARY 2011

- Presented to the **Rural Municipalities (Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties[AAMD&C], Zone 5)** meeting in Camrose on the Vermilion project
- Attended the **Agricultural Trade Fair** in Lloydminster and presented the IWMP Discussion Paper and Workbook
- Participated in Board Meeting, **Beaver Hills Initiative**, Sherwood Park

FEBRUARY 2011

- Gave a presentation to the **Vermilion River Operations Advisory Committee (VROAC)**
- Hosted and presented at a workshop in Mannville for the VRWMP
- Hosted and presented at a municipal forum in Vegreville for the VRWMP
- Presentation and GIS projects with students at the Kings University College for the VRWMP
- IWMP presentation to **Sturgeon County**

- IWMP presentation to the **BHI Board of Directors**
- IWMP presentation to the **Vermilion River County Council** in Kitscoty
- Co-hosted the **NTREE workshop** in Nisku
- Attend reception to celebrate establishment of the Golden Ranch Conservation area, hosted by **Nature Conservancy of Canada**, Edmonton

MARCH 2011

- Attended the **Foothills Research Institute Workshop**
- IWMP presentation to **Parkland County Council**
- IWMP presentation at the **Athabasca Watershed Council Board Meeting**
- IWMP presentation to the **Pigeon Lake Watershed Association**
- IWMP presentation to **Brazeau County Council**
- IWMP presentation to **St. Paul County Council**
- IWMP presentation to the **BHI Board of Directors**
- Attended the **AWRI and U of A Wetland Health and Policy Research Findings Workshop**
- IWMP presentation to **Lac Ste. Anne County Council**
- IWMP presentation to and attendance at **AEPA Agri-Environmental Forum**
- Attended the public lecture by **Bob Sanford** hosted by the Friends of the Royal Alberta Museum
- IWMP presentation to and attendance at the inaugural general meeting of the **Mighty Peace Watershed Alliance** in Peace River
- Attended and presented at the **Ceyana Canoe Club** meeting
- Manned display booth at the **Edmonton Boat and Sportsman Show**
- Co-hosted the **World Water Day Gala Event** with the RiverKeepers at the **Alberta Gallery of Art**
- IWMP presentation to **Labatt Brewery**
- IWMP presentation to and attendance at the **AEPA board meeting**
- Participation in meeting of State of the Watershed Committee of the **Battle River Watershed Alliance**, Camrose
- Hosted a working session to assist **Brazeau County** with completion of the workbook
- IWMP presentation to **Clearwater County Council**
- IWMP presentation to **Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers Water Task Group**