

BATTLE RIVER

WATERSHED ALLIANCE

STRATEGIC PLAN 2015-2020

How We Connect People To Place For Action



Canoeing the Battle River near Maskwacis

Serving the Battle River and Sounding Creek Watersheds of Alberta

THE BATTLE RIVER WATERSHED ALLIANCE

Who We Are

We are the people who live, work and play in the Battle River and Sounding Creek watersheds. We are landowners, community members, business people, researchers, and decision makers. We are the people that will ensure healthy natural areas, resilient communities, and a stable economy in this place that we love.

Our Vision

The Battle River and Sounding Creek watersheds will sustain abundant life, now and for future generations.

Our Mission

The Battle River Watershed Alliance (BRWA) leads in watershed management by connecting people through research, education, and advice to positively influence the future of our watersheds.

Our Values

Sound Research, Shared Knowledge, Mutual Responsibility, Innovation, Diversity, Collaboration, Sustainability, Leadership, Adaptive Management, Consensus-based Decision-making, Intergenerational Inclusivity

The Building Blocks of Watershed Sustainability

The building blocks of our watershed may be summarized in three key spheres: our environment, our society, and our economy.

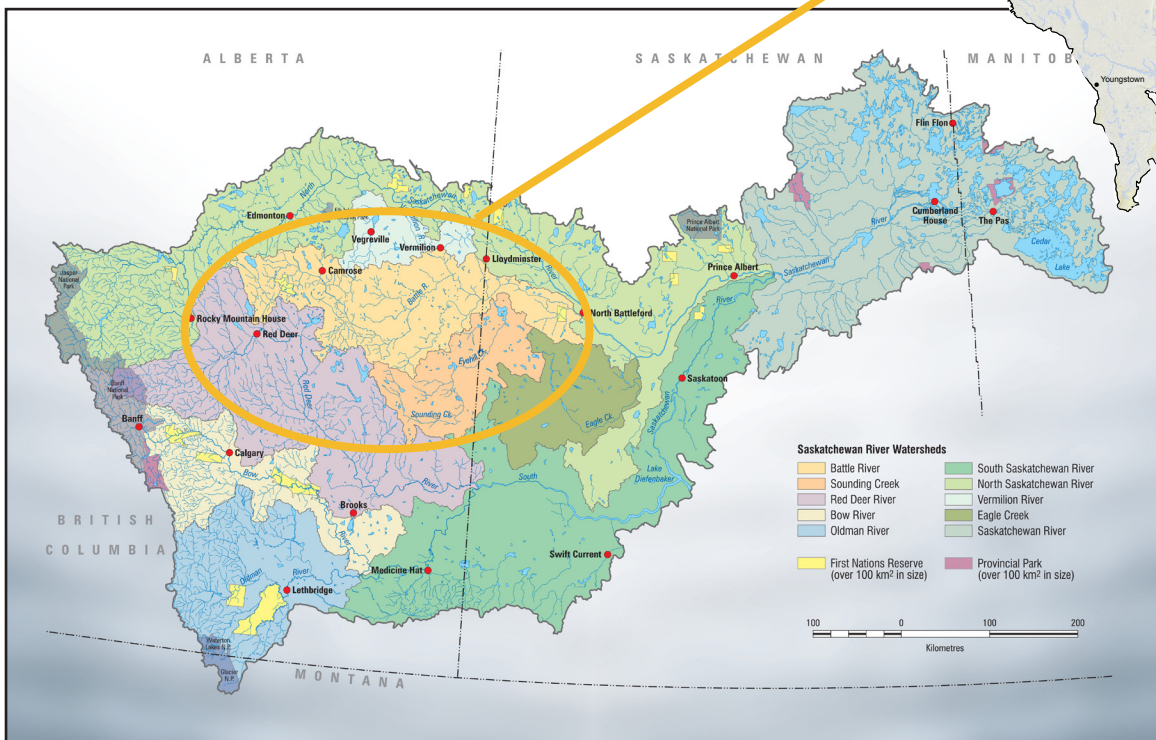
Our environment – this watershed, the place we call home – is the foundation upon which our communities and economy rest. A healthy natural environment supports vibrant communities and a viable economy over the long term. Society's use of resources must be compatible with the capacity of ecosystems to provide ecological goods and services. These goods and services, in turn, are constrained by the life-support system of the planet. Our communities are enriched through the many benefits we receive from the land, air, water, and biodiversity of our watershed. Our local economy is built and sustained through the use of our watershed's natural and social capital (i.e. the resources our watershed provides and the people who live, work, and play here).



ABOUT OUR WATERSHEDS

The Battle River and Sounding Creek are amazing prairie-fed watersheds. Home to over 120,000 people and spanning the boreal, prairie and parkland natural regions of Alberta and Saskatchewan, these watersheds are rich in history, culture and ecology. Beginning at Battle Lake and meandering across Alberta and Saskatchewan for some 1100 kilometres, the Battle River eventually joins the North Saskatchewan River at Battleford, SK. From there, its waters flow on to Lake Winnipeg and Hudson Bay. While Sounding Creek has no outlet beyond Manitou Lake in Saskatchewan, it is a key water source for the people and wildlife that call the Special Areas home.

We face many challenges in our watersheds, such as degraded water quality, limited water supply, and increasing land use pressures, but we are also a resilient community of people who are able to work together to find solutions to the challenges that face us. Great work is already being done to promote the long-term health of our watersheds. This Strategic Plan serves as a guidance document to support the BRWA in continuing its work.



The Alberta portion of the Battle River and Sounding Creek watersheds (shown above), which are part of the larger Saskatchewan River Basin (shown on left; map courtesy of the Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin, 2009).

OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

This Strategic Plan outlines the key goals, outcomes and actions that will guide the BRWA's work over the next five years. It will serve as an umbrella document to be utilized by BRWA staff and committees as they develop their annual work plans. We believe our work in these areas will make a difference to the health and sustainability of our watersheds.

The four overarching goals of our work are outlined below.

OUR GOALS

THE BRWA
LEADS WATERSHED
MANAGEMENT PLANNING
IN OUR WATERSHEDS

THE BRWA
ENSURES COMMUNITY
MEMBERS ARE
KNOWLEDGEABLE AND
ENGAGED WITH THEIR
WATERSHEDS

THE BRWA
SUPPORTS
THE GROWTH OF
A WATERSHED
STEWARDSHIP ETHIC

THE BRWA
IS A LEARNING
ORGANIZATION
DEDICATED TO
ACHIEVING
EXCELLENCE

Burma Park, County of Paintearth

Water for Life

The work of the BRWA supports *Water for Life: Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability*. Under this strategy, the BRWA is the designated Watershed Planning and Advisory Council (WPAC) for the Battle River and Sounding Creek watersheds in Alberta. WPACs play a role in reporting on the state of the watershed, leading in watershed planning, developing best management practices, supporting stewardship activities, and providing educational opportunities for watershed residents. Through this work, we support the achievement of *Water for Life's* three key goals:

1. Safe secure drinking water supply
2. Healthy aquatic ecosystems
3. Reliable, quality water supplies for a sustainable economy

AT A GLANCE

The BRWA has identified a number of outcomes for each of the four goals outlined in this Strategic Plan. These outcomes are summarized below:

The BRWA leads watershed management planning in our watersheds:

- Information is collected to increase knowledge of the Battle River and Sounding Creek watersheds and update the State of the Watershed Report.
- The BRWA carries out its Watershed Management Planning Process.
- The BRWA supports stewardship actions that align with its watershed management recommendations.
- Watershed residents, stakeholders, and decision-makers are well-informed and engaged in an ongoing dialogue about watershed management planning.
- The BRWA develops an internal guidance document outlining how emergent watershed management issues will be addressed.

The BRWA ensures community members are knowledgeable and engaged community members:

- Watershed community members know the importance and benefits of working at a watershed scale.
- Relevant information about the Battle River and Sounding Creek watersheds is presented to community members in a clear and engaging way.
- The BRWA provides place-based, experiential watershed education for all community members.
- The BRWA is recognized as a reliable and trustworthy source of information.
- The BRWA is recognized as a positive partner to work with to develop and deliver educational programs.

The BRWA supports the growth of a watershed stewardship ethic:

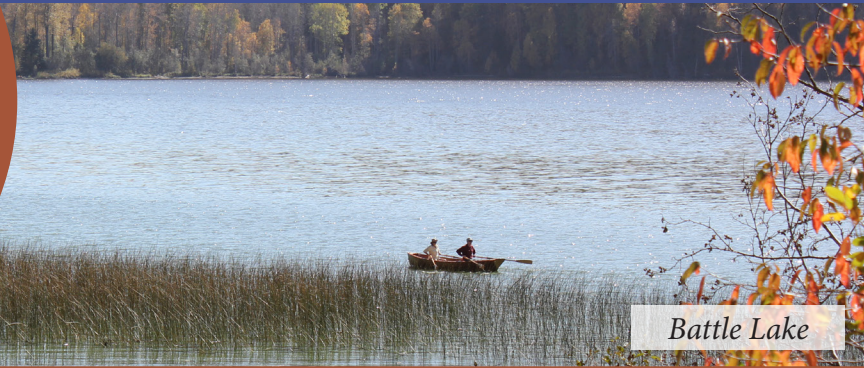
- The BRWA encourages and supports the implementation of watershed management recommendations and other stewardship initiatives.
- The BRWA facilitates understanding about ecological, economic, social, and cultural stewardship.
- The BRWA supports the work of watershed stewardship groups.
- The BRWA recognizes and celebrates stewardship successes.

The BRWA is a learning organization dedicated to achieving excellence:

- The BRWA manages and mitigates risk and operates in a transparent manner.
- The BRWA is a supportive *Water for Life* partner.
- The BRWA has a climate of innovation.
- BRWA staff and board members are empowered through professional development opportunities and a safe, healthy, and respectful work environment.
- The BRWA actively seeks out collaborative partnerships.

See the following pages for more details related to each of these goals.

THE BRWA LEADS WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLANNING IN OUR WATERSHEDS



Battle Lake

The goal of the BRWA's watershed management planning (WMP) process is to work with watershed residents, stakeholders and decision-makers to develop recommendations for the management of land and water in our watersheds. The BRWA will then support collaborative efforts to put these recommendations into practice. Watershed management recommendations will be developed for each of the identified "watershed management components", which fall under the broad categories of water quality, water quantity, land management and biodiversity. In addition, the BRWA will strive to address emergent watershed management issues. Also important to watershed management is reporting on the state of our watersheds. By monitoring changes in our watersheds over time, we can determine if watershed management actions are achieving the desired outcomes set out in our recommendations.

OUTCOMES

Information is collected to increase knowledge of the Battle River and Sounding Creek watersheds and update the State of the Watershed Report.

The BRWA carries out its Watershed Management Planning Process.

The BRWA supports stewardship actions that align with its watershed management recommendations.

Watershed residents, stakeholders, and decision-makers are well-informed and engaged in an ongoing dialogue about watershed management planning.

The BRWA develops an internal guidance document outlining how emergent watershed management issues will be addressed.



To achieve this goal, the BRWA will undertake the following actions:

ACTIONS	Now	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compile information on the state of the Battle River and Sounding Creek watersheds • Complete the Riparian Areas Management WMP Component • Undertake the Ponoka Riparian Restoration Program • Undertake the Camrose Source Water Protection Initiative • Undertake the Iron Creek Watershed Project • Participate on the Pigeon Lake Watershed Management Planning Committee • Carry out the WMP Implementation Framework • Engage stakeholders through print and online resources, media relations, and in-person dialogue opportunities • Develop an internal guidance document to address emergent issues • Build the BRWA's Geographic Information Systems mapping capacity to enhance watershed planning and implementation efforts
	Next	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the Wetlands Management and Native, Non-native, and Invasive Species WMP Components • Work with partners to undertake research to increase knowledge of the Battle River and Sounding Creek watersheds (may include wetland and riparian inventories, identification of critical source areas, social science research, etc.) • Explore additional opportunities to implement watershed management recommendations
	Later	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin developing an updated State of the Watershed Report • Complete the Land Use Practices and Surface Water Quantity WMP Components • Begin work on the Protected Areas/Environmentally Significant Areas, Fish and Wildlife, and Groundwater Quantity WMP Components

MEASUREMENTS

- Identify and gather information on the major components of the updated State of the Watershed Report
- Track WMP components completed
- Monitor WMP recommendations implemented
- Document partnerships formed through the WMP planning process and implementation
- Report on the number and diversity of participants involved in WMP workshops and implementation projects
- Evaluate the BRWA process for addressing emergent issues



THE BRWA
ENSURES COMMUNITY
MEMBERS ARE
KNOWLEDGEABLE AND
ENGAGED WITH THEIR
WATERSHEDS



Spirit of the Watershed, Miquelon Lake Provincial Park

The BRWA's watershed education and communication outcomes will continue to help watershed residents, stakeholders and decision-makers understand the complex causes and solutions to the challenges our watersheds face. They will have the essential knowledge and skills to enable them to make positive changes at the personal, professional, and political levels.

We aim to work with people of all ages and stages, cultures and communities in our programming. We use place-based experiential education to increase participants' knowledge and awareness of their watersheds. We cultivate a sense of appreciation and commitment for our watersheds.

Our communication intent is to have accurate, interesting, and inspiring information available to watershed community members. We highlight good news stories and organizational milestones, while providing clear, timely and locally relevant science (ex. physical, biological, ecological) and social science. We believe communication will enhance cooperation and understanding between the BRWA, our partners and watershed community members.

OUTCOMES

Watershed community members know the importance and benefits of working on a watershed scale.

Relevant information about the Battle River and Sounding Creek watersheds is presented to community members in a clear and engaging way.

The BRWA provides place-based, experiential watershed education for community members.

The BRWA is recognized as a reliable and trustworthy source of information.

The BRWA is recognized as a positive partner to work with to develop and deliver educational programs.

To achieve this goal, the BRWA will undertake the following actions:

ACTIONS	Now	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide place-based, experiential education using the Experience your Watershed educational modules • Partner with others to deliver education programs to a wide audience • Host partner programs in communities across our watersheds, including Caring for our Watersheds and Yellow Fish Road • Develop new educational programming to complement existing programs • Produce high quality print and online communication materials • Develop and distribute quarterly newsletters • Develop and distribute Annual Reports and hold Annual General Meetings • Maintain an up-to-date website and social media sites
	Next	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and pilot new educational programs (targeted toward specific audiences), refining them to meet the needs of those audiences • Develop, print and distribute the Traversing Terrain and Experience Atlas • Support the educational efforts of our partners
	Later	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the Communication Strategy and revise if necessary • Support the development of the updated State of the Watershed Report • Use new emerging technologies to communicate with watershed community members and promote the work of the BRWA

MEASUREMENTS

- Evaluate the BRWA’s education and outreach programs through staff reviews and participant surveys
- Track program uptake and distribution throughout the watershed
- Monitor number of watershed community members who contact us with questions or concerns about the watershed
- Track diversity and number of people on the BRWA’s membership and supporters contact list
- Document number of invitations to partner with others on educational programs



THE BRWA
SUPPORTS
THE GROWTH OF
A WATERSHED
STEWARDSHIP ETHIC

4H Pollinator Garden, Forestburg

Stewardship is our collective responsibility to retain the quality and abundance of our land, air, water and biodiversity. It involves managing natural capital through wise actions that demonstrate care and respect for all life. Through stewardship, the ecological, economic, social and cultural values of our watersheds are conserved or enhanced. The BRWA encourages and enables watershed residents, stakeholders, and decision-makers to take action as stewards of the Battle River and Sounding Creek watersheds.

OUTCOMES

The BRWA encourages and supports the implementation of watershed management recommendations and other stewardship initiatives.

The BRWA facilitates understanding about ecological, economic, social, and cultural stewardship.

The BRWA supports the work of watershed stewardship groups.

The BRWA recognizes and celebrates stewardship successes.



To achieve this goal, the BRWA will undertake the following actions:

ACTIONS	Now	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the work of existing watershed stewardship groups • Share information about completed WMP recommendations with stakeholders • Support the implementation of stewardship actions arising from the Caring for our Watersheds contest • Recognize watershed stewards through the OTIS Award • Identify watershed issues for stewardship groups to work on
	Next	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore and support opportunities for the formation of new watershed stewardship groups • Provide stewardship skills and training • Assist stakeholders in stewardship project design and delivery, and provide technical support (where applicable) • Support citizen science in the watershed • Provide project GIS support to inform stewardship efforts and measure success of projects
	Later	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host an annual Stewardship Forum to bring watershed stewards together to celebrate stewardship successes and learn about new stewardship opportunities • Disseminate information about stewardship opportunities to existing and potential stewardship groups • Develop and implement effective and innovative tools, resources and programs for ecological, economic, social, and cultural stewardship programs • Manage multiyear stewardship projects

MEASUREMENTS

- Track number of stewardship groups and stewardship initiatives in our watersheds
- Measure watershed stewardship awareness and water literacy of the general public
- Survey stewardship groups about their activities, volunteers, and collaborations
- Track number of volunteers contributing to BRWA stewardship projects
- Track BRWA involvement in stewardship events and initiatives



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ACHIEVING
EXCELLENCE

Battle River Valley, County of Paintearth

The BRWA will strive to have effective and efficient management in order to allow important watershed planning, education, and stewardship work to be accomplished. As a small non-profit society, the BRWA faces funding challenges. To enable good work it will be important to diversify funding partners and have an entrepreneurial approach to opportunities. It will also be important to create mutually supportive relationships and partnerships with our *Water for Life* partners, as well as with watershed residents, community and environmental organizations, and all orders of government (Municipal, Provincial, Federal, and First Nations).

OUTCOMES

The BRWA manages and mitigates risk and operates in a transparent manner.

The BRWA is a supportive *Water for Life* partner.

The BRWA has a climate of innovation.

BRWA staff, board and committee members are empowered through professional development opportunities and a safe, healthy, and respectful work environment.

The BRWA actively seeks out collaborative partnerships.



To achieve this goal, the BRWA will undertake the following actions:

ACTIONS

Now	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide WPAC representation on initiatives led by <i>Water for Life</i> partners • Attend Government of Alberta forums in order to stay informed about current provincial initiatives and potential partnership and collaboration opportunities • Maintain ongoing communications with other Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils across Alberta, and explore potential partnership and collaboration opportunities • Ensure BRWA bylaws are available online • Provide board and committee meeting details, agendas, and meeting minutes to watershed stakeholders upon request • Research and develop employee wellness program • Provide cost effective programs
Next	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attract and retain competent, well-trained and motivated staff to implement the BRWA's programs • Explore opportunities for additional partnerships and collaboration, including diversified funding sources • Explore social entrepreneurship opportunities • Connect with economic organizations operating within the watershed (Central Alberta Economic Partnership, Battle River Alliance for Economic Development, Joint Economic Development Initiative) • Organize tenth anniversary event (November 2016)
Later	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase non-government funding partners • Review internal policy manual • Review staff manual

MEASUREMENTS

- Track number and diversity of sponsorships, contributions, grants and donations
- Track professional development opportunities attended by staff, board and committee members
- Document partnerships between BRWA and other organizations



BATTLE RIVER

WATERSHED ALLIANCE

About the Battle River Watershed Alliance:

The Battle River Watershed Alliance was created in 2006 as a non-profit society. Shortly after its formation, the BRWA was selected by Alberta Environment, under *Water for Life: Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability*, as the designated Watershed Planning and Advisory Council for the Battle River and Sounding Creek watersheds in Alberta. The BRWA works in partnership with residents, communities, organizations, and government to support the health and sustainability of these watersheds.

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