



Steering Committee Terms of Reference

Revised March 1, 2021

CONTEXT

[*Water for Life: Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability*](#) was created by the Alberta Government in 2003 in response to increasing pressures on Alberta's water supplies. The three goals of the strategy are to preserve and maintain:

- Safe, secure drinking water supplies
- Healthy aquatic ecosystems
- Reliable, quality water supplies for a sustainable economy

To achieve these goals, *Water for Life* identifies three types of partnerships to lead collaborative watershed planning in Alberta: (1) the Alberta Water Council; (2) Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils; and (3) Watershed Stewardship Groups. Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils (WPACs) are regional organizations with the mandate to engage governments, stakeholders, other partnerships and the public in watershed assessment and planning. The [North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance](#) (NSWA) is the WPAC for the North Saskatchewan River watershed in which the Sturgeon River watershed is located. The NSWA takes a leadership role in watershed planning, state of the watershed reporting, outreach and education.

Watershed Stewardship Groups (WSGs) include a range of local organizations with diverse mandates. These groups undertake actions to raise awareness or physically improve their watersheds or local water bodies. As part of these actions, WSGs may undertake local watershed assessment and planning activities. The [Sturgeon River Watershed Alliance](#) (SRWA) is a WSG taking a collaborative approach to watershed management in the Sturgeon River watershed. This approach is overseen by a Steering Committee consisting of municipalities, Indigenous communities, and interested stakeholders.

THE STURGEON RIVER WATERSHED

The Sturgeon River is a non-glacial river which flows approximately 260 km eastward from its headwaters upstream of Lake Isle to its confluence with the North Saskatchewan River near Fort Saskatchewan (Figure 1). A watershed is an area of land that contains streams and rivers that all drain into a single larger body of water such as a river, lake or ocean. The Sturgeon River incorporates a drainage area of approximately 3,301 km² and the watershed is home to a population of approximately 140,000 people.

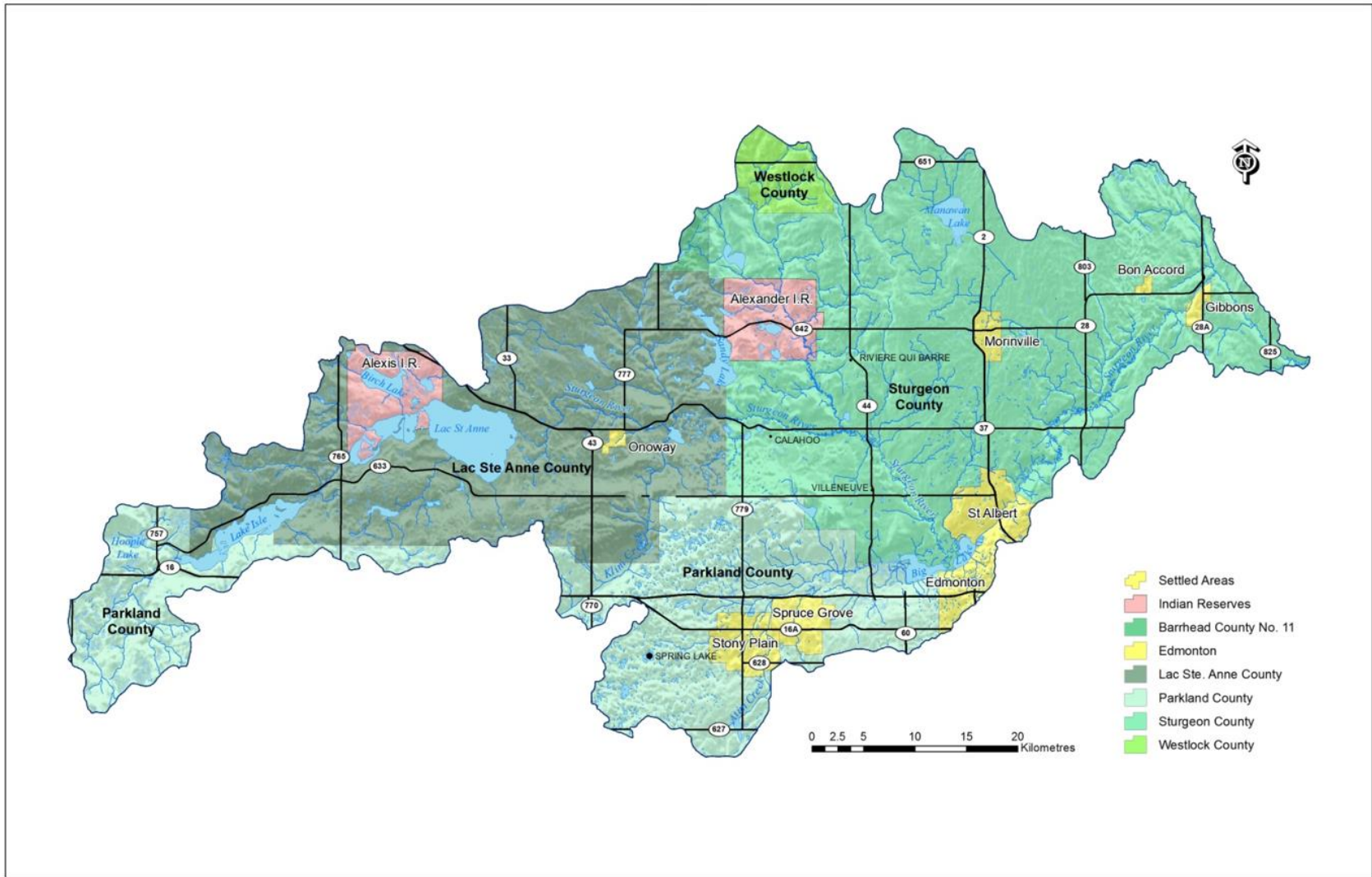


Figure 1. Map of the Sturgeon River and the surrounding watershed.

STEERING COMMITTEE PURPOSE

The Sturgeon River Watershed Alliance (SRWA) Steering Committee has two primary objectives:

- To work together to implement the *Sturgeon River Watershed Management Plan*;
- To build on the findings of the plan and the *Sturgeon River State of the Watershed Report* by undertaking work to identify and fill information gaps; and
- To periodically revisit and update both the state of assessment and the watershed management plan, as needed.

The 2012 [Sturgeon River State of the Watershed](#) report, prepared by the City of St. Albert, identified a number of information gaps. The SRWA raised funds and commissioned several technical reports to address these gaps and these reports are available on [NSWA webpage](#) for the Sturgeon River Watershed Alliance. This technical information provided the foundation for development of the [Sturgeon River Watershed Management Plan \(SRWMP\)](#), completed by the SRWA in 2020. A watershed management plan provides effective guidance when making decisions about the types of activities and development occurring in a community. The development of watershed management advice involves collaborative, long-term thinking and proactive decision-making about key land and water management issues. Watershed plans serve to sustain the health of our aquatic ecosystems.

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Steering Committee (SC) membership is open to municipalities and Indigenous communities in the Sturgeon River watershed, as well as the Provincial Government, non-government organizations (e.g., Big Lake Environmental Support Society) and other interested stakeholders. Membership is reviewed and confirmed annually. Each member organization has one vote; members may also appoint alternates.

Since not all municipalities and organizations in the watershed are able to participate due to various constraints, a cc list of interested parties will be maintained and will receive information and updates about the Alliance.

A Chair and a Vice-Chair will be selected by consensus of the members at the first meeting every calendar year or as needed. A membership schedule listing active members is maintained by the secretariat on an on-going basis.

GOVERNANCE

Every reasonable effort will be made to achieve consensus in decisions and recommendations. Where consensus cannot be reached, decisions and recommendations of the SC will be made by simple majority vote provided that a quorum of members is present. One vote is assigned to each active SC member organization. Quorum shall consist of 50% + 1 of the SC members and will be determined based on confirmed active membership. Voting can also be submitted electronically through email in times when a decision is required quickly but quorum cannot be reached. Dissenting votes will be noted and recorded.

SUB-COMMITTEES

To undertake various aspects of its work, the SC may strike sub-committees as needed. In particular, a standing Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) has been maintained to fill information gaps identified in the 2012 state of the watershed report. The TAC consists of one or more representatives from each SC member organization, as well as other interested stakeholders. Additionally, specific experts are often invited to attend meetings where relevant. The role of the TAC as per their Terms of Reference is to provide technical support and advice to the SC.

MEETINGS

Meetings of the SRWA SC will be held a minimum of twice per year, or at the call of the Chair or majority of voting members.

The North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance (NSWA) will provide administrative and technical support and will house the official records of the SRWA.

STEERING COMMITTEE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Approve the Terms of Reference for the TAC, and other sub-committees
- Approve work plans proposed by the TAC, and other committees
- Support TAC members in making dedicated time available to the work of the SRWA
- Seek funding sources and provide letters of support for grant applications
- Commit to communicating project updates with their respective administrations, organizations, and others
- Work collaboratively towards the implementation of the *Sturgeon River Watershed Management Plan (SRWMP)* in consultation with local and regional stakeholders
- Approve *SRWMP* annual reports that document progress towards plan goals and outcomes
- Work towards integrating the *SRWMP* with municipal policy and other strategic and operational processes
- Forward project findings, recommendations and implementation actions to appropriate government agencies, municipal representatives, and non-governmental organizations