

State of the Watershed Report Released

The BRWA is proud to announce the completion of our “State of the Battle River and Sounding Creek Watersheds Report 2011”.

This report provides an overview of the current ecological, social and economic conditions in the Alberta portions of the Battle River and Sounding Creek watersheds. It provides us with the information we need to make informed decisions about how best to manage the land and water resources of our watersheds. By managing these resources well, we can promote the long-term ecological, social and economic sustainability of our watersheds.

Learn more! An electronic version of the “State of” report, as well as a fact sheet on the watershed management planning process, is available on our website: www.battleriverwatershed.ca.



Hugh Sanders (left) and Sarah Skinner (right) present a copy of the State of the Watershed Report to Honorary Diana McQueen: Minister of Environment and Water

Your Land, Your Water, Your Voice:

Hearing Your Thoughts on our Watersheds

With the launch of the State of the Watershed report, the BRWA hosted community workshops across the Battle River and Sounding Creek watersheds during November 2011. The purpose of the workshops was to share information from the “State of” report and give people an opportunity to share their thoughts on issues and opportunities facing our watersheds.



Participants at the Wainwright meeting reporting to the group on their discussion

Many meaningful discussions took place during these workshops, which will help inform the BRWA’s decisions as we move forward with developing a Watershed Management Plan for our watersheds. Some of the issues you brought up included:

- surface and ground water quality and quantity,
- the impact of various land use practices on the health of our watersheds,
- the need for increased education and awareness related to environmental and watershed issues,
- the role of individuals, government and society as a whole in environmental stewardship and management

*Want to learn more about “what we heard”?
Attend our upcoming event on Feb 29.
Details on page three.*

Missed the community workshops? Want to learn more about the state of our watersheds and share your thoughts on watershed issues and opportunities? BRWA would be happy to give a presentation in your community to your club or organization. Call us at 1 888 672 0276

Connect People to Place for Action

This was the goal for the BRWA team at the recent Cenovus Environmental Education Leadership Clinic. The team of two staff and two board members spent four intensive days developing our new educational program with eight other groups and experts from Alberta Council for Environmental Education (ACEE). The result was the “**Experience your Watershed**” program. For more information on the leadership clinic, visit the ACEE website at www.abcee.org



Clinic Team (from left to right): Sarah, Greg, Nathalie and Hugh with their watershed diorama.

Experience your Watershed

This program will be a tour of the Battle River and/or Sounding Creek watersheds, designed to *connect people to their place for action*. This outdoor, interactive, experiential learning program will explore the social, economic and environmental factors of six important watershed components:

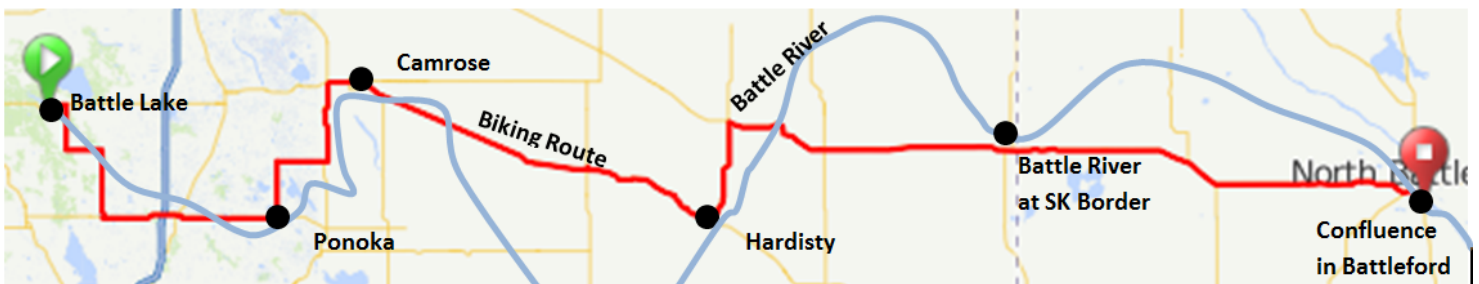
- water quality
- water quantity
- land use
- wetlands and riparian areas
- biodiversity
- ground water

The program is transferable and scalable so that we can take it anywhere and run one, several, or all six of the individual modules. At the end of each program participants will commit to taking one action that will help improve our watersheds. We are looking forward to running this new program across the watershed, starting this June!

Rolling down the River: Biking the Battle for Whole Health

There is a direct link between the health of our environment and the health of our bodies. Here at BRWA we are interested in ensuring both. In the spirit of this we are planning a bike tour to promote outdoor physical activity as a way to increase our physical health and our connection to and enjoyment of our natural surroundings. Isn't it true that we will only protect what we love?

The 5 day tour will include educational visits to communities and schools, scenic views, media attention and of course a lot of healthy biking! You can be involved in this unforgettable experience as a member of the cycling team for all or part of the journey. You can also attend one of the events or be a financial sponsor. For more information please contact Nathalie at Nathalie@battleriverwatershed.ca or join the Facebook group *Rolling down the Battle River*.



Drought Policy Research

The BRWA started a new project to research the development a drought management plan for the Battle River and Sounding Creek watersheds. Drought is defined depending on the characteristics of the drought and how it impacts the landscape and humanscape. The common definition of drought is “*an extended period of below normal precipitation resulting in decreased soil and subsoil moisture levels and diminished surface water supplies*”.

Meteorological drought is defined by below-average precipitation in a particular place and at a particular time. Hydrological drought refers specifically to the effect of low precipitation on water levels in rivers, reservoirs, lakes and aquifers. Agricultural drought links the characteristics of meteorological or hydrological drought to impact on agricultural activities, such as crop growth or livestock maintenance. Socio-economic drought occurs when the demand for an economic good exceeds supply of water resources as a result of a weather-related shortfall in water supply. Severity and impact are affected by water demand, the extent of water efficiency measures, and the ability to bring new supplies on-line.

It is predicted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that in most of the Prairie region there will be a declining trend in the overall amount of precipitation that falls.

Drought has become more common and severe worldwide as well as in Canada as variability in precipitation is amplified by climate change. With climate change, winter precipitation comes less as snowfall and more as rain, changing the timing of peak spring flows to earlier in the spring. This also translates into

less groundwater recharge.

Drought is very costly. The Prairie drought from 1999-2004 was the most expensive natural disaster in Canadian history. Drought affect us economically as well as our health and society both in rural and in urban centres. The ability of aquatic ecosystems to function is also greatly affected by drought. By working together to create a drought management plan, we in the Battle River and Sounding Creek watersheds can prepare our communities to manage for extremes.

For more information, please contact Susanna at susanna@battleriverwatershed.ca

Upcoming Event

Drought and Watershed Management Workshop

Wednesday, February 29th 2012,
Forestburg Community Centre, 10am-3pm

This workshop will provide an opportunity for watershed residents, stakeholders, and municipalities to:

- Hear back on “what we heard” during the November community workshops;
- Help prioritize issue areas to be addressed in the BRWA’s watershed management planning process;
- Learn more about the work of the BRWA regarding the development of a drought management plan for our watersheds; and
- Hear from an expert in climate change and drought research, Dr. David Sauchyn.

We hope to see you there! The workshop is free, but pre-registration is appreciated.

For more information or to register for the workshop, please give us a call at 780.672.0276 or send an email to the BRWA’s Watershed Planning Coordinator, Sarah Skinner, at sarah@battleriverwatershed.ca.

CARING FOR OUR WATERSHEDS

The 2012 CFW Central Alberta contest
is now open!

What can you do to improve your watershed?

Students in grades 7-12 are invited to answer this question for their chance to win \$1000! Implementation funds are also available to all who submit a proposal (implementation optional).

Classroom presentations and student mentoring is available.

Contest Deadline is March 28th, 2012.

For more information on the contest or to volunteer your time as a Watershed Ambassador, please visit www.caringforourwatersheds.com or email nathalie@battleriverwatershed.ca

Did you know?

A report on the “Economic Activity and Ecosystem Services in the Battle Basin” (Anielski and Watrecon 2011) estimated the **monetary value of ecological goods and services in the Battle River and Sounding Creek watersheds at \$5.05 billion per year.** Economic activity in our watersheds was estimated at \$9.62 billion per year (GDP). These results give us an idea of the significant benefits we receive from the multitude of resources and processes that are provided to us by natural ecosystems within our watersheds. It makes sense that we should value, protect, and care for these natural spaces which provide so much.

Agriculture

George Poruchnek - Landowner

Melissa Orr-Langner - Agricultural Water Engineer

Business/Industry

Barb Bosh - ATCO Power

Malorie Aube - Andrukow Group Solutions

Environmental Groups

Tracy Scott - Ducks Unlimited Canada

Wayne Ungstad - JJ Collett Centre, Board Vice Chair

First Nations

Leonard Standing on the Road - Montana First Nations

Norine Saddleback - Samson Cree Nation

Individual

Hugh Sanders - Individual, Board Chair

Midge Lambert - Individual

Municipal Government

Jeremy Enarson - City of Camrose

Wayne Nixon - County of Stettler, Treasurer

Jordon Christianson— Special Areas (Hanna) Office #2

Provincial/Federal Government/Academia

Greg Nelson - Alberta Environment

Shane Mascarin - Department of National Defense

Coming Events

PhotoVoice

This project invites watershed residents to share their perspective on, and connection to the watershed via photography. This spring the PhotoVoice program will be coming to Wainwright, Special Areas, and Brownfield. If you are in these general areas and would like to get involved please contact the office at 1-888-672-0276

Caring for our Watersheds

The CFW final competition will be on Saturday May 5th in Wetaskiwin at the Alberta Reynolds Museum. Everyone is welcome to come and see the 2012 finalist present their ideas on how they can improve their watershed!

Annual General Meeting

BRWA's AGM will be held on Thursday June 14th, 2012 at the County of Camrose Council Chambers. More information will be on our website and spring newsletter

Stay connected with us~



“Like” us on Facebook by searching “Battle River Watershed Alliance” or “follow” us on Twitter @battleriver to keep updated on the latest news and events at the BRWA!

Don't use Facebook or Twitter? No Problem! Between newsletters, you can find out about events on our website at www.battleriverwatershed.ca/news-and-events.

Who Relies on our Watershed?

In 2006, 122,500 people lived in the Battle River and Sounding Creek watersheds. Though this area of Alberta is often considered to be a predominantly rural landscape, our watersheds are becoming increasingly urban. In 2006, half the population lived in cities and towns within the watershed, with almost a quarter (22.3%) living in the cities of Camrose and Wetaskiwin and another third (33.1%) living in towns. An additional 12.1% of the population lived in villages, summer villages or on Native reserves. The balance (32.5%) lived in rural areas. (SOW Report, p. 9)

Also in our watersheds there are over 250 wildlife species of fish, mammals, amphibians and birds (Alberta Fish and Wildlife records). Of these species, 2.7% are currently classified as “at risk” 1.9% as “may be at risk” and 21.8% as “sensitive”. (SOW Report, p. 13). Humans and the local wildlife both require clean water, land and air for our health and happiness.