

Lesser Slave Watershed Council

**2009/10
Annual Report**

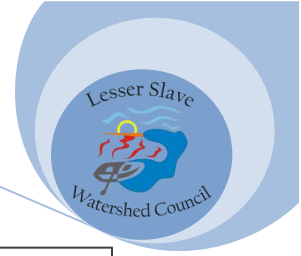


Written for the LSWC By:
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Executive Director



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Who is the LSWC?

The Lesser Slave Watershed Council is a non-profit group of volunteers who work with the provincial government to maintain the health of the Lesser Slave Watershed.

Members of the council are representatives from towns, municipalities, aboriginal communities, industries, cottage owners, non-profit organizations as well as recreation and tourism groups who have an interest in how the waters of Lesser Slave Lake and its tributaries are managed.



A map of the Lesser Slave Watershed showing major sub basins and tributaries.

In January of 2007 the LSWC was recognized by the Government of Alberta as the Watershed Planning and Advisory Council for the Lesser Slave Watershed under the *Water for Life Strategy*.

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.

Vision

"The Lesser Slave Watershed, including its lake and rivers, is a bond that brings communities together, is a part of each citizen's life, is a prime asset and renewable resource, and is a generator of economic development."

Guiding Principles

- Be accountable to all stakeholders and citizens within the watershed.
- Work collaboratively with stakeholders and citizens to improve the health of the lake and its watershed.
- Share responsibility for the health of the lake and its watershed by involving communities and stakeholders in watershed management.
- Promote a better understanding of natural watershed processes and the interaction between land, water, ecosystem and human activities.



2009/10 Accomplishments and Milestones

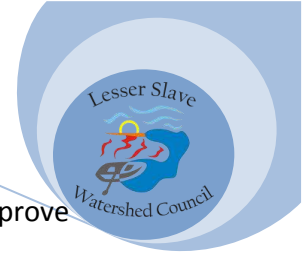
Water Management Plan Phase 1 – Lesser Slave River

The Lesser Slave River originates at the outlet of Lesser Slave Lake, and flows in an easterly direction for 72 km to its confluence with the Athabasca River. Flows in the Lesser Slave River are directly impacted by water levels in Lesser Slave Lake. In 1983, a fixed-crest weir and eight cutoff channels were constructed in the upper reach of the Lesser Slave River. The intent of the Lesser Slave Lake Regulation Project was to reduce the severity of flooding of low-lying areas around the lake.

After approval by the stakeholders around the LSWC table and a public consultation process, the LSWC submitted its phase 1 Water Management Plan for the Lesser Slave River to Alberta Environment in September 2009. The main purpose of the document is to address the issue of low water levels at the regulation weir and to maintain sufficient flow in the Lesser Slave River to protect the aquatic environment as well as provide water for downstream users. The plan also addressed the problem of siltation at the mouth of the river which can restrict flow from the lake to the weir and into the river.

The WMP makes several recommendations in the plan and these include:

1. A minimum flow of $6\text{m}^3/\text{sec}$ be maintained in the Lesser Slave River to protect water supplies for municipal and industrial uses, including effluent dilution, and to maintain concentrations of dissolved oxygen above water quality guidelines at the mouth of the river.
2. To ensure that a minimum flow of $6\text{m}^3/\text{sec}$ is maintained in the Lesser Slave River, the LSWC recommends that AENV take the lead role and responsibility for implementing the operational response procedures outlined in the water management plan.
3. The Lesser Slave Watershed Council recognizes the need for a navigable channel to be maintained in the Lesser Slave Lake outlet so that commercial and recreational marine craft can access the lake from the public boat launch and private marina located in the Lesser Slave River above the weir. The Watershed Council recommends that Navigable Waters Canada consider the specific navigational needs in these waters within the context of its overall legislative responsibility for the protection of the public right to navigation and the protection of the environment.
4. To ensure protection of the river aquatic environment in the long term, the LSWC recommends the IFN work program currently in progress be completed as outlined in the plan.
5. The Lesser Slave Watershed Council recommends that a permanent water quality monitoring station be established on the Lesser Slave River. The Lesser Slave is currently the only major watershed in the province that is not part of the long term river network (LTRN). The development of a River Water Quality Index for the Lesser Slave River would



provide a measure of the effectiveness of watershed management efforts to improve the health of the watershed.

Since submitting this water management plan the LSWC has had several discussions with Alberta Environment regarding the installation of gated culverts to maintain the recommended 6m/s3 in the Lesser Slave River. At this point in time, AENV staff are working out a preliminary design for the structure and completing a feasibility study for the project site.

Some of the major obstacles that we are facing have to do with funding. We have been advised by AENV that it is important to have a long term water quality monitoring station in our watershed, but at this time there isn't funding available to install one. The installation of the gated culvert structure at the weir is currently on the capital projects list, and if funding can be supplemented by some of the stakeholders on the Lesser Slave River it will move up on the list and hopefully be installed within the next year.

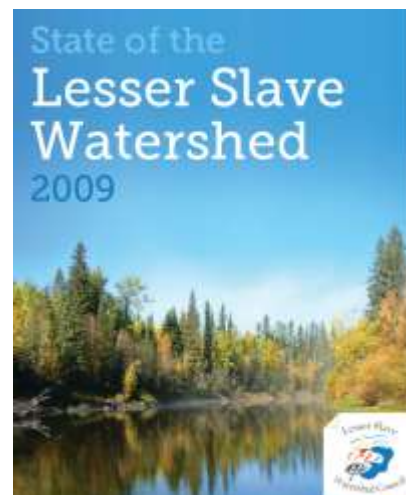
For a complete copy of the LSWC's Water Management Plan Phase 1 please visit our website at www.lswc.ca or call our office 780 523 9800.

State of the Watershed Report

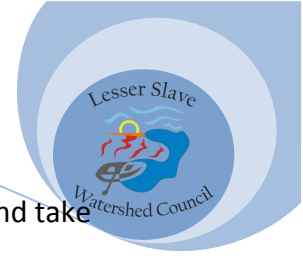
The Lesser Slave Watershed Council and contractor Carson Forestry Services have just completed the first State of the Watershed Report for the Lesser Slave Watershed. All of the Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils in Alberta have completed or are working on a State of the Watershed report for each of their basins as well. Alberta Environment has provided support and funding for State of the Basin reporting under Alberta's *Water for Life Strategy*.

The purpose of this State of the Watershed report is to evaluate the health of the Lesser Slave Watershed based on all of the current information and geo-data available; to identify information gaps where more research and data collection need to be done; and to make information about our local watershed available to the public.

Indicators such as water quality, water quantity, land used and biological indicators were selected and evaluated based on the information available. Each of the major sub basins within the watershed was evaluated separately and these include: South Heart/East and West Prairie, Driftpile River, Swan River, Lesser Slave Lake, Lesser Slave Lake North, and the Lesser Slave River.



This report includes a physical description of the Lesser Slave Watershed including geography, climate, hydrology, ecosystems and species at risk. A chapter on local Stewardship groups was also included to highlight the local stewardship groups and their efforts throughout the basin.



We at the LSWC hope that people read this report, learn more about their watershed and take action to do what they can to maintain and even improve its health.

The State of the Watershed report will be used by the LSWC to make decisions about future planning and projects in the watershed. This will also be a valuable tool for the Towns, Municipalities and industry when it comes to future planning and water conservation initiatives. The LSWC will share the report with all of the other Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils across the province; all of the stakeholders represented on the LSWC, watershed stewardship groups in the area and also provide copies to local schools.

To obtain a copy of this report please contact the Lesser Slave Watershed Council at (780) 523-9800, or visit our web page www.lswc.ca

Living by Water 2009

The Living by Water project is delivered in Alberta through the Federation of Alberta Naturalists (FAN). They have been running this program for eight years in central Alberta. The Alberta Conservation Team (ACT) works in partnership with FAN to increase the reach of their program to other areas in Alberta. The philosophy of the Living by Water project is to encourage home owners to make small changes in their properties to help improve the health of their lake. This goal is like minded ACT's goals, and thus this has become a natural partnership.



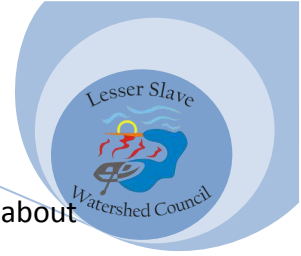
During July and August of 2009 , with the support of the Lesser Slave Watershed Council, ACT successfully delivered 20 homesite consultations in Shaw's Point, Joussard, Canyon Creek, Widewater/Wagner and Marten Beach. Depending on the interest from the homeowner the consultations took anywhere from 30 minutes to one and half hours.

A homesite consultation is a one on one process with each landowner that focuses on the positive actions they are currently doing on their property. By maintaining a solution based tone throughout the consultation, relevant individually tailored suggestions for improvement can be made to the home owners. If all home owners make small changes to their properties, the collective impact is beneficial for the lake.

Each consultation begins with providing the homeowner with an overview of the program and process. Throughout the consultation, it is emphasized that the information gathered is confidential and will not be used against them unless there is practices found that are dangerous to human health. Permission is also requested to take photos.

These photos are used for training and educational purposes and provide important information that is used to compile the reports. Any personal information is not attached to the pictures.





The main purpose of the homesite visit is to make observations and gather information about what is important to the homeowner and how they are currently using their property. Questions regarding home activities, waterfront recreation, septic systems, and shoreline vegetation are asked during the consultation. The information gathered from the homeowner and any observations gathered from a walk around the property provide enough data to build a customized report for each landowner.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS' FINDINGS

There were many similarities observed in the 20 consultations carried out along Lesser Slave Lake. Firstly, many landowners did not know that having a lakefront property requires special attention, and had little knowledge of their impact on the lake. Secondly, around the lake there was evidence of ATV use as seen through quad tire tracks and frequently used trails with dwindling vegetation along the shore and throughout the riparian areas. Finally, many landowners were unaware of what a healthy shoreline looks like. There was very little knowledge about the noxious and restricted weeds present on shoreline properties and also what vegetation shows a healthy shoreline. Consultation participants demonstrated their interest in learning about healthy vegetation such as reeds, weeds, shrubs and grasses as almost each consultation turned into a mini botany lesson! Landowners showed great interest in learning more about the lake ecosystem and many asked questions about how to restore their properties to a more natural state.



Many families, like this one here in Jousard, enjoy recreating on Lesser Slave Lake.

Within the communities of Widewater and Wagner, there were specific concerns that were observed. The current sewer disposal systems seen were commonly outdated and underserviced. When discussing this with landowners, they were hesitant to spend the money on pumping, inspecting and maintaining current septic fields. This is because sewer and water hook up will become available to them in the next one to two years. In some instances septic holding tanks had not been pumped or inspected in up to ten years.

FUTURE STEPS

Include Recommendations for seasonal Renters: At Lesser Slave Lake, we had the opportunity to talk with less conventional lakeside land owners. Campgrounds, bed and breakfasts and renters at resorts provided unique consultations. Recreationalists are the major users in these locations, and as such having specific tips and recommendations to provide these groups with will be very useful. As Lesser Slave Lake becomes more and more of a tourist destination, it will become increasingly important to educate visitors about lake water quality. The cumulative



impact of making positive changes to not only properties but recreation activities can improve the water quality on the lake.

Strengthen Partnerships: In order to offer homesite consultations, it is important to have strong support from the local stewardship groups and lake dwellers to ensure the process of booking consultations is successful. From this network of people, lake champions who promote the consultations are identified. These people know the lake and they have unique and meaningful relationships with the community. Thus, they are equipped to promote the Living By Water program by setting up consultations with their neighbors. This process is integral to the success of the Living by Water program. These partnerships and community connections need to be strengthened for future involvement of the Living by Water program in Lesser Slave Lake.

For more information about the Living By Water Program visit www.onesimpleact.alberta.com

Education and Awareness

LSWC and the LSFES

The LSFES is a group committed to forest focused environmental education and is led by a dedicated group of volunteer representatives from industry, schools and government who share a common goal of environmental stewardship. Educational programming is developed and delivered by professional Forest Educators.

In June 2009 the LSWC donated \$10,000 to the Lesser Slave Forest Education Society to help them with their operations and contribute to wetland and watershed related educational programming. The water related educational programs done by the LSFES accounts for about 25% of their activities and the LSWC is very glad to be a partner.

In the Summer of 2009 LSWC Executive Director Meghan Payne took to the field with the other LSFES instructors to educate grade 3's and grade 5's about wetlands, water quality, and freshwater ecosystems.

Everyone has a great time on these field days while they are learning about the "Marsh Monsters" who live in our ponds, swamps and

FBI Mystery at the Lake

The Forest Bureau of Investigation was called in to solve the murder mystery of Wally the Walleye. Wally was found dead on the beach under suspicious circumstances and junior agents had to solve the crime. Was it Ozzie the Osprey, Annie the Angler or Pete the Pike, to name a few?

Campers investigated the crime scene, interrogated the suspects and analyzed the autopsy reports. The campers explored 3 stations on bird identification, fish classification and water quality testing before solving the crime.



Jr. campers at the fish classification station.



wetlands or while they act as lab scientists to test the pH and dissolved oxygen at the water quality station. But don't forget the spruce bog and all of its unique features, plants and animals; there is much to learn in the bog.

For more information about the LSFES visit their website at www.lsfes.org

2009 WPAC Summit

Each year all of the WPAC's in Alberta gather at the annual WPAC Summit. In Fall of 2009 the WPAC Summit was hosted by the Battle River Watershed Alliance and the Beaver River Watershed Alliance and took place in Camrose. Executive Director Meghan Payne and Chairman Brian Elliott and his wife Nona attended on behalf of the LSWC. Along with members of other WPAC's the Summit is attended by AENV staff and representatives from groups like the Alberta



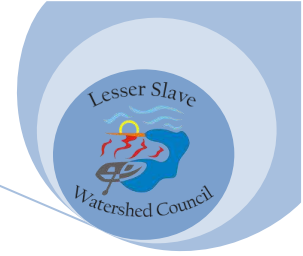
Executive Director Meghan Payne with the LSWC's informational display at the Summit in Camrose.

Water Council, Alberta Water research institute, universities and people who work in the water industry around Alberta.

Each WPAC talked about one of their major projects that they have been working. This is a really good learning tool for some of the newer WPAC's like us because there is a lot to learn from groups like the Bow River Basin Council who have been working in their watershed for 15 years. Meghan talked about the LSWC's Water Management Plan Phase 1 and explained the challenges we are facing to the audience.

We also had the opportunity to hear from AENV staff regarding funding and applying for government grants; we heard from Minister Renner over dinner and he assured us that his department will support WPACs and their goals into the future; guest speaker Dr. David Hill talked to the group about the Alberta Water Research Institute and we had the opportunity to attend short sessions with topics such as fund raising, building partnerships and media training.

This year's WPAC Summit will be hosted by the Southeast Alberta Watershed Alliance and will take place in Medicine Hat Alberta.



Application for Charitable Status

In the fall of 2009 the Lesser Slave Watershed Council decided to apply to Canada Revenue Agency to become a registered charity under the Canadian Income Tax Act.

The LSWC relies on grant money to operate and to carry out projects such as watershed research, education and awareness, State of the watershed reporting, Water Management Planning as well as various other activities. Currently we are 99 percent reliant on the grants we receive each year for Alberta Environment but we would like to branch out and seek other funding partners and opportunities.

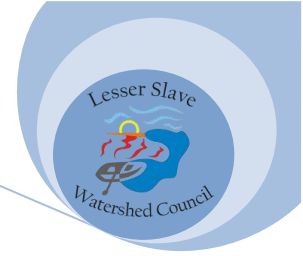
In November of 2009 the LSWC submitted our application to Canada Revenue Agency to become a charitable organization. As of April 1, 2010 the LSWC is a registered Charity with Canada Revenue Agency. Our registration number is 82607 8966 RR0001 and anyone who makes a donation over twenty dollars will receive a tax receipt from the LSWC.

2009/10 Donations and Supporters

In 2009 the LSWC received a \$2500 donation from Husky Energy. These funds were a contribution to the State of the Watershed Report and the LSWC would like to thank Husky for their generosity.

The Lesser Slave Watershed council also received \$1060.00 in donations from the public and our general membership. Thank you very much for your support.

The LSWC obtained an operational grant from Alberta Environment as well as a project contract to complete the State of the Watershed Report.



2009/10 LSWC Board of Directors

Executive Members:

Chair - Brian Elliott

Vice Chair – Murray De Alexandra

Treasurer – Guy L’Heureux

Secretary – Gordon Sanders

2009/10 LSWC Board of Directors:

Name:

Brian Elliott

Wilfred Willier

Rob Irwin (Rob Chalmers)

Brian Rosche (Darcie Acton)

Guy L’Heureux (Ray Dupres)

Vacant

Jerry Cunningham

Gordon Sanders

Larry Marquardt

Rod Burr

John Tchir (Michelle Keohane)

Wanda Watts (Robyn Kutz)

Stacey Wabick (Bonnie Raho)

Sherrie Hay (Kelly Harlton)

Murray De Alexandra (Syd Caudron)

Neil Renneburg

Lynn Sandquist (Lorne Pratt)

JD Dennis (Marshall Sloan)

Sector/Organization Represented:

Member at Large

Town of High Prairie

Town of Slave Lake

MD of Lesser Slave River

MD of Big Lakes

First Nations

Métis Settlements

Forest Industry

Tournaments/Recreation

Alberta Environment

Alberta Sustainable Resource Development

Federal Government (DFO)

Environmental Non-Government Organizations

Tourism Operators/Groups

Commercial Fisherman’s Association

Cottage Owners/Country Residential

Agriculture

Oil and Gas Industry

The LSWC currently has 17 general members and one employee, our Executive Director Meghan Payne

2009/10 LSWC Financial Statement

will be added to report once it has been completed by our accountants