



# Annual Report

## 2011 - 2012



**YOUR WATERSHED**

**YOUR VOICE**

March 31, 2012

## NORTH SASKATCHEWAN WATERSHED ALLIANCE SOCIETY

### ANNUAL REPORT 2011 – 2012

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 engages 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 continued efforts during 2011-12 to contact and brief individuals, jurisdictions and stakeholders throughout the watershed on NSWA projects and activities (see complete listing at end of report). As of February 2012, 85 individuals and 55 organizations were NSWA members.

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 2011-12. We acknowledge and appreciate their dedicated efforts to support watershed planning in Alberta.

<b>Position</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Sector Representation</b>
President	Dr. Les Gammie	Utility
Vice-Pres	Pat Alexander	Municipal
Treasurer	Robert Kitching	Municipal
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	Ted Bentley	NGO

## NSWA STAFF

The NSWA continued to employ six staff for 2011-12: 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; Melissa Logan, P.Biol., Basin Planner and Meghann Matthews, BBA, Administrative Assistant. Graham Watt, M.Sc., Basin Planner, has transitioned to contract work with NSWA to complete his remaining projects.

## FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

An audited financial statement for the fiscal year April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012 was prepared for NSWA by Gadowsky Lim and Associates, Edmonton.

The NSWA began the fiscal year on April 1, 2011 with \$529,833 in total assets, and completed the fiscal year on March 31, 2011 with \$356,610 in total assets. Full details are available in the audited financial statement, which has been posted to [www.nswa.ab.ca](http://www.nswa.ab.ca).

## PARTNER CONTRIBUTIONS

We thank the City of Edmonton for continuing to provide significant in-kind support to NSWA operations during 2011-2012. This support includes: office space, furniture, equipment, supplies and computer support for our operations. Members of our Board of Directors and the Vermilion River Watershed Management Project (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 2011-12 has been estimated at approximately \$479,731.

We also thank: Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development; Alberta North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) Partnership; EPCOR; the City of Edmonton; Alberta Beef Producers; Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada; and numerous Rural and Urban Municipalities (including the City of Fort Saskatchewan; Beaver County; Brazeau County; Camrose County; Clearwater County; County of Lac Ste. Anne; Minburn County; Lamont County; County of St. Paul; County of Vermilion River; Westlock County; Town of Gibbons; Town of Calmar; Town of Devon; Town of Elk Point, and the Town of Rocky Mountain House) 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.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING

The NSWA Board of Directors and staff prepared a 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 the *Integrated Watershed Management Plan* (IWMP) for the North Saskatchewan River. 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 will be submitting the final plan to stakeholders and government in June 2012.

Long-term collaboration will be required to achieve the goals of the IWMP and to implement the recommended actions. The NSWA will act as the bridging organization to bring people together to create the various implementation initiatives. Expert working groups will be formed to address priority tasks. The working groups will identify knowledge gaps and research needs, develop detailed work plans review pertinent legislation and policy, identify best management practices and consult as required.

Full details on this and other initiatives have been posted to [www.nswa.ab.ca](http://www.nswa.ab.ca).

## **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

Major NSWA strategic initiatives and projects in 2011-12 included:

- Extensive IWMP public consultation and stakeholder engagement efforts, including regional watershed forums, meetings, briefings
- Analysis of the feedback received from the IWMP Workbook responses and subsequent preparation of the final IWMP
- The Vermilion River Watershed Management Project
- Analysis of the feedback received from the Vermilion River WMP questionnaire responses
- Participation in the Water Management Framework for the Industrial Heartland and Capital Region
- The development of an atlas for the North Saskatchewan River Watershed
- Statoil Creative Sentencing Project (Alberta Justice)
- Completion of the Mayatan Lake State of the Watershed Report
- An improved website, Twitter feed, Facebook page and newsletter for the membership
- Province-wide interaction with other *Water for Life* partnerships

## **Strategic Goal 1: Demonstrate leadership in regional watershed planning through the provision of well-supported information and advice.**

### **INTEGRATED WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN (IWMP)**

The documents entitled “*A 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 for the North Saskatchewan River Watershed*” were distributed to over 1,000 individuals, organizations, political figures and municipalities across the watershed. A total of 106 Workbook responses were received from a wide variety of sectors. An in-depth analysis and report on the responses was prepared by Carolyn Chenard, PhD Candidate and Dr. Naomi Krogman of the University of Alberta. The NSWA prepared an Information Bulletin (“*Summary of Stakeholder Engagement*”), which summarizes the results of the extensive stakeholder engagement program in 2011. All the information and comments contained in the Workbook responses were used to draft the final IWMP, which will be released in June 2012.

### **VERMILION RIVER WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PROJECT (VRWMP)**

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 subwatershed 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 and in-kind contributions from: four rural municipalities (Beaver County, County of Minburn, County of Two Hills No. 21, 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 provided coordination, funding development, technical assistance and Board oversight to the project. NSWA was present at all monthly steering committee meetings for the project during 2011-12. During spring 2011, the VRWMP-SC completed a document entitled “*Vermilion River Watershed Management Plan: Draft Plan for Discussion*”, which was released for public review in summer 2011. The NSWA assisted with analysis of feedback to the draft plan during 2011-12 and will support the forthcoming review process, plan finalization and implementation planning through 2012.

## **Strategic Goal 2: Facilitate watershed research to address issues and enable management actions within the basin.**

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

The purpose of the Water Management Framework for the Industrial Heartland and Capital Region is to improve water quality and manage water quantity over the long term in the Devon to Pakan reach of the North Saskatchewan River. It takes a regional, cumulative effects approach to managing the impacts on the River of both existing and future municipal and industrial development in the Capital Region, and complements NSWA's IWMP for the whole watershed. NSWA is represented on the IH-WMF Implementation Steering Committee by Dr. Les Gammie and on the Baseline Science, Engineering and Governance sub-committees by Gordon Thompson, P. Eng.

Early in 2011-12, an engineering study of five municipal/industrial water supply and wastewater treatment/reuse options was completed and two options were selected for further study. One option is to continue developing industrial and municipal facilities independently, except that industry would share river water intakes wherever possible. The other option is an integrated regional system of municipal and industrial wastewater transmission, treatment, and reuse. An interim set of water quality objectives for Pakan was then developed based on NSWA's proposed objectives (maintain current quality where it meets or exceeds guidelines and improve it for a few constituents that do not currently meet guidelines). From these objectives, proposed maximum allowable loads were calculated. Industrial growth projections for the region were also updated and governance systems for the options were also investigated. A detailed engineering study of the two options was undertaken to compare their effectiveness at meeting the loading objectives; their costs; and their environmental, social and economic impacts and risks. It is anticipated that the study will be completed early in 2012-13.

During development of the IH-WMF a number of studies were done to update information on water quality, sediment quality, and the aquatic ecosystem health of the North Saskatchewan River in areas both upstream and downstream of the Capital Region. This work was summarized in a Synthesis Report prepared for the Steering Committee.

An IH WMF sub-committee was formed to examine cumulative effects monitoring but the work was superseded by the Alberta Environmental Monitoring Panel. NSWA also organized a technical committee to make recommendations on enhancements to the current ambient and effluent monitoring for the NSR mainstem and major tributaries.

For more information, please see the Industrial Heartland website at: <http://www.industrialheartland.com/>.

## **NORTH SASKATCHEWAN RIVER WATERSHED ATLAS PROJECT**

The NSWA continues to work toward understanding the full range of land and water management issues in the North Saskatchewan River watershed. In order to communicate these issues and to increase stakeholders' understanding of watershed geography, we have created an atlas depicting themes including topics such as hydrology, watershed features, land cover, land use, population, wastewater sources and planning jurisdictions. The final atlas will be presented at the 2012 AGM. This project was made possible by the financial support of Alberta Beef Producers, Alberta Ecotrust and Petro-Canada.

## **STATOIL CREATIVE SENTENCING PROJECT**

The NSWA and Emerge Learning were approached by Alberta Justice to prepare educational content for an "Online Training Project" for the Oil and Gas Industry. The opportunity arose as a result of a creative sentencing initiative and involved the preparation of specialized content dealing with authorized water diversions under the *Water Act*, and other related statutes and policies for the Green Area of Alberta. The content was developed in consultation with experts from Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development. The course covers topics such as the environmental impacts of surface water diversion, regulatory requirements, and compliance. The training program is primarily meant for supervisors and workers involved in the diversions of surface waters for oilfield use.

The content has been completed by NSWA and the online training module is currently being prepared by Emerge Learning.

## **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 Corporation (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 three of the pilot phase. In the last year, ATIC has made important progress in developing and integrating software modules, refining and testing analysis procedures, and developing the user interface. Funding for the project comes from the Agriculture and Food Council, Ducks Unlimited Canada and NSWA.



## **Strategic Goal 3: Establish an ongoing collaborative planning and management framework for the basin.**

### **MAYATAN LAKE STATE OF THE WATERSHED REPORT**

The NSWA was approached by the Mayatan Lake Management Association for assistance with the completion of a State of the Watershed Report for Mayatan Lake. The purpose of this report is to summarize all available environmental information for Mayatan Lake and its surrounding watershed. This report also provides a benchmark against which future stewardship activities and best management practices aimed at maintaining and improving watershed health can be assessed. The information will provide landowners, stakeholders, Parkland County and the Mayatan Lake Management Association (MLMA) with the information needed to support sound management decisions and develop solutions to protect or enhance land and water resources in the watershed. It also serves as a localized component and example of NSWA's larger basin planning initiative, the *Integrated Watershed Management Plan for the North Saskatchewan River*.

### **PROVINCIAL ACTIVITIES**

The NSWA continues to work with the other key partnerships established under *Water for Life: Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability*. The NSWA assumed the seat as the WPAC representative on the Alberta Water Council 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 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. The Executive Directors of all WPACs continued to meet quarterly to discuss mutual progress, operational concerns and organize the Annual WPAC Summit.

### **SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEBSITE**

In 2012, NSWA staff continued to use social media to raise more awareness about the organization's activities. The NSWA Twitter feed was started in May 2010, and by March 31, 2012 the organization had accumulated 730 followers (up from 436 followers in 2010-11), ranging from environmental organizations, news media, 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 IWMP Workbook process. A new monthly newsletter entitled *InStream* was created and posted to the NSWA website as a further initiative at keeping NSWA members better informed about issues, events, and activities. The NSWA website was continually updated to include events and news, and monthly emails are sent to the membership list.

## **Strategic Goal 4: Establish a strong operational model in which the NSWA is sustainable and has clear governance, capacity and funding.**

The NSWA Board of Directors established a sub-committee in 2011-12 to review governance operational models and to support the future growth of the NSWA Society. The sub-committee will recommend new organizational approaches for the NSWA with the development of new governance protocols for the Board of Directors and new accountabilities for staff. These changes reflect the evolution and organizational learnings of the NSWA since being appointed the WPAC in 2005, and are designed to improve overall effectiveness. They are also reflective of the changing policy and planning environment in Alberta. A key organizational goal for NSWA going forward will be to strengthen its role as the central watershed planning forum for the NSR basin.

### **OUTREACH HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING MARCH 31, 2012**

#### **APRIL 2011**

- April 2, 2011 - Edmonton Outdoor Show - Host NSWA information booth
- April 7, 2011 – Presentation to Elk Point Historical Society, Elk Point Chamber of Commerce, which included town councillors.
- April 12, 2011 – Presentation to Leduc County Council
- April 13, 2011 - Drayton Valley NSWA Upstream Watershed Forum
- April 14, 2011 - Presentation to County of Wetaskiwin Council
- April 15, 2011 - Edmonton NSWA Central Watershed Forum
- April 18, 2011 - St. Paul NSWA Downstream Watershed Forum
- April 26, 2011 – Briefing for Strathcona County Council

#### **MAY 2011**

- May 3, 2011 – Briefing for Rocky Mountain House Town Council
- May 4, 2011 – Alberta WPAC Managers meeting
- May 5, 2011 - Red Deer Sustainability Workshop
- May 6, 2011 – Presentation to Environmental Studies Students - The King's University College
- May 10, 2011- Presentation to Lamont County Council
- May 12, 2011 - Briefing for Alberta Bar Association
- May 20, 2011 - Clearwater County - Assisted with completion of IWMP Workbook
- May 24, 2011 - Presentation to Westlock County Council
- May 26, 2011 - Lamont County - Assisted with completion of IWMP Workbook
- May 28, 2011 – Briefing to University of Alberta students

- May 31, 2011 – Co-hosted NRTEE event

**JUNE 2011**

- June 1, 2011 - Labatt Brewery, Edmonton - Hosted NSWA booth and participated in World Water Day event
- June 4, 2011 - River Watch paddle
- June 8, 2011 - Edmonton - Met with staff of Capital Regional Board; discuss IWMP and links to regional planning
- June 9, 2011 - Presentation to “Cows, Creeks and Communities” community event hosted by Clearwater Land Care, Caroline, Alberta
- June 14, 2011 – Presentation to Two Hills County Council
- June 15, 2011 – NSWA AGM
- June 15, 2011 – Presentation to Beaver County Council
- June 20, 2011 – Presentation to Yellowhead County Council
- June 21, 2011 - Battle River Alliance - Participated in BRWA AGM
- June 29, 2011 – WPAC Forum – Central Region

**JULY 2011**

- July 12, 2011 – Presentation to Thorhild County Council
- July 18, 2011 – Presentation to County of Minburn Council

**AUGUST 2011**

- August 27, 2011 – Presentation at Pigeon Lake Watershed Association Annual General Meeting at Pigeon Lake

**SEPTEMBER 2011**

- Sept 7, 2011 – Alberta WPAC Managers meeting
- September 11, 2011 – Presentation to Mayatan Lake Management Association Annual General Meeting at Mayatan Lake
- September 14, 2011 – Presentation at Bow River Basin Council Quarterly Forum in Calgary
- September 15, 2011 - Athabasca Watershed Council, Lac La Biche - Participated in AWC one day workshop on integrated watershed planning
- September 23, 2011 - Alberta EcoTrust - River Day event
- September 27, 2011 – Presentation to Camrose County Council

**OCTOBER 2011**

- October 12-14, 2011 - Slave Lake – Annual WPAC Summit in Slave Lake
- October 18, 2011 - Presentation to The Netherlands Water Partnership in Edmonton

- October 20, 2011 - Presentation to the Sundre Forest Products Forest Advisory Committee, Rocky Mountain House

**NOVEMBER 2011**

- November 3, 2011 - Beaverhills Stakeholder Meeting
- November 4, 2011 - AENV / AEN joint meeting
- November 14, 2011 – Presentation to Fort Saskatchewan City Council
- November 16-18, 2011 – “Planning For Extremes” Conference, Saskatoon
- November 24, 2011 - Participated in Battle River Watershed Alliance Public meeting on State of the Watershed report, Wetaskiwin
- November 25, 2011 - Alberta NAWMP - Participated in Workshop on Wetlands and Integrated Watershed Planning

**JANUARY 2012**

- January 31 - February 1, 2012 – Government of Alberta & Aboriginal Water Issues Workshop
- January 31 to February 2, 2012 - NSWA booth at Agriculture Service Boards Annual Conference

**FEBRUARY 2012**

- February 1, 2012 – Briefing for Drayton Valley Town Council
- February 6, 2012 – Briefing for Minister McQueen at Alberta Legislature
- February 15, 2012 – Briefing for North Saskatchewan River Valley Alliance
- February 21, 2012 – Briefing for Spruce Grove City Council

**MARCH 2012**

- March 15, 2012 – Presentation to Alberta Trail Riding Association
- March 19, 2012 - Jasper Place Composite High School - Joint sponsorship with North Saskatchewan Riverkeeper of a public World Day Water Event
- March 20, 2012 - Rundle Mission - BRWA sponsored Aboriginal relationships
- March 26, 2012 – Presentation to Tofield Town Council
- March 26, 2012 – Presentation to Stony Plain Town Council
- March 27, 2012 – Co-hosted water seminar with Sustainability Resources, featuring Dr. Jon Fennell