

NSWA STRATEGIC PLAN

2025 - 2030





TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance acknowledges that the traditional land on which our watershed resides is in Treaty 6 Territory, Treaty 8 Territory, and the Métis Homeland.

We deeply respect and wish to honour the diverse Indigenous Peoples whose ancestors' footsteps have marked this territory since time immemorial, including the Nêhiyawak/Cree, Denesuliné/Dene, Anishinaabe/Saulteaux, Nakotalsga/Nakota Sioux, and the Niitsitapi/Blackfoot peoples.

We further acknowledge this territory as the Métis homeland and the home of one of the largest communities of Inuit south of the 60th parallel.

CONTEXT

The North Saskatchewan River watershed is a vital natural asset that sustains communities, industries, and ecosystems. As pressures on water resources grow due to population expansion, land use changes, and climate variability, a proactive and collaborative approach to watershed management is more critical than ever. Alberta's *Water for Life* strategy emphasizes the importance of partnerships, knowledge-sharing, and conservation to ensure the long-term sustainability of the province's water resources. The NSWA, with its long-standing expertise and extensive partnerships, is uniquely positioned to advance these priorities.

To navigate this evolving landscape, NSWA builds upon key strengths and addresses emerging challenges. Its reputation as a trusted source of watershed knowledge, its ability to bring diverse stakeholders together, and its commitment to science-based decision-making provide a solid foundation for leadership in watershed management. At the same time, limited long-term funding, capacity constraints, and evolving policy frameworks present challenges that require innovative solutions. Growing public interest in climate resilience, advances in water management practices, and increasing willingness among partners to collaborate offer opportunities to expand impact and drive meaningful change.

This strategic plan builds on NSWA's strengths while addressing key challenges and opportunities. The goals and strategies outlined here provide a roadmap to enhance stewardship, knowledge-sharing, collaboration, and organizational sustainability, ensuring that the watershed remains a thriving and resilient resource for generations to come.



VISION

People working together to improve the health and sustainability of the North Saskatchewan River watershed today and into the future.

MISSION

To protect and improve watershed health, water quality, and water quantity by:

- Seeking, developing, and sharing knowledge
- Facilitating partnerships and collaborative planning
- Working in an adaptive management process
- Striving to advance the practice of watershed stewardship

NSWA 2025-2030 STRATEGIC PLAN

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Progress toward achieving the NSWA Vision are periodically assessed through a State of the Watershed and a State of Implementation of the Integrated Watershed Management Plan.

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VISION

MISSION

GOALS

STRATEGIES

KPI

	Stewardship The NSWA is a leader in watershed stewardship.	Knowledge The NSWA is a key resource for watershed information and education.	Collaboration The NSWA is the preferred partner for water and aquatic ecosystem management.	Management The NSWA is a sustainable and well-managed organization.
	<p>State of the Watershed: Use innovative, science-based methods that set a benchmark for watershed health reporting.</p> <p>Research and Innovation Partnerships: Work with research institutions and partner organizations to co-develop and implement responses to emerging watershed issues.</p> <p>Integrated Watershed Management: Co-design management plans with watershed partners and support shared implementation to safeguard watershed health.</p> <p>Accessible Data and Tools: Provide high-quality, accessible science, data, and decision-support tools to enhance stewardship and responsible water management.</p> <p>On-the-Ground Projects: Work with partners to implement projects that restore, protect, and enhance the watershed.</p>	<p>Public: Increase awareness and understanding of the value and benefits of a healthy watershed.</p> <p>Youth: Deliver youth-focused programming focused on empowering action.</p> <p>Indigenous Knowledge: Partner with Indigenous communities to respectfully showcase Indigenous knowledge of the watershed.</p> <p>Municipal: Deliver programming specific to municipal partners in the watershed.</p> <p>Agriculture, Forestry & Industry: Develop partnerships to co-design programs to promote and support agricultural, forestry, and industry stewardship.</p>	<p>Government Partnerships: Strengthen the support and value provided to municipal, provincial, and intermunicipal government partnerships on aquatic issues.</p> <p>Indigenous Collaboration: Explore opportunities to work with First Nations and Metis communities on shared water stewardship goals.</p> <p>Sub-watershed Leadership: Act as a catalyst for coordinated local and sub-watershed management efforts.</p> <p>Cross-sector Collaboration: Strengthen partnerships with agriculture, forestry, industry, and non-governmental organizations to advance watershed stewardship.</p> <p>Academic Institutions: Strengthen relationships with academic institutions to contribute to research and innovation in watershed management.</p>	<p>Finance: Develop new means of sustainable finance.</p> <p>Inclusivity: Involve a diverse range of stakeholders, including underrepresented groups, in planning and decision-making processes.</p> <p>Governance: Explore innovative governance methods to encourage broader participation in watershed stewardship.</p> <p>Staff: Provide unique learning opportunities to NSWA staff in collaboration with partners.</p>
	Partner In-Kind Support In-kind support in dollars provided by partner organizations engaged in NSWA-led projects.	Workshop and Training Attendance: Number of participants in NSWA educational and outreach events (e.g. workshops, webinars, training sessions).	Requests for NSWA Participation: Number of requests for NSWA to participate or share knowledge beyond regular NSWA outreach and projects.	Operational Funding Diversity: Numerous operational revenue sources (e.g., municipal contributions, provincial government funds).

GOAL: STEWARDSHIP

The NSW is a leader in watershed stewardship.

The NSW is dedicated to fostering a deep and lasting connection between people and water. As a trusted leader in watershed stewardship, we champion science-based decision-making, inspire collaboration, and create opportunities for meaningful action. Our work ensures that the watershed remains a source of safe, secure drinking water, a healthy aquatic ecosystem, and a reliable water supply for economic sustainability.

STRATEGIES FOR STEWARDSHIP

- **State of the Watershed:** Use innovative, science-based methods to set a benchmark for watershed health reporting.
 - *A clear and comprehensive understanding of the watershed's condition empowers communities and decision-makers to understand, protect, and restore the watershed systems. By continuously assessing its health, we strengthen the foundation for sustainable water management and ecological vitality.*
- **Research and Innovation Partnerships:** Work with research institutions and partner organizations to co-develop and implement responses to emerging watershed issues.
 - *The future of our watershed depends on our ability to be innovative when tackling challenging problems. By working with experts in climate science, hydrology, and land management, we harness new knowledge and technologies to protect water resources and ensure long-term sustainability.*
- **Integrated Watershed Management:** Co-design management plans with watershed partners and support shared implementation to safeguard watershed health.
 - *Water does not follow jurisdictional boundaries—it connects landscapes, ecosystems, and communities. By aligning efforts across municipalities, Indigenous communities, industries, and conservation groups, we ensure that watershed management is coordinated, effective, and resilient.*



- **Accessible Data and Tools:** Provide high-quality, accessible science, data, and decision-support tools to enhance stewardship and responsible water management.
 - *Equipping municipalities, landowners, and industries with accurate data and user-friendly tools enables better planning and action, ensuring that watershed decisions are informed, proactive, and forward-thinking.*
- **On-the-Ground Projects:** Work with partners to implement projects that restore, protect, and enhance the watershed.
 - *Real change happens where people and ecosystems intersect. Projects on the ground translate science and collaboration into tangible environmental benefits that strengthen the watershed's resilience and biodiversity.*

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR STEWARDSHIP

Partner In-Kind Support

In-kind support in dollars provided by partner organizations engaged in NSW-led projects.



GOAL: KNOWLEDGE

The NSW is a key resource for watershed information and education.

A society that is well-informed on how their watershed works is essential for effective watershed management because informed individuals and organizations can make better decisions that protect and sustain water resources. The NSW plays a critical role in providing trusted information, improving environmental literacy, and creating opportunities for learning and collaboration. By increasing awareness and understanding of watershed dynamics, we empower individuals, communities, and decision-makers to take meaningful action in ensuring long-term watershed health and sustainability.



STRATEGIES FOR KNOWLEDGE

- **Public:** Increase awareness and understanding of the value and benefits of a healthy watershed.
 - *By educating the public about watersheds, we can inspire a culture of stewardship and encourage responsible water use and land management.*
- **Youth:** Deliver youth-focused programming focused on empowering action.
 - *Today's youth are the future stewards of our watershed. Engaging them in hands-on learning and leadership opportunities can create the potential for a lifelong commitment to environmental responsibility.*
- **Indigenous Knowledge:** Partner with Indigenous communities to respectfully showcase Indigenous knowledge of the watershed.
 - *Indigenous perspectives offer deep-rooted wisdom and holistic approaches to water and land stewardship. By pairing traditional knowledge with western science, we enhance our collective understanding of watershed value and foster stronger relationships with Indigenous communities.*

- **Municipal:** Deliver programming specific to municipal partners in the watershed.
 - *Municipalities play a crucial role in land-use planning and water management. Providing targeted resources and training ensures that local policies and initiatives can maintain or improve watershed health.*
- **Agriculture, Forestry, and Industry:** Develop partnerships to co-design programs that promote and support agricultural, forestry, and industry stewardship.
 - *Sustainable practices in agriculture and industry are vital for protecting water quality and ecosystem integrity. By working together, we create solutions that balance economic needs with environmental sustainability.*

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR KNOWLEDGE

Workshop and Training Attendance:

Number of participants in NSWA educational and outreach events (e.g. workshops, webinars, training sessions).



GOAL: COLLABORATION

The NSWA is the preferred partner for collaborative water and aquatic ecosystem management.

Strong partnerships are a pillar of *Water for Life* and are the foundation of effective watershed management. The NSWA works across sectors and jurisdictions to align efforts, build capacity, and support informed decision-making. In this way, we create synergies that drive progress in water and aquatic ecosystem management, ensuring sustainable outcomes for both people and nature.



STRATEGIES FOR COLLABORATION

- **Government Partnerships:** Strengthen the support and value provided to the provincial and municipal governments on aquatic issues.
 - *The Government of Alberta is the water manager in Alberta; provincial policies and initiatives are foundational to ensuring watershed health. Strengthening collaboration with provincial authorities ensures that NSWA's expertise and watershed insights contribute to sound water management decisions at the provincial and watershed level.*
 - *The NSWA can help municipalities integrate watershed considerations into planning and decision-making by providing technical support, data, and opportunities to collaborative across jurisdictional boundaries.*
- **Indigenous Collaboration:** Explore opportunities to work with First Nations and Métis communities on shared water stewardship goals.
 - *Indigenous people hold valuable knowledge and offer unique perspectives in watershed management. Engaging with Indigenous communities fosters mutual learning and ensures that watershed stewardship efforts are inclusive and respectful.*

- **Sub-watershed Leadership:** Act as a catalyst for coordinated local and sub-watershed management efforts.
 - *Many watershed challenges require targeted, localized solutions. Through sub-watershed partnerships and initiatives, the NSWA can strengthen grassroots efforts and ensure that local actions contribute to regional watershed health.*
- **Cross-sector Collaboration:** Strengthen partnerships with agriculture, forestry, industry, and non-governmental organizations to advance watershed stewardship.
 - *Agriculture is deeply connected to watershed health. The NSWA can support producers to promote sustainable water practices that contribute to long-term water security and ecosystem integrity.*
- **Academic Institutions:** Strengthen relationships with academic institutions to contribute to research and innovation in watershed management.
 - *Collaborating with academic institutions enhances the NSWA's ability to support research and innovation in watershed management, ensuring that decision-making is informed by the latest science and best practices. These partnerships also create opportunities for knowledge exchange, student engagement and applied research that benefits the watershed.*

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR COLLABORATION

Requests for NSWA Participation:

Number of requests for NSWA to participate or share knowledge beyond regular NSWA outreach and projects.



GOAL: MANAGEMENT

The NSWA is a sustainable and well-managed organization.

Prioritizing financial sustainability, inclusive governance, and staff development allows the NSWA to be resilient as an organization, which in turn ensures the long-term success of watershed initiatives. In this way, we create an organization that is adaptive, forward-thinking, and impactful.

STRATEGIES FOR MANAGEMENT

- **Finance:** Develop new means of sustainable finance.
 - *A diverse funding base ensures the NSWA remains resilient and able to support long-term watershed initiatives.*
- **Inclusivity:** Involve a diverse range of stakeholders, including underrepresented groups, in planning and decision-making processes.
 - *A broad and inclusive approach strengthens decision-making and ensures that all voices, particularly those historically underrepresented, are part of watershed stewardship efforts.*
- **Governance:** Explore innovative governance methods to encourage broader participation in watershed stewardship.
 - *Effective governance fosters transparency, accountability, and engagement, so that the NSWA remains a trusted leader in watershed management.*
- **Staff:** Provide unique learning opportunities to NSWA staff in collaboration with partners.
 - *Investing in staff development strengthens NSWA's expertise, ensuring the organization remains at the forefront of watershed science, policy, and collaboration.*



KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR MANAGEMENT

Operational Funding Diversity:

Number of operational revenue sources (e.g., municipal contributions, provincial government funds).



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Peter Pankiw