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Season's Greetings from the Athabasca Watershed Council!



An Online Athabasca State of the Watershed Report is Underway

An online State of the Watershed (SoW) Report is being developed and is expected to be completed in March 2012. The main feature of the SoW Report will be an Interactive Atlas that will display various map layers and supporting information about each of the 10 sub-watersheds (see map, P. 2) as well as the greater Athabasca watershed.

The Interactive Atlas will display various maps of the physical and biological features of the Athabasca watershed such as geology, soil, topography, land cover, meteorology, hydrology, land-use, wildlife, and point-sources of pollution. In addition, maps on indicators of Conservation of Biological Diversity, Maintenance of Surface Water Quality, Maintenance of Ecologically Significant Water Levels and Flows, Maintenance of Groundwater Quality and Quantity, and Watershed Condition Pressures will also be displayed. The choice of indicators is limited by currently available data. The SoW Report will also identify gaps in data and knowledge.

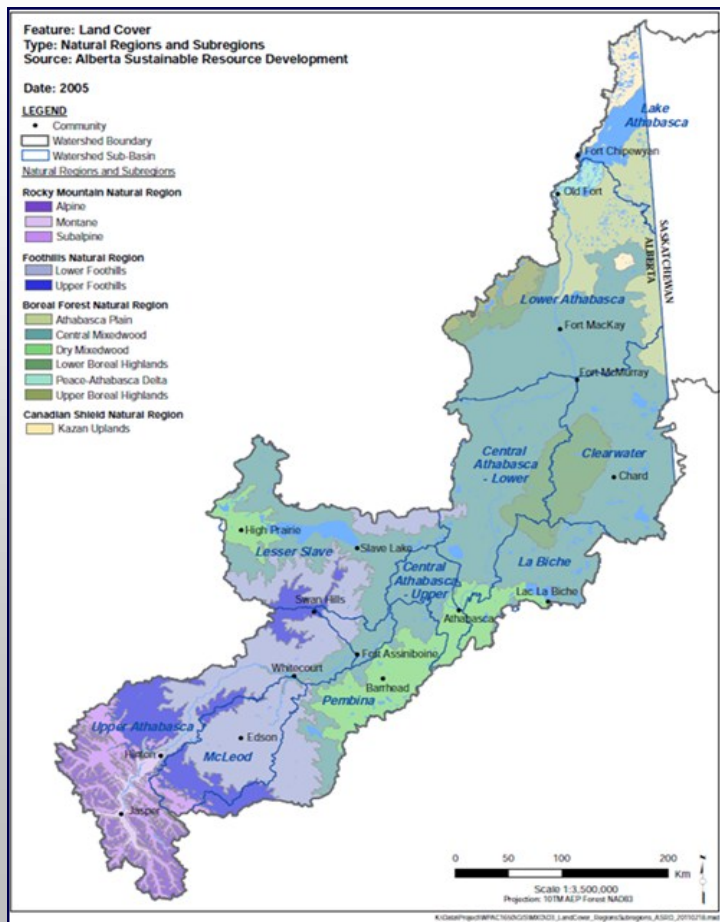
The project is being developed by Fiera Biological Consulting based in Edmonton. The project is overseen by the Technical Committee of the Athabasca Watershed Council that is composed of 6 board members. The Science Advisory Team, currently composed of 3 scientists coming from the government and the University of Alberta, provides advice as the project moves along. The Science Advisory Team is currently being expanded to provide expert advice on most of the watershed health indicators.

Once completed, the online State of the Watershed Report will be publicly announced during the forthcoming Annual General Meeting in May 2012. A series of public consultation events throughout the watershed is being planned to gain input into the online SoW Report.

The online SoW Report follows the completion of State of the Watershed Report – Phase 1, a working document, that was announced in the last newsletter, March 2011.



Dan Moore, Chair, Technical Committee



The Athabasca watershed is divided into 10 sub-watersheds. This allows prioritizing of areas with specific issues. The watershed has four natural regions that result in different vegetation and wildlife distribution in response differences in climate, topography, and bedrock geology or soil.

Focus on Watershed Stewardship

Central Athabasca Stewardship Society (CASS) was formed by Fort Assiniboine area residents in 2010. The society promotes the importance of agriculture, responsible land use planning, and conservation of natural ecosystems and their functions and values.

CASS has initiated a community landscape visioning project and invites the support of environmental funding agencies and other watershed stewardship groups. For more information, please contact: castewards@gmail.com



Marilou Montemayor, Watershed Science Coordinator, AWC-WPAC, gave the presentation “Lake Salinity Levels and Eutrophication” at the **Alberta Lake Management Society (ALMS) Workshop** in Chestermere, AB on September 30, 2011.

Athabasca Watershed Council Annual General Meeting 2011



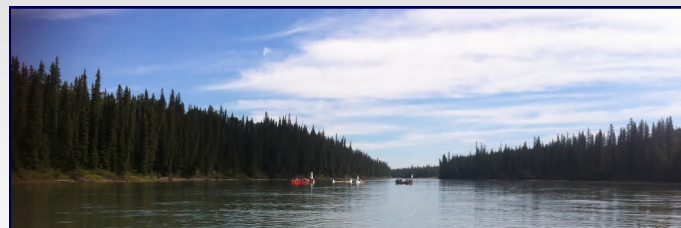
Photo: C. Simmons

Wetlands—near the Athabasca River in Jasper National Park

The 2011 Annual General Meeting was well attended, with over 50 participants meeting in Hinton on May 28, 2011. A presentation by Ken Saddleback on “*First Nations of the Athabasca and the Spirit of Water*” was very well received. An informative overview on the “*Bibliography – Athabasca River Basin Project*” was provided by Dr. Robert Holmberg, Professor Emeritus, Athabasca University.

The highlight of the AGM was the election of four new Directors of the Board: Gerald Nanninga (Government); David Rector (Other); Lorraine MacKay (Non-government); and Julie Burke (Aboriginal). The AWC-WPAC was deeply saddened at the death of Gerald Nanninga shortly after the AGM election. The County of Barrhead subsequently agreed to designate Councillor Darrell Troock to fill this position on the Board. The AWC-WPAC Board has a total of 16 Directors representing 5 sector categories: Government (3), Non-Government (3), Industry (3), Aboriginal (3), and Other (3), and the Past– President.

To review the AWC-WPAC Annual Report 2010-2011, visit www.awc-wpac.ca



Voyageur Canoes on the Athabasca below the community of Hinton

Alberta WPACs—Summit on the Shore Conference— Slave Lake



Photo: C. Simmons

Summit delegates at work on Alberta WPACs Collaborative action plan.

Every October, all eleven Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils (WPACs) in the province of Alberta gather for a **WPAC Summit conference** to discuss common issues and opportunities, share new ideas and lessons learned, and plan actions on how to address issues and opportunities collaboratively. This year's summit was the 5th WPAC Summit and was held October 12-14, 2011 at the Sawridge Inn and Conference Centre in Slave Lake.

The first evening included an informative presentation by **Dr. Brad Stelfox** on modeling of cumulative effects of human activities (e.g. forestry, agriculture, human settlements, oil and gas, and mining) and their effects on water resources and natural ecosystems. The ALCES model (www.alces.ca) is able to project different management scenarios over time, e.g., business as usual; implementation of beneficial management practices (BMPs); as well as "management by objective" and "true economic performance". He advised that Alberta WPACs may want to explore and implement BMPs, but also look at 'management by objective' to achieve key recommendations within each watershed.

The following day was filled with motivational talks from 3 WPAC chairmen inspired by their experiences working with their respective WPACs: Les Gammie (North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance); Hugh Sanders (Battle River Watershed Alliance) and Bob Cameron (Mighty Peace Watershed Alliance). Resource persons from various groups also provided information and opportunities that could be utilized by WPACs: Land Stewardship Centre, Sustainability Resources, and Alberta Ecotrust.

Mark Bennett (Bow River Basin Council) and Dave Trew, (North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance) shared lessons learned in the development of their respective

Integrated Watershed Management Plans. The day ended with a review and comments session led by Connie Simmons (Athabasca Watershed Council, and David Samm (Battle River Watershed Alliance) on the draft document "5 Year Renewable Memorandum of Understanding" (MoU) for the proposed Alberta WPACs Collaborative initiative.

Evening festivities were highlighted with a local cuisine of fresh walleye courtesy of Commercial Fisherman Zone 8, and the lively greetings of local **MLA, Pearl Calahasen**. The final day of the Summit provided a thought-provoking talk from **Monique Passelac-Ross** (Canadian Institute of Resources Law, Univ. of Calgary) on Aboriginal and Treaty Rights to Water.

The remainder of Friday morning was dedicated to a global café workshop of WPAC participants to provide feedback and direction for the Alberta WPACs collaborative action plan 2012-13.

Meet Our New Staff



Marilou Montemayor joined the Athabasca Watershed Council as the **Watershed Science Coordinator** in September. Marilou brings with her valuable experience working from her previous work with the Red Deer River Watershed Alliance (WPAC). She has prior experience working on surface water and groundwater quality monitoring in the oil sands reclamation and research, and beneficial management practices in agriculture. She has completed applied research on re-vegetation of mined peatlands contaminated with salinity. She holds Master of Environmental Studies and Bachelor of Science (Environmental and Resources Sciences Theme) degrees from the University of Waterloo and Trent University, respectively.

**Welcome to the Athabasca Watershed Council,
MARILOU!**

Athabasca River Voyageur Canoe Brigade—August 2011

Reliving a part of Canadian history on the Athabasca River, AWC-WPAC Directors, staff and members paddled 130 km along the Athabasca River, August 18-22, 2011. The 4-day ARVCB event was held to celebrate explorer David Thompson's travels in the upper Athabasca in 1810-1812, and to raise awareness of the historical significance of voyageur canoes and the Athabasca River to the early fur trade.

As part of the Council's community engagement focus, the ARVCB event also provided many opportunities to raise awareness and provide information to the public about the Athabasca Watershed, and to enlist new members.



AWC-WPAC Board and staff meet Laverne Thompson (second from left) the 7th Generation descendent of explorer David Thompson, and a new member of the Athabasca Watershed Council.



Photo: C. Simmons

The Athabasca Watershed Council during the second day of the Athabasca River Voyageur Canoe Brigade.

THANK YOU!

The AWC-WPAC sincerely thanks
Suncor Energy Inc.
 for their donation for the ARVCB event.

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Save the Date:

- ◆ Athabasca Watershed Council **Annual General Meeting—May 26, 2012** Place: TBA
- ◆ Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC), "Leading the North Conference"—January 25-27, 2012, Fort McMurray, <http://www.nadc.gov.ab.ca/leading-north.asp>
- ◆ Alberta Soil Science Workshop—February 14-16, 2012, Edmonton, <http://www.soilsworkshop.ab.ca/>
- ◆ Canadian Land Reclamation Association (CLRA), "End of Life...a New Beginning" - February 29-March 2, Red Deer, <http://www.clra.ca/12-02-29-AlbertaAGM.htm>
- ◆ Canadian Oilsands Network for Research and Development (CONRAD) 2012 Water Conference & Workshops—March 20-22, 2012, Edmonton, <http://www.cwn-rce.ca/news-and-events/2012-conrad-water-conference-student-poster-competition/>
- ◆ Community Planning Association of Alberta (CPAA Planning for Complete Communities—April 16-18, 2012, Red Deer, <http://www.cpaabiz/>

Why the "Dispatch"?

In 1904, Billy Louttit, a Métis dispatch carrier for the Hudson Bay Company, ran 100 miles from Athabasca to Edmonton in 16 hours to get help for the town, threatened by an imminent flood. Then, like now, water was an issue to be taken seriously. "Dispatches" were often official messages, sent with haste and importance, to a particular destination. And so it is with this newsletter—important information about the Athabasca Watershed Council and its work, sent to keep you informed and up-to-date.

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