

THE HEADWATERS ALLIANCE

**2019 – 2024
STRATEGIC PLAN**



About the Headwaters Alliance

The North Saskatchewan Headwaters Alliance is a group of like-minded municipalities located in the headwaters of the North Saskatchewan River.

Working towards a healthy watershed, they conduct their work via a steering committee of elected officials and a technical committee of municipal staff, experts and representatives from other non-government organizations working in the area. Organizational and technical support is provided by the support is provided by the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance.



Vision

The headwaters of the North Saskatchewan River are valued by the people who live and visit here; are healthy, resilient and biologically diverse; and are being managed through collaboration between communities for a clean and abundant water supply to meet the social, economic and environmental needs of current and future generations.

Mission

We will strive to leave the headwaters of the North Saskatchewan River in as good or better quality than today, by bringing awareness and education about the importance of a healthy watershed to governments, industry, public, and other interested stakeholders.





Photo credit: Robert Burkholder

Our work is guided by the following principles



Goal 1: Organizational Sustainability

Overview of this goal:

- Be vibrant and sustainable
- Have current members who remain active and support a shared vision
- Recruit additional members
- Secure consistent funding



Meeting of Technical Advisory Committee for the Headwaters Alliance *Photo credit: M. Shain*

STRATEGIES OR ACTIONS	TIME FRAME	LEAD/PARTNER	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
1.1 Draft and approve a five-year Strategic Plan	2019 + 2023	NSWA + Munis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities continue to financially contribute to NSWA
1.2 Report on progress annually	2019 – 2023	NSWA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipalities continue to appoint staff and elected official members to the NSHA
1.3 Develop a budget and obtain funds through grants, in-kind, and financial support from partners	2019 – 2023	NSWA + Munis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each municipality reviews the Plan • Top annual performance measures are set and reviewed through survey
1.4 Develop and implement a marketing and branding strategy	2019 – 2020	NSWA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform a short-term review of the Plan (2021)
1.5 Recruit new members from different spheres: government, economic development, engineering, water/wastewater treatment, etc	2019	NSWA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform a full review of the Plan (2023) • >1 grant/year • >2 research partnership projects/year • SC approved marketing strategy
1.6 Conduct a self-evaluation	2019 – 2023	NSWA + Munis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TAC meetings include guest speakers
1.7 Celebrate and generate awareness of successes	2019 – 2023	NSWA + Munis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite GOA and EPCOR to all meetings • Apply for awards annually (Alberta Emerald Award, Municipal Award of Excellence, CAPP Planning Award)

Goal 2: Well-supported initiatives

Overview of this goal:

- Raise awareness and support for the NSHA and its initiatives with elected officials and other stakeholders
- Build political buy-in to support the challenge of bringing together a diverse group of municipalities to collaborate on watershed goals
- Continue to foster a strong spirit of inter-municipal collaboration, break down boundaries, improve communication



Headwaters Tour in 2016 Photo credit: M.Shain

STRATEGIES OR ACTIONS	TIME FRAME	LEAD/ PARTNER	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
2.1 Build relationships with elected officials through council presentations that show how NSHA's work affects them (i.e. make a business case for initiatives)	2019 – 2023	TAC + SC + NSWA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine name change (if necessary) • NSWA present to NSHA communities once every other year
2.2 Solicit support and collaboration from other water and conservation groups by promoting their work and making presentations at their events	2019	NSWA + ALUS/ LandCare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representatives use outreach opportunities (e.g. Agricultural tours, River Valley Alliance, RiverFest) to present the work of this committee
2.3 Showcase collaborative successes by sharing case studies or fact sheets (e.g. WaterSHED monitoring program)	2019 – 2023	NSWA + partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TAC members provide updates on the NSHA to their Directors quarterly
2.4 Build landowner support by connecting them to tools and resources for their work	2019 – 2023	NSWA + ALUS/ LandCare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2019: Canoe tour • 2021: Riparian Web-portal is launched and utilized by all municipal partners
2.5 Plan high profile media events (e.g. canoe trips) to raise awareness	2019, 2021, 2023	NSWA + Munis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2021: Riparian web-portal includes a setback calculator

Goal 3: Awareness

Overview of this goal:

- The watershed is valued, appreciated, and respected by current and future generations
- Individuals and institutions will understand the impact of their actions and their responsibility they have to keep the watershed healthy



STRATEGIES OR ACTIONS	TIME FRAME	LEAD/PARTNER	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
<p>3.1 Increase public awareness, understanding, and appreciation for the value and benefits of a healthy watershed through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • factsheets and/or online videos • web/social media and marketing tools that explain who we are and what we do, for sharing maps and reports 	2019–2020	NSWA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop 3 factsheets (riparian, Ecosystem Services, Water Licensing) • Increase NSHA presence on NSW website and newsletters • Reach >1,000 with message of NSHA
<p>3.2 Ensure that the public, industry, and decision-makers are aware of the consequences of both their actions and inaction by hosting education forums and webinars on ‘hot’ topics (e.g. headwaters forum on green zone issues)</p>	2021–2022	NSWA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host Headwaters Forum • NSW to create general presentations on “What is a Watershed” • NSW to hire summer students to attend municipal events
<p>3.3 Leverage the work of existing programs and partnerships (e.g. Grade 8 curriculum) to get the message out</p>	2020	Muni Partners + NSWA	
<p>3.4 Present to stakeholder and other interested groups (EPCOR, LandCare, etc)</p>	2020 + 2022	NSWA + Muni Partners	
<p>3.5 Conduct outreach activities at popular municipal events</p>	2019–2023	NSWA (summer student)	
<p>3.6 Create opportunities within/between jurisdictions, including downstream users</p>	2019–2023	NSWA	

Goal 4: Knowledgeable stakeholders

Overview of this goal:

- Data, information, and knowledge gaps are identified and filled through commissioned studies, collaborative initiatives, and individual action. Information is shared and knowledge is built.
- A greater understanding of risk to human health, infrastructure, and economic risk



Community members listen as Farmer shares about how he has worked toward riparian restoration. *Photo credit: Rajan Rathnavalu.*

STRATEGIES OR ACTIONS	TIME FRAME	LEAD/ PARTNER	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
4.1 Identify and prioritize data, information, and knowledge gaps and work to fill them through resources and partnerships	2020	NSWA + Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify top 4 data gaps • Connect with partners and form a data working group
4.2 Encourage citizen science to fill data gaps by working with U of A researchers, NGOs (ALMS, ABMI etc)	2020	NSWA + Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize existing surveys on literacy/values
4.3 Understand residents' watershed literacy , values		Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create relationships with other NGOs to promote watershed activities
4.4 Build knowledge by sharing information in an accessible and digestible format	2019		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create infographic materials
4.5 Improve water quality information by participating in the EPCOR water quality monitoring program	2019 – 2023	NSWA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to sit on the EPCOR committee
4.6 Promote assessment of regional groundwater (supply and demand), groundwater inventories, monitoring programs, etc	2020		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a mechanism to share the data • Complete regional ground water assessment
4.7 Promote assessment of cumulative impacts from recreation, forestry, other activities in the Green Area of the watershed and Climate Change. Promote industry BMPs	2021	AER, academics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite Flood mapping researcher to speak at the headwaters forum or directly to NSHA committees
4.8 Promote floodplain mapping (hazard ID) and climate change models	2020 2021	Weyerhaeuser, Sundre Forest Products, etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host a Headwaters Forum
4.9 Encourage the creation of a water data warehouse (similar to airsheds) or dashboard (similar to Alta. Regional Dashboard)		Insur. co. + AEP	

Goal 5: Adaptive management

Overview of this goal:

- Use watershed assessment and planning to maintain/improve surface and groundwater quality and quantity and aquatic ecosystem health (wetlands, riparian areas, and biodiversity)
- Create long-term, concrete targets in a plan that guides successive councils. Plan will address cumulative effects of wastewater treatment, recreation, water demand, water quality, source protection, etc



STRATEGIES OR ACTIONS	TIME FRAME	LEAD/ PARTNER	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
5.1 Improve understanding about the availability of clean abundant potable (non-saline) water and potable water alternatives for industrial use	2020	e.g. All One Sky Foundation, Foundry Spatial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete web portal: links to project partners and cross-promotion • State of Watershed report completed
5.2 Improve understanding about the state of fish and other species biodiversity, including habitat and habitat corridors in the headwaters	2020	ABMI, Foothills Research Institute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSWA to continue participation on the WaterSHED Monitoring Program (EPCOR)
5.3 Continue to improve riparian health: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • share inventory/ health assessment information via web portal • develop and implement a riparian action plan (include a target of intactness) 	2020	NSWA + Munis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steering Committee to approve Riparian Strategic Plan and share with Municipal Council • Deliver water quality data back to NSHA
5.4 Encourage monitoring programs and citizen science initiatives	2019 – 2023	NatureLynx, EPCOR program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a concept plan for WMP by 2021
5.5 Encourage on-the-ground stewardship action (develop and promote information, restoration tools, and resources, opportunities for groups to share learnings)	2019 – 2023	ALUS/LandCare, Yellow Fish Rd. (Urban), etc	
5.6 Develop a state of the headwater’s assessment to improve knowledge and benchmark water quality, water quantity, and aquatic health	2021	NSWA + ABMI + ALCES	
5.6 Develop a management plan (with targets) that is supported by all municipalities	2021	NSWA + SC	

Goal 6: Policy and plan alignment

Overview of this goal:

- Recognizing ‘we’re all in it together’: federal provincial, municipal, Indigenous and industry polices, and plans are aligned to support the protection and/or restoration of watershed.
- We will connect good science to policy and decision making. Build on commonalities and align differences between municipalities

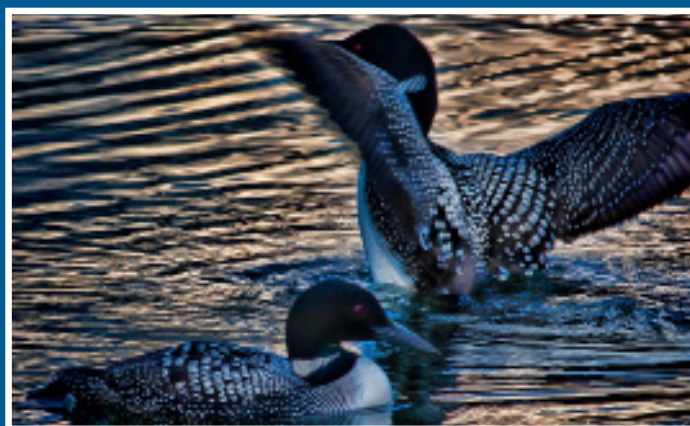


Photo credit: Robert Burkholder

STRATEGIES OR ACTIONS	TIME FRAME	LEAD/ PARTNER	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
6.1 Conduct a review of policies and plans affecting the headwaters and identify gaps and inconsistencies	2019 – 2020	NSWA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2019, begin the municipal bylaw alignment work (pilot)
6.2 Provide a platform for discussing policy gaps and inconsistencies	2020	NSWA + SC + Munis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 2021, identify other policy alignment areas
6.3 Encourage recreation management planning and reduce impacts of increased recreation in sensitive areas / on the river and river valley / in the Green Area on water quality	2021	Munis, River Valley Alliance, rec groups. etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 2021 begin work on the Riparian Action Plan Strategy that includes bylaw recommendations • By 2022, determine Riparian Health Targets/objectives that can be followed by all municipalities
6.4 Encourage sensitive areas inventories/ mapping and programs to protect and restore these areas	2019 – 2020	2019-2020 NSWA + ABMI + ALCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to work with the IMWEB model to develop watershed scenarios that include economic analysis of green infrastructure
6.5 Promote green infrastructure valuation and the role of green infrastructure in meeting municipal servicing needs	2019 – 2021	2019-2021 Munis + ALIDP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase relationships with AUMA/ RMA