

# Lakeland College Students Compete in Riparian Web Portal Contest to Showcase Real-life Restoration Projects



*The NSWA's Scott Millar and Lakeland College professor, Nicole Nadorozny, stand on either side of the Lakeland College students who participated in the 2024 Riparian Web Portal Contest. Photo credit: Lakeland College.*

When Mary Ellen Shain met Dr. Nicole Nadorozny, it was obvious that they have a shared passion for riparian areas. NSWA's Shain is the lead coordinator of the Emerald-award winning Riparian Web Portal (RWP). Dr. Nadorozny's passion for land impacts on water was a perfect fit to take over a course at Lakeland College in Aquatic Habitat Protection. After Nadorozny took the RWP 101 training, she and Shain began to discuss how the RWP could be a way "for students to engage with community members or organizations that are involved in aquatic habitat protection".

## THE COLLABORATION & THE COMPETITION BEGIN

The collaboration between Lakeland students and the NSWA is now in its second successful year. To make it more competitive – and fun – the NSWA also throws in a prize. Students do the legwork to enter inspiring riparian conservation or restoration projects into the RWP database while getting to network and learn from people in various industries and spheres.

After students complete the RWP training, they are matched in pairs with projects that align with their specific stream of study (either environmental or enviro-agriculture). Students interface with the project coordinators virtually to gather all the necessary details. After organizing the information, collecting onsite photos, and getting feedback from Dr. Nadorozny, they upload their projects online. This year, each pair presented their projects to their class, while organizational partners were welcome to tune in remotely.

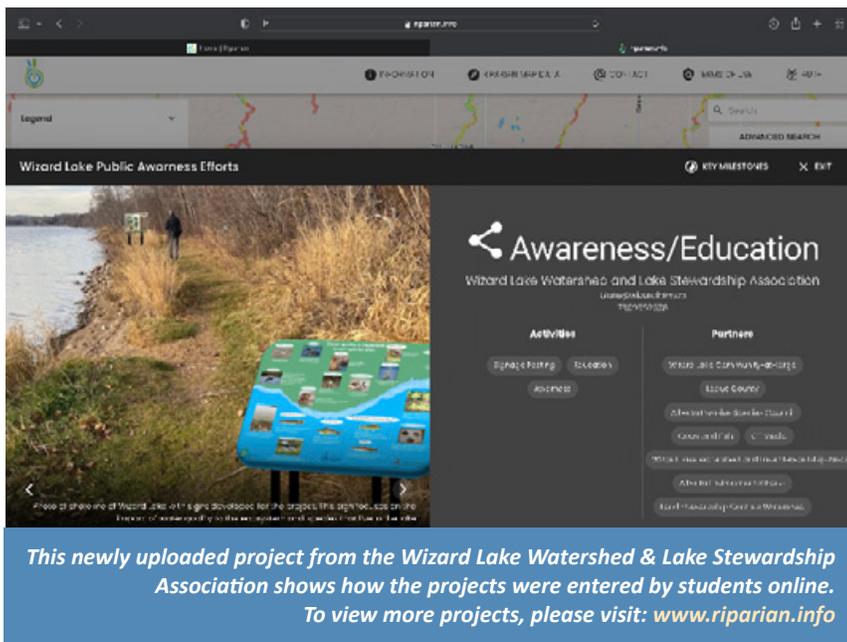
## ONE STUDENT DESCRIBES HER EXPERIENCE

Student Teagan Scott took time to describe her experience with the project. Scott and Kathrin Wildt partnered with Jill Henry from the County of Grande Prairie to showcase their work on the Beaverlodge weir as part of the Redwillow Watershed Restoration Plan. Scott says she was impressed at how the County and partners had removed the weir – a "big, clunky piece of metal" that was causing issues with floating debris and erosion-- to make natural gravel riffles for safe fish passage.

In terms of the "real world" experience, Scott says, "It felt like we got out of the classroom," as they were able to search on Google maps to find the exact project location and see what was happening on the ground. They were sent drone videos that travelled downstream to give them a better sense of the



*Teagan Scott during her presentation on the Redwillow Watershed Restoration project. Photo credit: Lakeland College.*



space and scale of the river and riffles. Other advantages included “Expanding outside of the classroom and getting us to talk to different employers of companies that may be useful connections.”

Of her fellow classmates’ presentations, Scott says, “It was really cool as students getting to learn about the different projects that potentially could happen in watersheds or riparian zones” and adds that it was helpful “to expand our knowledge of what’s actually happening out there.”

A bonus was that Scott and Wildt did two follow-up virtual presentations: for the Agricultural Service Board Meeting for Grande Prairie and a pre-recorded presentation for West County Watershed Society AGM

2024 (Beaverlodge River). This allowed the County of Grande Prairie to showcase the product and outcome of their collaborative initiative, according to their coordinator, Jill Henry.

As for the final prize winner, NSWA’s Shain and Jillian Peterson selected which project stood out – both for its factual and creative approach to the content.

## WRAPPING THINGS UP

NSWA’s Executive Director, Scott Millar, joined the final presentations in person on March 25th and gave a prize to Carson McDonald and Tajudeen Imam for their efforts. NSWA’s Jill Peterson described their project as “creative, in-depth, and inspirational”.

Dr. Nadorozny says of the collaboration with the RWP, “I teach about the *Water for Life* strategy and the importance of riparian areas. I think some great work is being done on riparian habitat, this includes various initiatives like the riparian intactness assessments that were used for the RWP, and the RWP is an opportunity for us to educate the public in general about the really cool boots on the ground projects that people are doing around the province. If there’s an opportunity to showcase that, I’m happy to be a part of that.”