



Student Nate Chan presents BRWA Communications Coordinator Sarah Skinner with the donations raised.

Water Sustainability Benefit Concert

A group of students from Augustana recently put on a Water Sustainability Benefit Concert as part of their CSL placement this semester. The goal of the concert was to raise awareness about various water-related topics and issues such as acid rain, the melting of permafrost, and wetland loss. The performers at the concert provided a backdrop of musical entertainment for the evening.

The student organizers of the event, in addition to raising awareness of water sustainability issues, also collected monetary donations, which were generously donated to the BRWA. Almost \$200 was raised! A big thank you to the students (Becky Smith, Kim Carwell, Nate Chan and Kaylyn Jackson) for hosting a great event!

For more information on **Alternative Land Use Services** (ALUS), visit

www.deltawaterfowl.org/alus

See especially Delta Waterfowl Foundation's press release related to the Alberta pilot project, entitled "*ALUS in Alberta: A New Approach for Habitat Conservation*".

Alberta starts farm environmental project

BY MARY MACARTHUR, The Western Producer

Every field Sean McGrath owns has a coulee or a small tributary leading to the Battle River six kilometres away.

McGrath, a fifth generation farmer who lives south of Vermilion, Alta., found it a natural progression to set aside small tracts of land to encourage wildlife habitat.

And now, he'll be in line for a bonus in the form of a small stipend paid through the new Alternative Land Use Services pilot project. The program is designed to recognize that McGrath provides ongoing environmental services for society as a whole.

"We're excited because it's proactive," he said.

It's the first ALUS project in Alberta. Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario have variations on the projects that pay farmers for creating positive environmental goods and services that benefit all Canadians.

Joan Gabrielson, ALUS project co-ordinator with the County of Vermilion River, said the projects range from creating shelterbelts that attract native species, replanting native grassland, fencing off sensitive wildlife areas to livestock and stopping cultivation around several small sloughs.

Gabrielson said ALUS lets farmers design their own projects and receive small financial compensation for taking land out of production. ALUS cost-shares the initial cost of the projects and pays ongoing money to compensate the farmer for improving wetlands, waterways or fish habitat.

Gabrielson is working with a dozen more farmers in the area to design more projects, but hopes it will expand beyond the county.

"We would like to see the ALUS concept adopted provincially."

McGrath said the program's flexibility was the attraction for him.

"We've toyed with different ways to accommodate environmental improvements. Sometimes they're expensive even though they have obvious benefits for everyone," he said

"This way we can demonstrate all the good things we do."

McGrath said he also receives personal satisfaction in doing the right thing on his farm.

With the few acres of wetland and cropland involved, McGrath will be paid roughly \$500 to \$600 a year for taking the environmental improvements.

"We're not going to get rich. This is a chance to be proactive and demonstrate value and have some direction in the project and not just have someone tell us what to do."

The pilot project pays farmers for maintaining sloughs and other positive practices that benefit all Canadians.

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Pictures taken as part of the PhotoVoice Project (see article next page). Photo credit: Bukala A. (left), Erin Murphy-Thompson (right)

Alberta Water Council Update by Terry Sly



The Alberta Water Council's report *Recommendations for Improving Alberta's Water Allocation Transfer System* was released to the media and public on November 23rd 2009. The report examines the province's water allocation transfer system and makes recommendations in six key areas:

(1) establishing protected water, (2) defining the market and its principles, (3) moving unused water to the market, (4) incenting water conservation, (5) improving the application and approval process, and (6) data and information.

The recommendations stay within the confines of the *Water Act* and are focused on opportunities that can be implemented in a short- to medium-term timeframe. The report is one of three documents that were prepared to support a larger review of the Alberta's water allocation system which is being undertaken by the provincial government. The other two reports are from the Alberta Water Research Institute, which examines the allocation systems of other water-short jurisdictions, and the Minister's Advisory Committee which broadly reviews the entire allocation management system in Alberta. A public consultation is anticipated in 2010, so watch for your chance to discuss these very important issues.

The Alberta Water Council released a second report on January 15th titled *Provincial Ecological Criteria for Healthy Aquatic Ecosystems*. The report outlines seven criteria that are the first steps in identifying areas that are critical for sustaining ecosystem health, such as key headwaters and important wildlife habitat. The criteria were developed following the Systematic Conservation Planning (SCP) methodology – a scientific, GIS-based environmental evaluation process used in land use and environmental planning. The recommended criteria and subsequent SCP process will provide valuable information to improve decision-making by governments, WPACs, conservation groups, landowners and others living and working in any of Alberta's watersheds. The work also supports the improved integration of land and water use planning across the province by providing some very important information to both processes. Applying the SCP process to aquatic ecosystems is a relatively new approach in Canada. The report and additional information are available on the Council's website, www.awchome.ca under the PEACH project.

Iron Creek Watershed Improvement Society Seventh Annual Supper and Information Evening, by Don Ruzicka



On March 3rd, the Iron Creek Watershed Improvement Society partnered with the Battle River Watershed Alliance to host the annual "Supper & Information" evening in Killam. Entertainment was provided to the audience of 72 people by "Chris and Sharky" throughout the evening. Presentations by Lindsey Catherwood, a Flagstaff County Assistant Ag Fieldman, David Samm and Noemie Jenni of the BRWA, and Kris Kendall, a senior biologist with Alberta Conservation Association, were well received.

Lindsey presented the results of water well testing focused on the level of arsenic in 25 wells that were sampled last year in Flagstaff County. Levels are low but require monitoring to assure that the limits are within a safe range. Eight wells were also tested for herbicides and pesticides. All were found to be safe.

David and Noemie gave an overview of the projects and work that the alliance is involved in. They are currently working on a report that will identify the state of the watershed leading to the development of a strategic management plan.

Jeremy Abbott, a student at Strome School, also attended and gave an interesting talk on the benefits of injecting exhaust emissions from tractors into the soil and decreasing the amount of fertilizer required. This reduces CO₂ emissions and decreases fertilizer run-off into the watershed. Jeremy and another student wrote a paper on this and entered it in a program called "2010: Caring For Our Watershed: Central Alberta Program" sponsored by Agrium Fertilizer.

Kris Kendall gave an informative talk on "Alberta's Remarkable Reptiles and Amazing Amphibians." He explained the importance of caring for the watershed and its wetlands as they provide critical habitat for both of these. To the delight of some, Kris brought a live bull snake for those who wanted to, to get close to the real thing.

All of the speakers stressed the importance of caring for the watershed and how we all have a responsibility. The ICWIS looks forward to working with the BRWA on future projects and programs that benefit both watersheds.



Photograph by Bettina Alder, one of the students involved in the PhotoVoice project.

CARING FOR OUR WATERSHEDS

The Caring For Our Watersheds program is now in full swing for the spring season. This program is a proposal writing contest that asks students to tackle the question, “What can I do to improve my watershed?” This is a daunting task for those of us working in the watershed, but it is impressive to see students getting down to work on designing projects and becoming engaged in issues in their own schools, communities, and watershed. Students compete for cash prizes of up to \$1000 for both themselves and their school, providing the opportunity to discover the need for stewardship in their own back yard.

I have had the privilege to do presentations on the Battle River Watershed in schools in both New Norway and Ponoka, with more presentations booked for the coming months. This contest, along with the support we can give to schools in the form of local information, maps, and case studies, is an excellent tool for creating awareness within our watershed that has the potential to lead to action.

This year the base area of the competition has even expanded beyond the Battle River Watershed with the help of support from the Red Deer Watershed Alliance and the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance. With their help, we have schools interested from all three watersheds, which I hope will result in increased submissions, higher student participation, and increased awareness of watershed issues.

The deadline for submissions is May 12, 2010 and the final speaking competition and awards banquet is on June 5, 2010. I am looking forward to seeing the ingenious ideas students will be proposing this year and hopeful that we can put some of these plans into action.

If you would like more information on how the program works, please visit: <http://www.caringforourwatersheds.com>

PhotoVoice Project

The BRWA recently initiated a pilot project called PhotoVoice. A primary goal of the project is to capture, through photography, the perspectives of people living within the Battle River watershed. It is hoped that this project will contribute to an increased understanding

Interested in sharing your voice?

If you'd like to share your perspective on the watershed, please send your photographs to the Battle River Watershed Alliance at

pictures@battleriverwatershed.ca

Also, check out our PhotoVoice blog at

www.voicesofthebattleriver.blogspot.com

and exploration of people's perceptions of, and connections to, this landscape and watershed. This project is also a means of gathering social data to enhance the State of the Watershed (SOW) Report, which will provide a snapshot of the watershed's overall

health through the examination of ecological, social and economic indicators. Through photography, the values, ideas and experiences of people within the watershed may be explored further.

Two CSL students from the Augustana Campus of the University of Alberta have been assisting with the initial stages of this project.

They, along with staff at the BRWA, have been taking pictures and meeting to discuss the significance and meaning behind these photographs. In addition, the photographs were displayed in a photography exhibition held at Augustana on March 18, 2010. The exhibit was positively received by those in attendance, who were able not only to hear the perspectives told through the photographs displayed, but also to share their own perspectives on the photographs, the watershed, and water-related issues in general.

CSL (Community Service-Learning) is a program at Augustana that places students out in the community, volunteering with various organizations, schools, and groups. The goal of the program is to promote engagement with the broader community and context within which learning takes place, and to encourage students to make connections between theory and practice.

The next steps will be to evaluate the project's value and success in drawing out people's perspectives on water and watershed issues, and to explore what role the project might play in the future.



Pictures taken as part of the PhotoVoice Project. Photo credit: Shayne Steffen (upper left); David Samm (lower left); Sarah Skinner (right).

DID YOU KNOW?

Each individual requires approximately 50 litres of clean water per day to ensure that basic health and vitality needs are met. On average, Albertans use 300 litres of water each day. That's six times the required amount!

Agriculture

George Poruchnek - Landowner

Melissa Orr - Agriculture Water Engineer

Business/Industry

Barb Bosh - Treasurer, ATCO Power

Darcy Allen - Encana

Environment

Tracy Scott - Ducks Unlimited

Canada

Jim Stevens - BRWA Vice Chair,

Pigeon Lake Watershed Association

First Nations

Leonard Standing on the Road - Montana First Nations

Wayne Ungstad - Individual

Individual

Harley Louis - Montana First Nations

Midge Lambert - Landowner

Municipal Government

Jeremy Enarson - BRWA Chair, City of Camrose

Wayne Richardson - County of Paintearth

Hugh Sanders - Summer Village of Crystal Springs

Prov/Fed. Gov't Academia

Greg Nelson - Alberta Environment

Shane Mascarin - Department of

National Defense

Coming Events

"Capture the Spirit of the Watershed" Art Workshops

The Battle River Watershed Alliance is partnering with the Camrose Arts Society to "Capture the Spirit of the Watershed" through two *plein air* painting workshops. The workshops will take place on June 12 and September 18, from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm on each day. The public is free to sign up for one or both workshops.

SPIRIT OF THE VALLEY: June 12

Walk in Stoney Creek valley in Camrose directly south from the Stoney Creek Centre and discover the wonders of painting the valley.

SPIRIT OF THE WETLAND: September 12

Join colleagues in a workshop to a rural wetland east of Camrose. After a drive to Killam we will head north to Don Ruzicka's farm and set up the plein air experience at his cabin that overlooks a beautiful prairie wetland. Lunch provided!

For more information or to register for one or both of the workshops, contact Jane Cherry-Lemire at 780.672.9949 or by email to jcherry@camrose.ca

Caring For Our Watersheds Competition

You are invited to attend the final speaking competition and awards banquet for the "Caring for our Watersheds" competition. This event will take place during the afternoon and evening of June 5, 2010, at the Augustana Campus of the University of Alberta, in Camrose. Come hear students talk about their ideas for improving our watershed!

For more information on specific locations and times for this event, contact the program co-ordinator, Erin Murphy-Thompson, at 780-672-0272 or erin@battleriverwatershed.ca.

WAYS TO CONSERVE



- ◆ Don't hose down your driveway or sidewalk. Use a broom to clean leaves and other debris from these areas. Using a hose to clean a driveway can waste hundreds of gallons of water. Also, check outdoor faucets, sprinklers and hoses for leaks.
- ◆ Do you garden? Get a rain barrel to collect water for the garden.
- ◆ Don't leave the water running in the kitchen when washing and rinsing dishes. Also, don't leave the water on while brushing your teeth.