



Lesser Slave Watershed Council 2008/09 Annual Report



Background and Status of the LSWC

In the 1990's there were some low lake levels and river flows which brought about a lot of concern from citizens in the region. These significant fluctuations in water levels affect recreation and tourism, agriculture, commercial and sport fisheries, and municipal and industrial water supplies. These events prompted a group of concerned citizens from the region to get together and discuss the issues related to these low lake levels and what could be done about it. In 2000, this group organized themselves as the Lesser Slave Watershed Council and their focus was on taking action to ensure the sustainability of Lesser Slave Lake and its watershed.

With the implementation of the province's Water for life Strategy and the growing concern about the sustainability of the water resources in the region, the Watershed Committee became the Lesser Slave Watershed Council (LSWC), and designated a Watershed Planning Advisory Council (WPAC) by the Province in January 2007.

The 2008 operational year has been a productive one for the LSWC and with a renewal of Water for Life and growing partnerships in the watershed the council hopes that in the year to come we will achieve more of our long term goals and improve the health of the watershed.

Mission Statement

The Lesser Slave Watershed Council will be a proactive organization working towards the sustainability of the Lesser Slave Lake Watershed with regard to the economic, social and environmental health of the region and its citizens.

2008 Highlights and Accomplishments

As in other years the operational plan for the 2008-2009 year built on the ongoing projects and initiatives from previous years. Here are the accomplishments for this fiscal year:

New Executive Director

Meghan Payne, a graduate from the University of Lethbridge, was hired in July 2008 to fill the position of executive director for the Lesser Slave Watershed Council. The town of High Prairie is providing office space for the LSWC at a very reasonable cost. As the face of the LSWC Meghan will build awareness in the community, take care of the books and accounting, promote the LSWC, work on

education initiatives, manage grants and contracts, participate at a provincial level by meeting with other WPAC representatives every 4 months, take care of the accounting for the LSWC, speak at functions as requested in the community and at conferences, as well as take care of any other miscellaneous items on a day to day basis.

Water Quality Monitoring

The LSWC started this project in the fall of 2007 which includes monitoring of lake tributaries for nutrients and other water quality parameters; the main goal of the project is to determine a nutrient budget for the lake.

In the spring runoff of 2008 water samples were successfully collected and analyzed but to complete the program a summer storm event also needed to be sampled but we were not blessed with such an event last summer. So in the summer of 2009 the LSWC plans to collect samples during a major rain event in order to complete the program that has been designed for the watershed by Alina Wolanski of AENV.

Lake Sedimentation

Based on recommendations from a sedimentation study, the LSWC has continued its work on river channel surveys in the basin. The purpose of these surveys is to gain knowledge as to whether or not stream beds have begun to stabilize after flood control projects that removed meanders from the river were undertaken in the 1980's. In the 2008 fiscal year channel surveys were completed on the Swan River by a local contractor. Future plans could include a channel survey of the Driftpile River and reinstating sediment monitoring on the major rivers in the watershed,

Ecological Water Needs

Defining the relationship between river flows and lake levels and the aquatic ecosystem is a key objective for the LSWC, fundamental to its goal of improving the health of aquatic environments in the watershed while ensuring reliable water supplies for municipal, industrial, recreational and tourism needs.

In 2007 a contractor was hired to do hydraulic surveys and 2D habitat modeling on the South Heart River (Mullen's walleye spawning area) and on the Lesser Slave River (open water conditions). In the winter of 2008 the same contractor was hired to do similar work on the Lesser Slave River under ice-cover conditions. . This work fits into the Healthy Aquatic Ecosystems goals outlined in Water for Life and the LSWC hopes to continue with similar survey and habitat

modeling work on another segment of the Lesser Slave River in the 2009/10 operational year.

Hydrology Modeling of Lesser Slave Watershed

Development of an integrated hydrology model for the Lesser Slave watershed is a top priority. Such a model is fundamental to evaluating various lake level stabilization scenarios, and also could be used to evaluate watershed land use and sub-basin specific impacts.

The contractor has built two models: one model (MIKE SHE) computes surface runoff and base flow based on climate and physical data; the other model (MIKE 11) routes flows through rivers and the lake. The model can be applied to assessing the relative effect of various management scenarios. AENV hydrologists will be able to run the model and to keep refining and updating it. The watershed model represents the first of its kind in the province.

State of the Watershed Report

A priority project of the LSWC is to complete a State of the Watershed report. In December 2008 requests for proposals were sent out to various contractors around the province and in January 2009 the LSWC selected a contractor and began the process of selecting indicator metrics that will be used to evaluate the overall health of the basin.

This document, once completed, will act as a guide for future watershed planning and management. Municipalities, industry and other stakeholders will find this document to be a useful tool for guiding their environmental planning in the future.

To raise awareness about the report a brochure was developed and mailed out to local businesses, municipalities and towns in the basin. This brochure also requested donations to help cover the costs of the layout and printing of the final document. Public input is important to the LSWC and once we have a final draft of the report open houses will be held in the community to engage the public.

Education Objectives

Executive director Meghan Payne has been in contact with the director of the Lesser Slave Forest Education Society in regards to forming a partnership with the LSWC to deliver curriculum based watershed and wetland information to school aged children in the basin. The LSFES was founded in 1999 by a group of local educators, forestry professionals, government representatives and

concerned citizens. They are focused on providing environmental education and public awareness to youth within the Lesser Slave area. To date the LSFES has educated over 25,000 students and also holds boreal forest education camps throughout the summer.

This is a great partnership for the LSWC as this organization focuses 25% of its programming and resources on wetlands and water ecosystems. Members and instructors are already recognized and accepted into local schools and all material fits into the curriculum guidelines. The LSWC Executive Director, Meghan Payne, plans to help out this spring and summer by leading classroom presentations and assisting with field trips and camps where water related materials will be presented. As the LSFES is a nonprofit organization as well they have asked the LSWC for a donation to go along with the new partnership.

Increasing Public Awareness

Webpage

A local web designer in high prairie was hired to build a page for the LSWC. Our web page can be seen at www.lswc.ca. By having a web page the LSWC is more accessible to large number of people. The content of the webpage includes things like: important information about the basin, links to back ground studies, a photo gallery, a comments section, links to other water related websites and a lists of past and current projects that the LSWC is working on. A membership form is also available on the website and anyone who is interested in the LSWC is encouraged to become a member. The web page is a great way to share information with the public and having a link to the site on the Alberta Water Portal web page will also help raise awareness about our watershed.

Information Materials

The contract for the development of information materials for the LSWC has been completed. The LSWC now has 12 fact sheets about the council and the basin. Some of the topics include: riparian habitat, sedimentation, aquatic ecosystems, goals and projects of the LSWC and water allocation in the basin. The contractor also produced 3 power point presentations, 4 tri fold desktop displays, and 1 large tradeshow sized display. These materials will aid the LSWC in raising awareness about our goals and activities and can be used at various trade shows, conferences and forums in the future.

Water Management Plan Phase 1 – Lesser Slave River

Low flow conditions in the Lesser Slave River during dry years have raised concerns about water supply, downstream aquatic health, and lake levels. To address these concerns phase one of the water management plan was developed for the Lesser Slave River. Alberta Environment originally began work on the document but now that the LSWC has established itself as the WPAC the council is equally involved in the process. As of January 2009 the draft document has been presented to councils of the town of High Prairie, the Town of Slave Lake, the MD of Big lakes and the MD of Lesser Slave River and their input and concerns have been acknowledged and incorporated into the plan. Council members are also supposed to present the plan to their respective sectors and bring back concerns that they have to the LSWC at meetings. The next steps are to hold public meetings where people can ask questions and voice their concerns about the water management plan and those concerns will be addressed before the final draft is sent to Alberta Environment for approval.

In the Year Ahead....

In the next year the LSWC plans to have the state of the watershed report finalized and printed then distributed around the watershed. This document will act as a guide for future watershed planning and management and hopefully aid other stakeholders in the basin when they are creating their own environmental plans.

Raising awareness about the LSWC and our activities is a priority for the WPAC. In the next year we hope to build some partnerships with existing groups in the watershed who share our goals and visions. Increasing water stewardship activities in the basin and increasing the LSWC's membership would be a positive step for us. Speaking engagements and open houses are just a few ways for the LSWC to make its self more familiar with citizens in the watershed. The LSWC will attend local trade shows, conferences and any other engagements that present an opportunity to increase membership or raise awareness. Projects such as water quality monitoring present a great opportunity to recruit volunteers to help out and get some real hands on experience with the council. A training day is planned to teach proper sampling techniques and safety in the field.

Phase One of the Water Management plan for the Lesser Slave River was originally started because of concerns around low lake levels and the emergency measures that may need to be implemented in such a situation. Making progress on this document is important for the MD of Lesser Slave River and Town of Slave as the outcome directly affects them. In the next year the

LSWC hopes to receive some feedback from Alberta Environment and begin the process of implementing the recommendations outlined in the document.

As the LSWC is a relatively new WPAC we are always looking for new opportunities to partner on projects. ACA, Ducks Unlimited and Cows and Fish are all excellent groups who have done work in the basin in the past and the LSWC hopes to organize projects with these groups in the future as well.

2008 LSWC Board of Directors

Position	Name	Organization
Chair	George Keay	Citizen at large
Vice chair	Murray DeAlexandra	Commercial Fishermen Association and related Groups
Secretary	Gordon Sanders	Forest & related Industry
Treasurer	Brian Elliott	Cottage Owners/Country Residential
Director	Brian Rosche	M.D. of Lesser Slave River
Director	Guy L'Hereux	M.D. of Big Lakes
Director	Wilfred Willier	Town of High Prairie
Director	Peter Freeman	First Nations
Director	Jerry Cunningham	Métis Settlements
Director	Lynn Sandquist	Agriculture Sector
Director	Larry Marquardt	Recreation and tournaments
Director	Rob Irwin	Town of Slave Lake
Director	Stacey Wabick	ENGO's (including Watershed Stewardship Groups)
Director	Marshall Sloan	Oil and Gas Industry Sector
Director	Kelly Harlton	Tourism Operators/Groups
Director	Rod Burr	Alberta Environment
Director	John Tchir	Alberta Sustainable Resource Development
Director	Wanda Watts	Federal Government

Financial Statements**(April 1, 2007 – March 31, 2008)**

As decided by the council the 2007-2008 financial records were audited by Doyle & Company Chartered Accountants. As of March 31, 2008 the financial statements of the Lesser Slave Watershed Council are as follows:

Statement of Financial Position

	2008	2007
<u>Current Assets</u>		
Cash	\$113,255	\$187,986
Investment	\$100,000	-
Accounts Receivable	\$ 70,000	\$122,000
GST Receivable	\$ 5,264	-
Prepaid Expenses	\$ 450	-
	\$288,969	\$309,986
<u>Current Liabilities</u>		
Accounts Payable	\$77,424	-
Deferred Revenue	\$193,269	292,000
	\$270,720	\$292,000
<u>Net Assets</u>		
Unrestricted Net Assets	\$18,249	\$17,986
Total	\$288,969	\$309,986

Statement of Operations

	2008	2007
Revenue		
Grant Income	\$392,000	5,000
Revenue deferred to Subsequent period	(\$193,296)	-
Interest Income	\$1,819	\$1,247
	\$200,523	\$6,247
Expenses		
Administration	\$12,000	-
Advertising and Promotion	\$576	-
Insurance	\$600	-
Office	\$669	\$103
Professional Fees	\$475	\$482
Project Expenses	\$185,490	\$5,000
Rental	\$450	\$455
	\$200,260	\$6,040
Excess of Revenue Over Expenditures	\$ 263	\$207