



North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance



Photograph: Travis Boonstra, NSWA Summer Student 2001

Annual Report March 31, 2002

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North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance Society
Annual Report
March 31, 2002

Mission

The North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance (NSWA) is a non-profit society whose purpose is to protect and improve water quality and ecosystem functioning in the North Saskatchewan River Watershed within Alberta. We work to achieve this goal by:

- Improving the community's ability to make informed decisions about the value of watershed protection and the integrated stewardship of land and water resources
- Maximizing communication, relationships, and partnerships among members and within the larger community
- Promoting a balanced approach to watershed management that recognizes the relationship between cultural, social, and economic desires and watershed functioning.

Background

The NSWA is an on-going initiative. Our area of focus is the North Saskatchewan River watershed, which covers approximately 80,000 km² in Alberta. Our members emphasize a watershed approach to address the cumulative effects of land use activities.

The NSWA uses an inclusive, transparent process to involve as many stakeholder groups as possible. We envision a community of active leaders that balance the environmental, cultural, social, and economic implications of their actions in order to sustainably use and manage the resources within our watershed.

Our members cooperate on projects and activities that will bring about change in the watershed. We work to coordinate watershed-friendly programs, raise public awareness, and educate the basin community about the value of watershed protection. Our meetings provide a forum for members to share information and make connections between their activities. We also review government and industry actions and policies and advocate best-management practices.

Short-term Goals

The NSWA 2000-2005 Business plan sets the following short-term goals for the organization:

1. foundation and relationship building (2000-2001)
2. community-based action (2002-2005) and
3. evaluation (2005).

In 2001/2002, the NSWA focused on reaching out to the membership and developing key projects. This was a very successful year for the NSWA, resulting in the completion of the Community Watershed Toolkit, and the final drafts of both the River Guide and the Heritage Rivers Background Study. In addition, the NSWA explored new sources of funding and increased its operating budget by almost \$200,000. Outreach efforts attracted 22 new member organizations, and significant progress was made on the State of the North Saskatchewan Watershed Report.

Accomplishments for the Year Ended March 31, 2002

The NSWA's many achievements over the past year have resulted in a higher profile for the organization, which was acknowledged by our selection as an Emerald Award Finalist in the Not-for-Profit Association category in June 2001. The following points highlight the NSWA's activities in the key areas of our operations:

NSWA Development:

- The NSWA Steering Committee met bi-monthly to provide strategic direction for the organization
- The NSWA maintained and strengthened partnerships with watershed organizations from other basins (such as Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin and the Bow River Basin Council)
- A change in management occurred in December with Adele Mandryk leaving to pursue graduate work and the hiring of Rose Yewchuk
- Recently Rose Yewchuk left the NSWA and subsequently Sharon Willianen was hired as manager in May 2002

Member Meetings:

- The first Annual General Meeting was held on June 28, 2001 to foster communication, education, and long-term planning among watershed stakeholders
- The NSWA worked with the Bow River Basin Council, Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin, and the Oldman River Basin Quality Initiative watershed groups to organize the "Who Speaks for the Watershed" conference held in Calgary from October 11 - 12, 2001

Member Recruitment (Outreach):

- Outreach was a major priority in 2001. Summer student Stacey Bajema worked with Caroline Burgess from AMEC Earth and Environmental to develop an outreach plan to maintain interest and participation among existing members and attract new members from various sectors
- The NSWA sent out letters and invitation packages to prospective members and used follow-up calls to determine their level of interest. These strategies resulted in an increase of 22 new member organizations over 2000/2001
- The NSWA continues to develop and maintain a database of interested and active stakeholder groups to track the participation of our members
- We now have a clear understanding of who comprises our membership, sectors that require further representation and plans for continued outreach efforts
- Member Watershed Initiative Factsheets have been updated to our website and linked to member websites. This is an excellent resource for people wondering about the kinds of watershed projects that members are carrying out in our watershed
- Throughout 2001/2002, NSWA staff met with and made presentations to various groups about the NSWA's goals and activities

Member Communications:

- Members were apprised of ongoing activities via email and regular mailings
- The NSWA sent out a quarterly newsletter for circulation to members and interested parties

Website Development (www.nswa.ab.ca):

- NSWA staff continue to increase the amount of information available on the website, including NSWA reports, fact sheets, and member profiles
- The NSWA reference database was posted to the website in January 2002. It is a valuable resource for NSWA members and the general public
- The Community Watershed Toolkit was posted to the website in March 2002

Resource Library Development:

- The size of the NSWA's resource library increased with the purchase of new books, videos, and materials
- Summer student Abigail Vandenberghe compiled and organized newspaper articles and resource materials on various watershed-related topics
- The NSWA reference database has been updated and is fully accessible online - it now houses hundreds of references to publications relative to the water, ecology, economy, culture and history of the North Saskatchewan watershed and North Saskatchewan River
- Paper and digital maps of the watershed and a GPS unit are available for the use of our members
- A report on the physical characteristics of each subwatershed region has been completed and is available to members for reference

Summer Student Accomplishments:

- Six students were hired in the summer of 2001 to work on various NSWA projects
- Stacey Bajema worked to develop an outreach plan, research funding agencies, and update the NSWA's communications plan
- Abigail Vandenberghe wrote a draft manuscript for the Community Watershed Toolkit, searched the Edmonton Journal Archives for articles pertaining to the North Saskatchewan River, organized the NSWA's resource library, and updated the NSWA's reference database
- Dennis Perrin surveyed the NSWA membership to determine their willingness to contribute their GIS data and expertise to the State of the North Saskatchewan Watershed Report. He also wrote a report on the biophysical, economic, and ecological character of each sub-watershed region
- Billie Milholland, Travis Boonstra and Sheree Dallyn began preparing the maps and researching the content for the River Guide and the Heritage Rivers Background Study
-

Expedition to the Headwaters of the North Saskatchewan River:

- From July 18 – 22, 2001, the Manager and summer staff of the NSWA went to the Saskatchewan Glacier to see the headwaters of the North Saskatchewan River
- They visited Abraham Lake, the Big Horn Dam, and the Columbia Icefields Interpretive Centre, and took a canoe trip with Voyageur Ventures along the river
- Some of the staff also stayed on at Aurum Lodge – an ecotourism operation – and searched the archives at the Rocky Mountain House Historic Site

NSWA Projects

The following three pages give detailed reports about each of the NSWA's projects for 2001/2002 – the Community Watershed Toolkit, the River Guide, the Heritage Rivers Background Study, and the State of the North Saskatchewan Watershed Report.

These projects resulted from collaboration between NSWA members and partners. They were adopted because of their potential to unite members and bring about change in the watershed. In-kind contributions to all NSWA projects from Trout Unlimited Canada and The City of Edmonton continued throughout 2001/2002 and is recognized for its value to the organization.

Community Watershed Toolkit

This project was created to empower citizens and community groups to carry out watershed initiatives in their own communities. It contains information about how to start a local watershed partnership and create watershed-friendly projects. The Community Watershed Toolkit will help to bring about the NSWA's vision of a community of active leaders who make balanced decisions about land use and water resources.

The Community Watershed Toolkit was completed on March 31, 2002. It addresses the following themes:

Taking A Watershed Approach
Do You Know Your Watershed?
Projects To Help Your Watershed
Benefits of a Healthy Watershed
Our Watershed Success Stories
Watersheds and Human Health
Watersheds and Ecological Health
Watersheds and Economic Health
Starting Your Own Watershed Group

Watershed-related publications from Alberta Agriculture and Cows and Fish are also included in the Toolkit. A total of 1000 paper copies are available for distribution to community groups and interested individuals in the North Saskatchewan Watershed. The entire content of the Toolkit is available online at the NSWA website at www.nswa.ab.ca under the Toolkit heading, and will continue to generate interest for years to come.

The *Community Watershed Toolkit* will make the following contributions to the NSWA's goals:

- It will empower local communities to take action to protect and enhance the integrity of their local watersheds
- It will improve the capacity of rural water users to address their own water issues, such as water scarcity, groundwater depletion, riparian area management, and sound septic & agricultural practices
- It will introduce smaller groups to the NSWA and encourage them to use the NSWA as a resource
- It will raise awareness of the connections between watersheds, environmental integrity, water quality, and human health

A number of different partner organizations helped bring the Toolkit to fruition. Representatives from EPCOR, PFRA, the Land Stewardship Centre, Living by Water, the University of Alberta; Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development; Cows and Fish, and Alberta Environment provided helpful information and reviewed the content for accuracy.

Funding Partners:

The Alberta Sport, Recreation and Wildlife Fund, the Community Animation Program (Health and Environment Canada), EPCOR and PFRA

Total Contributions: \$28,500

Linked Projects:

1. The Mountain to Prairie Eco-Recreation Guide for the North Saskatchewan River

This project (more commonly known as the River Guide) is intended to introduce citizens to our river's fascinating history and ecology and encourages them to use and enjoy the river responsibly.

It is an extensively researched guide that covers the North Saskatchewan River from the headwaters in the Columbia Icefields to the Forks in Saskatchewan. It provides detailed maps of each of the river's 27 reaches, and features historical, biological, and geographical information. It also explains and encourages ecologically sound camping, canoeing, and recreation practices.

The River Guide is a valuable educational tool that is intended to:

- educate all river users on best practices when enjoying the aquatic and riparian areas of the North Saskatchewan River (sustainable recreational use)
- educate all river users about the ecological significance of riparian areas
- encourage use, enjoyment, and personal ownership of the North Saskatchewan River
- raise awareness of the link between watershed use for human purposes, environmental integrity, and water quality
- raise awareness of the value and need for sustainable watershed management.

An initial print run will be ready by July 10, 2002. The proceeds from the sale of the River Guide will be used for reprinting in subsequent years. A portion of the revenues generated from the sale of the River Guide is intended to fund mitigative initiatives in the riparian zones along the river.

2. Heritage Rivers Background Study

In May 2001, the NSWA was commissioned by Alberta Community Development's Parks and Protected Areas Division to prepare a background study on the heritage values of the North Saskatchewan River. Because NSWA summer staff were gathering historical and cultural information for the River Guide, the projects became linked and research efforts were expanded to compile additional information for the Heritage Rivers Background Study.

The draft study was completed on March 31, 2002 and will form the basis for the nomination of the North Saskatchewan River as part of the Canadian Heritage Rivers System. The study itself is a valuable information resource for researchers and interested citizens.

A large number of NSWA members contributed information to the River Guide and Heritage Rivers Background Study. The River Guide Working Committee included representatives from the City of Edmonton River Valley Rangers, the Northwest Voyageurs Canoe and Kayak Club, the Alberta Recreation Canoe Association, Voyageur Ventures, and the Alberta Fish and Game Association. Representatives from the City of Edmonton, Alberta Community Development, the University of Alberta, Augustana University College, The King's University College, the Papaschase Band, and numerous museums and historic sites across the watershed, contributed historical information and provided their expertise.

Funding Partners for these 2 linked projects:

Alberta Community Development, EPCOR, Edmonton Community Lottery Board, Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin and PFRA.

Total Contributions: \$90,391

State of the North Saskatchewan Watershed Report

The State of the North Saskatchewan Report is key to the NSWA's long-term goals. It is intended to provide a sound scientific base for decision-makers in our watershed. This is an ongoing NSWA project that will be completed in 2004. The goals of the report are to:

- raise awareness among stakeholders and citizens of the current condition of the watershed and the value of watershed protection
- encourage studies in areas of watershed functioning that are poorly understood
- make recommendations for sustainable management of the watershed
- form the basis for a North Saskatchewan Watershed Management Plan under the *Alberta Water Act*

The State of the North Saskatchewan Watershed Report will compile information about current water and ecological conditions within the North Saskatchewan Watershed in a GIS database format. The public will be consulted to help identify emerging issues and knowledge gaps and make recommendations for the wise use and management of the watershed.

The work undertaken towards this project In 2001/2002 includes:

- securing 75% of the necessary funding
- surveying members to see what data and expertise they can contribute to this report
- compiling a report on the landscape and land-use profiles of each of the North Saskatchewan River Watershed's 17 subwatershed regions
- identifying relevant watershed-related publications and articles
- completing the Terms of Reference for this project and advertising a Call for Proposals for a consultant firm to assemble the GIS database, proposals review and consultant selection

A large number of NSWA members and partners have committed their data for inclusion in the report. The working committee for the State of the North Saskatchewan Watershed report includes representatives from the Alberta Conservation Association, Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the Land Stewardship Centre, EPCOR, TransAlta Utilities, Alberta Environment, Toxics Watch Society, and the University of Alberta.

Funding Partners:

Alberta Capital Region Wastewater Commission, Alberta Cattle Commission, Alberta Conservation Association, Alberta Ecotrust, Alberta Environment, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, EPCOR, The Fort Saskatchewan Regional Industrial Association, Mountain Equipment Co-Op and PFRA

Total Contributions: \$133,512

NSWA Membership

Every effort is made to involve as many stakeholder groups as possible in the NSWA. We believe that our membership should include the active participation of all user groups across the North Saskatchewan Watershed.

There are two categories of NSWA members: those who actively participate in working groups and want to receive regular updates, and those who wish to be periodically kept informed about NSWA activities.

The total membership at March 31, 2002 is approximately 114 organizations. This is an increase of approximately 22 organizations over last year. Some organizations have more than one representative, so our mailing lists contain over 150 people. A complete list of members is attached to this report (Attachment A).

Membership Breakdown

Sector	Total Keep Informed Organizations	Total Active Organizations	Upstream	Edmonton and area	Downstream	Outside of Watershed
Aboriginal	1	2	2	1		
Agriculture	2	4	2		3	1
Citizen	1	1		2		
Education	2	4	2	4		
Environment	8	20	6	13	2	7
Government	2	4	1	4	1	
Health	2			1	1	
Industry	7	8	3	6	3	3
Municipal	5	28	4	12	17	
Recreation	2	8	4	4	1	1
Research	1	2		2		1
Totals	33	81	24	49	28	13

NSWA Steering Committee 2001/2002

Steering Committee members are elected at the Annual General Meeting and normally commit to a year of service from the date of the AGM. In 2001/2002, a few positions on the 11-member committee changed hands over the course of the year. The executive officers are listed here, along with the period for which they held each position.

Position	Term	Name	Organization
President	June 2001 – Present	Cindy Shepel	EPCOR
Vice-President	June 2001 – March 2002	Gail Feltham	TransAlta Utilities
Treasurer	June 2001 – Nov 2001	Charles Labatiuk	City of Edmonton

Treasurer	Nov 2001 – Present	Lyndon Gyurek	City of Edmonton
Member	June 2001 – Oct 2001	John Lilley	Lilley Environmental Consulting
Member	June 2001 – Present	Bill Fox	Alberta Cattle Commission
Member	June 2001 – Present	Ernie Ewaschuk	Land Stewardship Centre
Member	June 2001 – Present	Doug Thrussell	Alberta Environment
Member	June 2001 – Present	Richard Escott	PFRA
Member	June 2001 – Present	Barry Irving	University of Alberta
Member	June 2001 – Present	Diana Rung	Alberta Conservation Association
Member	Jan 2002 – Present	Adele Mandryk	University of Alberta
Manager	June 2001 – Dec 2001	Adele Mandryk	
Manager	Dec 2001 – April 2002	Rose Yewchuk	
Manager	May 2002 – Present	Sharon Willianen	

The NSWA Steering Committee meets bi-monthly. All NSWA members are welcome to run for a position on the Steering Committee at the NSWA's Annual General Meeting normally held in June of each year.

Lasting Benefits of the NSWA Initiative

There are many tangible and intangible benefits to the NSWA's work.

The organization creates tangible benefits for members by:

- *Establishing partnerships* between diverse stakeholder groups, including agriculture, industry, municipalities, First Nations, and NGOs
- *Using resources collectively* to avoid duplication and expand the capacity of the NSWA and its members
- *Addressing cumulative effects* at a watershed level
- *Coordinating programs* to raise public awareness and encourage widespread participation of stakeholders and communication between stakeholders
- *Increasing the information available* about groundwater protection, cumulative use management, and best management practices.
- *Improving the understanding* of aquatic and riparian ecology and the link between human land use, ecosystem functioning and water quality
- *Improving the understanding* of the watershed's interconnectedness
- *Developing long-term sustainable use and management plans* for water and land resources
- *Envisioning environmentally sustainable solutions* to watershed issues
- *Enhancing water quality and quantity* to meet human needs and ecological needs
- *Preserving and enhancing aquatic and terrestrial biodiversity*, ecosystems and the hydrologic cycle
- *Making increased resources, information, and support available* to small groups and rural water users

Intangible benefits:

The NSWA Initiative is a working model of an integrated watershed approach to sustainable resource use and management. This is a relatively new concept and involves voluntary

commitment from the watershed community and government. The community drives this process, and all members contribute as equal partners.

The success of this model will serve to:

- *Motivate and stimulate others* to embrace a cooperative, non-jurisdictional approach to water and environmental protection
- *Demonstrate* how local cooperation and action can have global impacts
- *Illustrate the connection* between land use and water quality
- *To create a sense of ownership and empowerment* in communities throughout the watershed.

Supporting Documents (available upon request and at the NSWA website – www.nswa.ab.ca):

2000 – 2005 NSWA Business Plan

NSWA Bylaws

Member Terms of Reference

Steering Committee Terms of Reference

Manager Terms of Reference

State of the North Saskatchewan Report Terms of Reference

Attachment A
North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance
Member/Partner List – March 2002

Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development
Alberta Capital Region Wastewater Commission
Alberta Cattle Commission
Alberta Community Development
Alberta Conservation Association
Alberta Ecotrust
Alberta Energy and Utilities Board
Alberta Environment
Alberta Fish and Game Association
Alberta Lake Management Society
Alberta Recreation Canoe Association
Alberta Research Council
Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation
Alberta Sustainable Resource Development
Alberta Trailnet Society
Alberta Urban Municipalities Association
AquaScience
Banff National Park
Battle River Tourist Association
Beyond Books Institute (River Watch)
Big Lake Environment Support Society (BLESS)
Bow River Basin Council
Bow River Project
Breton Plots Soil Conservation Society
Butte Action Committee for the Environment
Canadian Heritage Parks Canada
Capital Health Authority
City of Camrose
City of Edmonton, Drainage Services
City of Edmonton, Planning & Development
City of Edmonton, River Valley Rangers
City of Leduc, Environmental Advisory Board
County of Camrose
County of Paintearth #18
County of St. Paul #19
County of Thorhild #7
County of Two Hills #21
County of Vermilion River #24
County of Wetaskiwin #10
Cows & Fish Program
Department of Fisheries and Oceans
Dickson Fish & Game Association
Ducks Unlimited
Earthkeeping
East Central Regional Health Authority
ECL Environmental Services Limited
Edmonton Catholic Schools
EduTransfer Design Association Inc.
Elk Point Chamber of Commerce
Energy Efficiency Association
Enoch First Nation
EnviroMak
Environmental Law Centre
EPCOR
Federation of Alberta Naturalists
FEESA
Fisheries and Oceans, Habitat Management

Flagstaff County
Fort Saskatchewan Regional Industrial Assoc.
Friends of Lily Lake
Grey Wooded Forage Association
Intensive Livestock Working Group
Iron Creek Watershed Improvement Society
Lacombe County
Lac Ste. Anne County
Lakeland Regional Health Authority
Lamont County
Land Stewardship Centre
Leduc County
M.D. Brazeau
M.D. Clearwater
M.D. of Wainwright No. 61
Midwest Tourism
Noble Resource Management Ltd.
Northeast Slopes Riparian Group
Northwest Voyageurs Canoe and Kayak Club
Nova Chemicals Corporation
Parkland County
Parkland Residents Association
Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin
Paul First Nation
Pembina Institute for Appropriate Development
Petro-Canada
PFRA
R L & L Environmental Services
River Valley Alliance
Rocky & Nordegg Cooperative Fisheries Inventory Program
Rocky Riparian Group
Rossdale Community League
Saddle Lake Tribal Administration
Shell Canada
Sierra Club, Prairie Chapter
Smoky Lake County
Soil and Water Conservation Association (Alberta)
St. Mary's Irrigation District
Strathcona County
Strathcona County Environmental Operations
Sturgeon County
Sundance Forest Products
Sunpine Forest Products
The Canadian Salt Company Limited
The King's University College
TOPSOIL & Heritage Conservation Initiative
Town of Devon
Town of Drayton Valley
Town of Elk Point
Town of Gibbons
Town of Rocky Mountain House
Toxics Watch Society
TransAlta Utilities
Trout Unlimited Canada
University of Alberta, Kinsella Research Station
University of Alberta, Renewable Resources
Vermilion River Naturalist Club
Village of Marwayne
Voyageur Ventures
Water Institute for Semi-arid Ecosystems (WISE)
Weyerhaeuser
YoWoChAs

