

# 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.



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# Our work is guided by the following principles

## BALANCED NEEDS

We are advocates for a healthy and resilient watershed and for balancing social, economic, and environmental needs

## WATERSHED HEALTH

We believe a healthy watershed includes clean water and healthy watercourses; healthy riparian areas and wetlands; healthy fisheries and other biodiversity; connected natural corridors and space for natural processes, like flooding, to occur

## LISTENING

We build trust by asking, not telling



## ACTIVE & ADAPTIVE

We are action-oriented and adaptive; able to align and evolve with new and changing issues/trends

## CONSISTENCY

We believe in reducing impacts by supporting evidence-based decision-making that is consistent throughout our policies and plans

## COLLABORATION

We will demonstrate through action by setting a good example and collaborating with others to reduce impacts

## GOOD COMMUNICATION

We will share our learnings through effective communication about the need for a healthy watershed

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

# 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"> <li>• Determine name change (if necessary)</li> <li>• NSWA present to NSHA communities once every other year</li> </ul>
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"> <li>• Representatives use outreach opportunities (e.g. Agricultural tours, River Valley Alliance, RiverFest) to present the work of this committee</li> </ul>
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"> <li>• TAC members provide updates on the NSHA to their Directors quarterly</li> </ul>
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"> <li>• 2019: Canoe tour</li> </ul>
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"> <li>• 2021: Riparian Web-portal is launched and utilized by all municipal partners</li> <li>• 2021: Riparian web-portal includes a setback calculator</li> </ul>

# 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><b>3.1</b> Increase public awareness, understanding, and appreciation for the value and benefits of a healthy watershed through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• factsheets and/or online videos</li> <li>• web/social media and marketing tools that explain who we are and what we do, for sharing maps and reports</li> </ul>	2019–2020	NSWA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine name change (if seen as necessary)</li> <li>• NSWA present to NSHA communities once every other year</li> <li>• All representatives present the work the work of this committee on during outreach opportunities (e.g. Agricultural tours, river valley alliance, river fest, Ag tours)</li> </ul>
<p><b>3.2</b> 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"> <li>• TAC members provide updates on the NSHA to their Directors quarterly</li> </ul>
<p><b>3.3</b> Leverage the work of existing programs and partnerships (e.g. Grade 8 curriculum) to get the message out</p>	2020	Muni Partners + NSWA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2019 Canoe tour</li> </ul>
<p><b>3.4</b> Present to stakeholder and other interest groups (EPCOR, LandCare, etc)</p>	2020 + 2022	NSWA + Muni Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Riparian Web-portal is launched and utilized by all municipal partners</li> </ul>
<p><b>3.5</b> Conduct outreach activities at popular municipal events</p>	2019-2023	NSWA (summer student)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By 2020, the Riparian Web Portal will include a set-back calculator</li> </ul>
<p><b>3.6</b> 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"> <li>• Identify top four data gaps</li> <li>• Connect with partners and form a working group</li> </ul>
4.2 Encourage CitSci to fill data gaps by working with U of A, NGOs (ALMS, ABMI etc)	2020	NSWA + Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create infographic materials</li> </ul>
4.3 Understand residents' watershed literacy, values	2019	NSWA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to sit on the EPCOR committee</li> </ul>
4.4 Build knowledge by sharing information in an accessible and digestible format	2019 – 2023	NSWA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a mechanism to share the data</li> </ul>
4.5 Improve water quality information by participating in the EPCOR water quality monitoring program	2019-2023	NSWA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete regional ground water assessment</li> </ul>
4.6 Promote regional groundwater assessments (supply and demand), groundwater inventories, monitoring programs, etc	2020	AER, academics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite Flood mapping researcher to speak at the headwaters forum or directly to NSWA committees</li> </ul>
4.7 Promote assessment of cumulative impacts of recreation, forestry, and other activities in Green Area of the watershed. Promote industry BMPs	2021	Weyerhaeuser, Sundre Forest Products, etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host a Headwaters Forum before 2020</li> </ul>
4.8 Promote floodplain mapping (hazard ID) & climate change models	2020	Insur. co. + AEP	
4.9 Encourage creation of water data warehouse (like airsheds) or like AB Regional Dashboard	2021		

# 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"> <li>• Complete web portal: links to project partners and cross-promotion</li> </ul>
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"> <li>• State of Watershed report completed</li> <li>• WMP completed</li> </ul>
5.3 Continue to improve riparian health: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• share inventory/ health assessment information via web portal</li> <li>• develop and implement a riparian action plan (include a target of intactness)</li> </ul>	2020	NSWA + Munis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NSWA to continue participation on the WaterSHED Monitoring Program (EPCOR)</li> <li>• Deliver water quality data back to NSHA</li> </ul>
5.4 Encourage monitoring programs and citizen science initiatives	2019 – 2023	NatureLynx, EPCOR program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a concept plan for WMP by 2021</li> </ul>
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

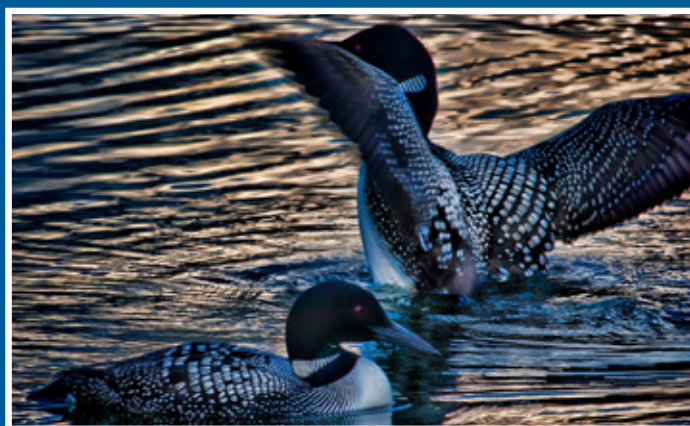


Photo credit: Robert Burkholder.

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"> <li>• Identify number of gaps</li> <li>• Connect with partners and form a working group</li> </ul>
6.2 Provide a platform for discussing policy gaps and inconsistencies	2020	NSWA + SC + Munis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create infographic materials</li> </ul>
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"> <li>• Continue to sit on the EPCOR committee</li> <li>• Develop a mechanism to share data</li> <li>• Complete regional ground water assessment</li> </ul>
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"> <li>• Invite Flood mapping researcher to speak at the headwaters forum or directly to NSHA committees</li> </ul>
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"> <li>• Host Headwaters Forum before 2020</li> </ul>