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Lesser Slave Watershed Council

Executive Summary

Community Engagement for the Integrated Watershed Management Plan, October – December 2016

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Executive Summary

Under Alberta's Water for Life Strategy, Lesser Slave Watershed Council (LSWC) is continuing to develop its Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP) for the Lesser Slave Watershed.

The objectives of this project are to:

- Conduct engagement on an overview of the working draft of the Integrated Watershed Management Plan to seek stakeholder advice and input on some of the key components of the draft
- Capture the highlights of these engagements in a summary document

Prior to the fall of 2015, the LSWC conducted limited engagement with stakeholders on watershed planning. In September 2015, a formal engagement process was started with stakeholders and local governments.

In April 2016, work began on the draft IWMP. With the development of an early draft IWMP in August 2016, a summary document was created that could be used to engage with stakeholders and other audiences. In the fall of 2016, stakeholder engagement was conducted through an online response form and two workshops.

This report documents the results of that stakeholder engagement, which began in September and ended on November 11, 2016.

The objectives of the stakeholder workshops were to:

1. Provide an overview of the working draft of the Integrated Watershed Management Plan
2. Seek stakeholder advice and input on some of the key components of the working draft — goals, objectives, indicators, measures and recommendations

An online response form was created, which was for stakeholders who:

- Were unable to attend the workshops
- Preferred to submit ideas in writing
- Wished to supplement the ideas they presented at the workshops

The LSWC established a Municipal Working Group of staff and elected representatives for all the local governments in the watershed. The purpose of the group is to build a working relationship between the Watershed Council and local governments because those governments are ultimately key implementers of the watershed plan. Those governments are also already involved in activities that are addressing watershed issues and that will be part of the plan.

Ongoing meetings are being organized with First Nations and Métis communities in the watershed and those will continue through the development and implementation of the watershed plan.

In late 2015, a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was established. The purpose of the TAC is to provide technical and professional advice to support the development of the

IWMP. Members of the committee do not represent a particular sector or agency and provide their advice as individuals with a particular area of expertise. Members are drawn from academia, industry, local government, provincial government, provincial crown agencies, and the conservation community.

Stakeholder workshops were held in High Prairie on October 18, 2016 and in Slave Lake on October 19, 2016.

A key element of the workshops was a presentation by watershed planner Sandi Riemersma of Palliser Environmental Services Ltd. The presentation and the summary document, "Lesser Slave Integrated Watershed Management Plan, Key Contents from the Working Draft, October 2016" formed the basis for workshop discussions and stakeholder input on the IWMP.

A total of 35 people responded using the online response form. Respondents, who came from a broad range of different sectors, were generally very positive about the direction the IWMP is taking.

The majority of respondents supported the issues, goals, objectives, indicators and measures presented in the presentation and the summary document. Many comments were made and these were combined with the comments from the workshops and summarized below.

Comments received during both the stakeholder workshops and the online response form were combined and summarized according to the different components of the draft IWMP (see Table below).

Component of Draft Plan	Comments
Key Issues	
Water Quantity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns due to alterations to natural watercourses • Metals in water • Rationale for 6 cubic metres a second in Lesser Slave River • Need for emergency water supplies • Need to map springs and seeps
Water Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns related to sediment in Horse Lakes, South Heart River, and Buffalo Bay areas • Drinking water quality – differing guidelines between Indigenous Affairs and Northern Development and municipalities, boil water advisories on First Nation reserves • Pollution from Swan Hills emissions • Importance of snow loading
Wetlands	Lack of willingness of public to change practices that impact wetlands
Riparian Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem is due to bad management of cattle access and grazing practices; also, use of fertilizers and pesticides

Component of Draft Plan	Comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents may take legal action on municipalities regarding set-back rules
Sediment transport*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issue of how sediment transport affects present and future shoreline development
Source water protection*	In headwaters to ensure water quality and quantity
Ice fishing*	People leaving equipment and garbage behind
Pesticides*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact on medicinal plants Need to investigate sources of data on pesticide use — municipal permits, CN Rail, Agri-Food Canada
Emerging contaminants*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Household chemicals, pharmaceuticals
Creek crossings*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issue related to oil and gas, forestry, road development, recreation
Climate change*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs to be represented in the IWMP
Floods and droughts*	Resiliency and importance of water cycles need to be addressed
Goals	
General	Need for overarching goals to explain benefits and costs (economic and social) when implementing the IWMP including the costs of doing nothing
Education (new goal)	Add a goal on education
Goal 1 Water Quantity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water Quantity objective is the least attainable There are limited strategies for managing water levels
Objective 1	What is meant by “management strategies”?
Goal 2 Water Quality	Need to determine which human activities are causing the most problems around the lake and which natural processes are causing problems
Objective 6	Need to add education to stewardship objective
Watercourses (new Goal 2 objective)	Need to address watercourse crossings (bridges, culverts, etc.)
Goal 3 Riparian Areas	Need an objective for education
Goal 4 Wetlands	Need to delineate between “green” and white” zones
Goal 5 Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need for more science to understand situation Need an objective for education

Component of Draft Plan	Comments
Indicators	
Water Quantity – water supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggest snow pillow monitoring in the Swan Hills • Suggest some measure of groundwater monitoring
Water Quantity – water allocation and use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for a comprehensive compilation of the net use of water by all users • Other water-use reports are available — municipal, agricultural
Water Quality – lake trophic status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is baseline/normal condition determined? • Suggest dissolved oxygen as an indicator
Riparian Areas – riparian function	Concern about the “six-metre rule”
Wetlands – wetland cover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What about type of wetland? • Need to complement wetland cover with a wetland restoration or compensation measure. It is complex because new wetlands policy allows for temporary wetland loss
Draft Leading Recommendations	Suggest a desktop analysis for the Instream Flow Needs study because it is a cost-effective approach
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ALUS (Alternative Land Use Services) Program to help landowners and farmers • Land trusts • Incentives to follow BMPs • Ducks Unlimited programs • Need to say who is going to pay for different parts of implementation; where money will come from; particularly a municipal concern • Benefits of beaver activity (Cows and Fish) • Need to balance social, environmental and economic considerations • Align plan and recommendations with Athabasca Regional Plan • Use of environmental and municipal reserves in protecting watershed
Channelization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does anyone have resources to repair channelization? • Is it possible to reintroduce ox-bows in a channelized stream? • Needs to be part of development costs or avoided altogether
Minimize use of fertilizers and pesticides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note Agricultural Operations Practices Act (AOPA) and Environmental Farm Plans in helping address this • Need for an outreach and education project
Ice fishing	Need increased stewardship and education

Component of Draft Plan	Comments
Riparian areas health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for information on groups that can help and information sources (Cows and Fish, Alberta Lake Management Society, Alberta Water Council, provincial government) • Need for some sort of manual on how to repair and maintain riparian areas •
Riparian areas set-backs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need incentives for agricultural producers, developers and property owners • Balancing shoreline development with set-backs
Wetlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will IWMP give advice on how/where to reclaim/replace wetlands? • Can we put a value on the ecological services provided by wetlands
Fish spawning habitat	Need to inform municipalities and other governments where these areas are and work to protect them
Water quality – monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forestry potential partner to help • Need for additional stations • Add pesticides
Water quality – data	Other sources of data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nations testing and source water protection plans • Forest industry • Oil and gas (water-well data) • Farm and municipal drilling reports
Water quantity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get information on regional water line concept from Big Lakes County • Get information on Temporary Withdrawal Permits • Dredging plan
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize existing networks for monitoring wildlife • Forestry companies identify raptor nests • Explore partnership with Boreal Centre for Bird Conservation (BCBC) • Identify critical habitat for species at risk • Enforcing/maintaining restrictions to Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESAs)
Sediments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for sediment source tracking study • Need for sediment management study
Community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use online forums • Engaging watershed stewardship groups (WSGs) • Positive reinforcement programs — Living by Water, Watershed Ambassadors program (Red Deer River Watershed Alliance)

* These issues were brought forward in the discussions for consideration; they were not listed as key issues in the presentation at the workshop or the summary document.

The objectives of the engagement process and the stakeholder workshops were achieved.

The summary of comments presented in the table above gives the LSWC and the watershed planner in co-operation with the Technical Advisory Committee some valuable input to consider addressing in the IWMP. It is important not only to acknowledge hearing the comments, but also to indicate clearly how the comments are or are not incorporated into the IWMP and why.