

BATTLE RIVER

WATERSHED ALLIANCE

2020-2021
ANNUAL
REPORT



Willow Staking Workshop on Bigstone Creek

ABOUT THE BRWA

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 who will ensure a stable economy, healthy natural areas, and resilient communities in this place that we love.

Our Vision

By using sound knowledge, wisdom, and wise actions, we ensure that the Battle River and Sounding Creek watersheds sustain abundant life, now and for future generations.

Our Mission

The BRWA provides relevant science, social science, policies, and education for a diverse community of people to create solutions to our watershed's challenges.

Our Emblem

This emblem captures some of the cultural, social, economic and environmental values of our watershed. It flows in a circular direction, representing the natural and seasonal cycles.



Our Work

We accomplish our vision and mission in these strategic areas:

Alliance Management

pages [3](#), [14-15](#)

Watershed Management

pages [4-5](#)

Watershed Engagement

pages [6-7](#), [10-11](#)

Stewardship

pages [12-13](#)



Navigating Adversity and Building Resilience Together

Reflecting back on the past year, and the fact that we're still faced with uncertainties related to COVID-19, this year's report highlights both the stark reality of today and our hope as we move forward - together.

The BRWA Staff and Directors are pleased to present the 2021 Annual Report outlining the

Alliance's accomplishments. These successes are reflective of the resiliency and pride BRWA staff possess and demonstrate daily. The achievement of completed projects reflects the ability of the staff to operate under non-optimal conditions and continue to produce excellent results. BRWA made it easier for staff to work from home and virtual meetings became a weekly occurrence.

This year the Board of Directors will be updating

the Alliance's Five Year Strategic Plan. New, continuing and emerging priorities will allow us to respond to the needs of the watershed and the people who live, work and play in our watersheds.

A wee bit of history - November 30, 2006 in Killam, Alberta, the BRWA was officially formed and one month later in December became a registered society in Alberta. Our first donation was from the Ponoka Fish and Game Association. This November we will be 15 years old and it will be time to celebrate! Stay tuned for more information about BRWA's 15th anniversary celebration event.

My message for all is simply a big thank you. Thank you to all the people we work with for their continued support. I also thank the incredible BRWA board and staff for their patience, kindness, creativity and support during this time of pandemic crisis.

-David Samm, General Manager

Board of Directors

The BRWA is governed by a Board of Directors, a group of 12-15 individuals committed to helping us realize our vision. The Directors represent various stakeholders, from Government to Business to the Environmental sector. We are grateful for the work and support of this board who helped guide us through a difficult year and adapted to online meetings:

Academia

Greg King, *University of Alberta - Augustana*

Agriculture

Khalil Ahmed, *Battle River Research Group*

Business/Industry

Barb Bosh (Board Chair), *ASHCORE Technologies Ltd.*

Dustin Owens, *Heartland Generation*

Environmental NGOs

Lorne Ferguson (Board Treasurer),
Camrose and District Fish and Game Association
Diane Hanson, *Alberta Rural Sustainable Alternatives Network*

Individual

Al Corbett (Board Vice-Chair)

Midge Lambert

Peter Pullishy

Greg Smith

Municipal Government

Corinne Kelts, *Special Areas*

Preston Weran, *Town of Blackfalds*

Ryley Andersen, *M.D. of Wainwright*

Ex Officio

Jamie Bruha, *Alberta Environment and Parks*

Melissa Orr-Langner, *Alberta Agriculture and Forestry*

2021 Staff

This year, we expanded to have 8 staff members, our biggest team ever! This included two project assistants (pg 5) and our Education Lead. Sadly, the end of the fiscal year also meant these three staff moving on. Thank you Amanda, Negar, and Mackenzie!



Staff: Left to Right

Sarah Skinner,

Watershed Planning Coordinator

Amanda Rooney & Negar Zangi, Climate Change and Health Project Assistants

Mackenzie Durocher, Education Lead

David Samm, General Manager

Susanna Bruneau,

Research & Stewardship Coordinator

Nathalie S. Olson,

Education & Outreach Coordinator

Sheila Logelin, Office Manager

Learn more about us at www.battleriverwatershed.ca/about/staff-and-board/

WATERSHED MANAGEMENT

Thankfully, most of the BRWA's watershed management and planning projects were able to carry on throughout 2020, through many virtual meetings, emails, and phone conversations with the people and organizations who support us in this work. Here are a few of the initiatives that have helped us keep the momentum going this past year.

Buffalo Trail Riparian Restoration Program

As most of the world stayed close to home, 2020 was a great year to work with local landowners on projects that support the health of our watershed. Through the Buffalo Trail program, the BRWA is currently providing funding to support 9 landowner projects. These on-the-ground actions range from riparian fencing and planting projects, to livestock watering systems and improved stream crossings. All of these actions aim to protect or restore the health of riparian areas, which are crucial buffer zones between land and water. When these areas are healthy, they help filter and purify water, reduce the risk of floods and drought, support diverse and resilient ecosystems, and provide many other benefits.

Together, these projects will lead to the enhanced management of over 8,000 acres of agricultural land, including around 45 kilometres of shoreline/ streambank and 120 acres of riparian areas.

We would like to thank our program partners: Cows and Fish, M.D. of Wainright, County of Paintearth, County of Vermilion River, and the Agroforestry and Woodlot Extension Society.



Okwanim Creek watering system

Riparian Intactness Assessment Project

Over 7,000 kilometres of riparian areas across the watershed have now been assessed for "intactness". This is a measure of how much human impact there is in these areas, as well as the amount of trees, shrubs, and other plants that are present.

In 2020, the BRWA worked with the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance and other partners to develop a new "Riparian Web Portal". The Portal will be a free online tool that people can use to explore the intactness of riparian areas in places that matter to them. It will also include lots of resources for people to learn more about riparian areas and what we can all do to help improve their health.

We've also been working to create a series of riparian videos to share this information more broadly. Stay tuned for the launch of these exciting new resources next year!



Environment & Community Health

Since 2017, the BRWA has been a member of the Environment, Community, Health Observatory Network (ECHO Network). The Battle River and Sounding Creek watersheds are one of four "regional cases" involved. An important focus of our work over the past year has been to create the new Watershed Health Indicator Framework and begin working on our "Health in the Watershed" Atlas.

Climate Change and Health Project

Shifting climate patterns have the potential to impact many aspects of life in our watershed. These impacts are not limited to ecological changes; climate change may also affect the health of people and communities across the region.

Through the Adaptation Resilience Training program, the BRWA hired two project assistants to look into how climate change may affect the health of people, communities, and ecosystems locally. Using the BRWA's watershed health indicator framework to guide their work, they developed a report that outlines potential impacts as well as promising solutions to help build healthier and more climate-resilient communities.

We now plan to use this extensive research to create resources that empower people to pursue climate adaptation and mitigation actions in their local area.



Project Assistants Negar and Amanda

Nipiy Committee

The BRWA is grateful for our ongoing involvement with Samson Cree Nation's nipiy (water) committee, chaired by Mario Swampy. Below is an excerpt from the committee's response to a recent survey conducted as part of the Alberta Water Council's "Alberta Water Futures" Project. These insights highlight the importance of working with Indigenous communities on water-related challenges and opportunities.

Nipiy Challenges - Jurisdiction and Relationships

"Indigenous communities have been left as bystanders in the management of natural resources during any discussions concerning water regulation. Beginning conversations about water regulation without addressing the fundamentally different perspectives on issues like water ownership, stewardship, and rights shared by Indigenous communities does not set the stage to start on equal footing.

The overlapping responsibilities of three governing bodies—the Government of Canada, the Government of Alberta, and Samson Cree Nation—plus other stakeholders further complicate our ability to practice self-determination. ... Jurisdictional issues will be further complicated by a changing climate that already disproportionately affects Indigenous and vulnerable communities in an increasingly water

stressed region. There is tremendous opportunity to include Indigenous communities in a deep and respectful way so that future challenges can be approached in collaborative partnership. Indigenous communities should be front and centre in issues like water regulation from the outset. There are many opportunities to create long lasting partnerships, but we must be included in determining the scope and parameters of involvement.

We would love to see a world where Albertans are educated about water issues and Indigenous issues so that they can approach these concerns in a respectful and reciprocal manner."

**-Nipiy Committee, Samson Cree Nation
Chairperson: Mario Swampy**

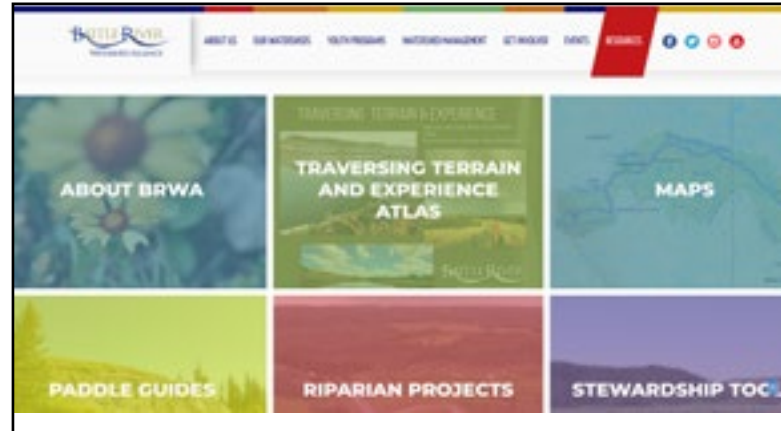
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The BRWA is committed to meeting with, hearing from, and supporting our community members to be involved in our watersheds. During the pandemic, we've shifted some of our efforts to virtual and small group engagement.

Our Online Presence

Website updates

We have updated our website to keep it current and aligned with our areas of work, and to ensure you can find what you need. Check out the updated resource library for Stewardship Tools, or browse the Watershed Management menu to explore our planning and implementation projects.



Social

Like a lot of people, we have been spending more time on social media this year! We continue to use Facebook to share events and project information, and Instagram to share photos of our daily activities and the beauty of our region. We've created a few new videos for our YouTube Channel and continue to see an increase in followers and interactions on all sites. We also have Twitter, but are more likely to listen to bird calls than put out our own tweets!

*Join us by searching for @BattleRiverWatershed
and use the hashtag #BattleRiver or #BattleRiverWatershed for your own shares!*

Connecting, at a distance

When possible, the BRWA was glad to have opportunities to meet our watershed community members. We attended farmers markets in Viking and Alliance to chat with people and share our resources. We also presented to Rotary Clubs in Camrose and Wainwright, both online and in-person, about our work and opportunities to get involved. The BRWA enjoys these opportunities to visit with people across our region and welcomes invitations to speak or attend events.

Virtual Annual General Meeting

Another first for us (and many) this year was hosting our virtual Annual General Meeting.

We were pleased and surprised to have 45 participant log-ins, and a lot of great feedback.

One thing is for certain, even when we can do in-person events again, creating accessible and enjoyable virtual events is here to stay.



BRWA Staff hosting their first virtual AGM



Battle River, south of Alliance

Paddle the Battle

2020 was a great year to Paddle the Battle. Water levels stayed high throughout the season and being on the water was a great local activity for social distancing!

Paddle Guides

Our team added 6 more paddling guides to the collection, for a total of 16. The guides for paddling the lakes and rivers of the watershed contain put-in and take-out locations, distances, highlights, and cautions.

The routes can be viewed on an interactive map, and guides downloaded as a PDF from the webpage: www.battleriverwatershed.ca/get-involved/paddle/

"I just want to send my gratitude to this Absolutely Amazing and Incredibly Helpful webpage that I just recently happened upon, titled Paddle The Battle!!!!"

...this source has been invaluable to me this summer, as I also have a couple of stand up paddleboards that I have now felt confident to bring out on some of the routes that are mentioned on the website!!!! I just really want to thank whomever(s) have been involved in this amazing resource..... and to all of you that continue to pour all your hard work and souls into this amazing sacred waterway!!!!"

-Paddle the Battle Guide User

Carve your Own Paddle Workshop

This October, Bob Silverthorne led a two-day workshop on using hand tools to carve custom paddles. We had 10 people participate, including these two young paddlers. Bob is a legendary outdoorsman, storyteller and educator who we were so happy to learn from.

We hope the connection to their paddle brings lots of happy paddling memories for all participants.



Workshop Guide Bob Silverthorne and two proud paddlers

OUR WATERSHEDS

BATTLE RIVER WATERSHED



Beginning at Battle Lake and meandering across Alberta and Saskatchewan for some 1,100 kilometers, the **Battle River** eventually joins the North Saskatchewan River at Battleford, Saskatchewan.

The Battle River and Sounding Creek are unique 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.

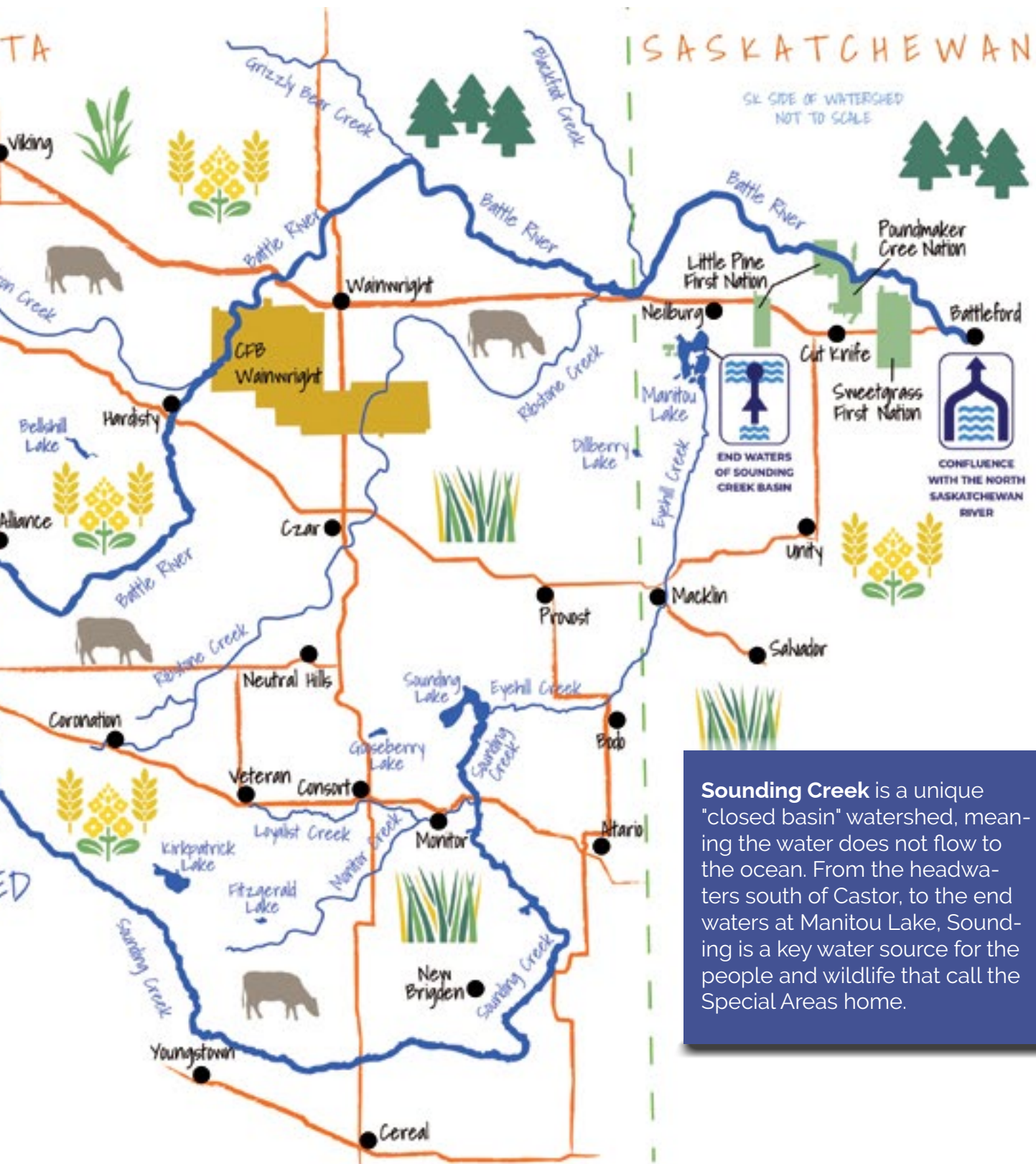
Our watersheds are part of Treaty 6 and 7 territory. Fulfilling the spirit and intent of these Treaties is an ongoing process, and the BRWA is committed to building strong and respectful relationships with the Indigenous Peoples of this land, with all living beings, and with the land and water on which we all depend.

We face many challenges in our watersheds, such as degraded water quality, limited water supply, and increasing land-use pressures. However, we are a resilient community of people who are able to work together to find solutions to the challenges that face us.

Indigenous experiences, teachings, knowledge and wisdom inform and enrich our collective efforts to care for the land and water of this region.

SOUNDING CREEK WATERSHED





Sounding Creek is a unique "closed basin" watershed, meaning the water does not flow to the ocean. From the headwaters south of Castor, to the end waters at Manitou Lake, Sounding is a key water source for the people and wildlife that call the Special Areas home.

YOUTH PROGRAMS

The BRWA's Youth Education Programs aim to inspire appreciation and action for our watersheds.

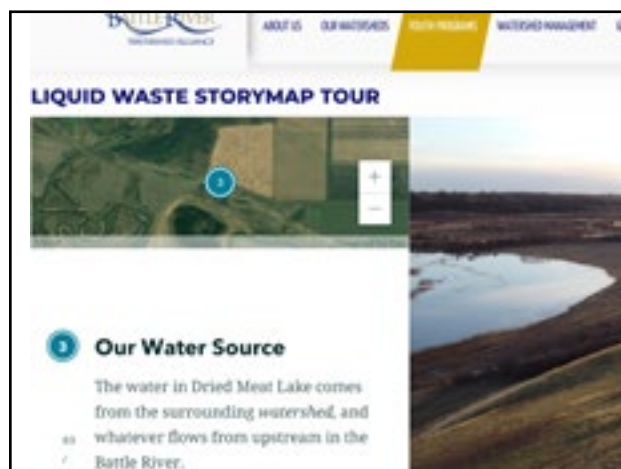
Like everyone, our Spring of 2020 was vastly different than expected. Usually the months of May and June are our busiest for our education team, as we travel around the watershed to host a variety of school field trips and presentations. Health restrictions meant we pivoted to provide resources to teachers and students working from home. Made especially clear during the COVID-19 pandemic is the importance of getting outside and connecting with the natural world.

Waste in our Watershed StoryMap

The Waste in our Watershed Tour for Grade 4 students in Camrose has now gone virtual!

Using the ESRI ArcGIS StoryMap platform, our team created two virtual tours: the Waste and Water cycles in Camrose. These tours cover the same locations and topics as our in-person tour, and more! These "Scrolling Stories" are full of maps, photos, videos, interviews, and fun facts to teach and inspire the students, or any waste-conscious adult! Check them out for yourself at:

www.battleriverwatershed.ca/youth-programs/waste-tour/



Caring for our Watersheds

March 17, 2020 was the deadline for Caring for our Watersheds proposals. Schools had just moved to online learning. Still, we received 118 proposals from 208 students at 13 schools. These proposals outlined student projects on what they can do to improve their watershed.

Given the uncertainty of the time, we did not hold a final competition. The finalists were all recognized with equal prize amounts. However, several projects got implemented that spring. One project in our watershed was a community clean-up hosted by Dana and Soren in Hay Lakes. Another was a timely "Rub a Dub Dub" Phosphate-Free Soap idea by Anny and Chrisle in Edmonton.

This year's contest deadline was March 23, 2021. It was a difficult school year, and that was reflected in classroom participation. We received 43 proposals from 80 students at 10 schools. Our carbon-neutral final competition was hosted virtually on Greenshows. Congratulations to everyone who participated, especially all of the finalists and the 1st place team from EcoVision Club at Lacombe Composite High School.





Magpie Nature Camp

Magpie Nature Camp



Our 2020 Magpie Nature Camp took creative turns to adapt to Alberta Health Guidelines for summer camps. To the great pleasure of our staff and campers, groups were kept small with only 10 campers, two leaders, and a back-up leader available. 42 youth aged 7-12 took part in a half-day, week-long program.

The youth spent their days playing outdoors, unaware of our "coyote mentoring" ways of teaching them about and fostering appreciation for the world around them.

We are grateful for our partners and the Camrose and District Fish and Game Association and Cargill for their support.

Augustana CSL ~ Make your Map



This Fall, we had the privilege of working with 24 University of Alberta - Augustana students in the AUCSL 100 course. Working with Professor Paul Stonehouse, we engaged the students to think about their place attachment as triggers that spark community involvement, service, and advocacy. As first-year students from all over Canada and the World, it was very interesting and informative to learn about their personal place attachment values and what stewardship activities they would most likely participate in.



New this year! We are excited to launch the Future Farmers for Freshwater Program with funding from the Government of Canada EcoAction program, and our local partners at Flagstaff County and 4-H Alberta.

We have been busily preparing resources to offer free educational and engaging presentations to 4-H (and other youth) clubs about their freshwater resources. We will then take action by working on a riparian restoration project. Learn more at www.battleriverwatershed.ca/youth-programs/future-farmers and stay tuned for the results of this new and exciting project!

STEWARDSHIP

OTIS Award *for being OutsTanding In Stewardship*

The BRWA started the OTIS Award in 2013 to recognize the positive actions of stewards in our watersheds. We are proud to present the 2020 OTIS Awards to the following stewards:



Individual Winner: Glen Hvenegaard - Professor of Nature

Dr. Glen Hvenegaard has been a professor of Environmental Studies at the University of Alberta Augustana Campus since 1994. Glen has shared his knowledge and passion for the natural world with countless students, inspiring environmental conservation and action for sustainability. In the community, Glen actively promotes stewardship as the organizer of the annual Camrose Christmas Bird Count, and through the Camrose Wildlife and Stewardship Society. He is a strong supporter of environmental education and outreach events, and the Camrose Purple Martin Project.



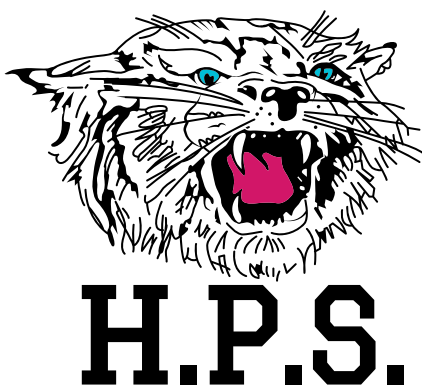
Business Winner: Camrose Energy - Energy Engagement

Camrose Energy is a leading local energy supply business focused on accessibility, sustainability, and supporting the community. Camrose Energy is a strong believer in moving towards renewable energy. They offer the Green Energy Program, which allows customers to choose how much of their energy consumption comes from green sources. They also host the Solar Club Program, which supports micro-generators, for only the cost of a donation to the local food bank. To give back to the community, Camrose Energy donates 10% of their profits to one of four community organizations, including the Battle River Watershed Alliance.



Organization Winner: Millet & District Museum - Curating Stewardship

In the spring of 2020, the Museum, in partnership with the Millet in Bloom committee, created an outdoor classroom in the Pipestone Park, along the Eyot Creek. The classroom contains seating and signage presenting the Museum's native plant research. In 2019, after taking part in the BRWA's Finding Common Ground 2.0 energy tour, Museum staff shared their experience with "Our Common Ground" presentations within the local community, as well as with the Central Alberta Regional Museums Network. The museum also took action and reduced their energy use and carbon footprint.



Youth Winner: Hughenden Public School - Inquiry-Based Education

Youth at Hughenden Public School have had some fantastic inquiry-based learning opportunities thanks to their Science teacher Susan Reynolds. The school-wide Inquire at HPS and Beyond project aims to foster a culture of innovation, inquiry, problem solving and critical thinking particularly associated with STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics) fields, including energy focused inquiry-based lab activities.



Bigstone Creek, North of Falun

Bigstone Creek Willow Staking Workshop

In this workshop, participants got hands-on experience in a riparian restoration project! From sourcing willow cuttings, to proper preparation, to planting, the 17 volunteers learned all the steps needed to conduct their own restoration project. They also contributed to restoring a local creek!

This workshop was jointly hosted by the Agroforestry and Woodlot Extension Society (AWES) and Wetaskiwin & Leduc counties, with support from the BRWA.



"Hands-on learning is effective at any age and stewardship workshops and field schools provide opportunities for our residents to learn new skills. Often our events are attended by farmers, and this is a group that is used to working with their hands to get a job done."

-Kim Barkwell, Sustainable Ag Coordinator, Wetaskiwin & Leduc counties

Winter LakeKeepers Program

On a cold winter day in February, 5 BRWA staff visited our headwaters at Battle Lake to help with winter water quality sampling through the Alberta Lake Management Society (ALMS) Winter LakeKeepers Program. The staff drilled a hole into the ice and collected samples to test for nutrients, phytoplankton (algae), isotopes, chlorophyll, and dissolved oxygen. ALMS then completed the tests and will add the data to their extensive database on lake health.

Thanks to Camrose Energy and their customers who donate to us. Their 2020 donation supported this project.



"LakeKeepers is all about enabling lake stewards and users to collect water quality data from their favourite water body. The information collected from the Winter LakeKeepers program enables anglers to understand the quality of fish habitat under the ice, lake stewardship groups to learn more about their lake's seasonal water quality dynamics, and lake scientists to research the impacts of pollution and climate change on lakes in the winter time."

-Caleb Sinn, Alberta Lake Management Society

PARTNERS AND FUNDERS

The BRWA is a local alliance — a web of people, organizations, governments, and businesses who work together to maintain and improve the health of our watersheds.

We would like to acknowledge the following groups for their support this year:

Youth Education Partners

Battle River Community Foundation
Camrose and District Fish and Game Association
Cargill with CAF America
ECO Canada
Enbridge
Evergreen
Government of Alberta
Myron Badrey
Nutrien
Nu Edge Construction

Invest 50 Partners

Beaver County
City of Camrose
Village of Donalda
Village of Halkirk

Outreach Partners

Battle River Community Foundation
Camrose Energy
Nature Canada
Project Learning Tree
Volunteer Alberta

Watershed Management Partners

Canadian Agricultural Partnership
Canadian Institutes of Health Research
Ecumenical Lenten services in Camrose
Government of Alberta
Government of Canada,
Lake Winnipeg Basin Program
Samson Cree Nation



Environment and
Climate Change Canada

Environnement et
Changement climatique Canada



Environment
Community
Health
Observatory
Network

Réseau
observatoire sur
l'environnement
les communautés
et la santé

Working with the Battle River Watershed Alliance

"[The BRWA] has meant a lot. I was pretty connected to my place anyway, and I was able to get even more connected. And learning so much. I learned so much from when I first started there – science stuff, ecological stuff, people stuff. And I still use it because I'm building on it.

It's [the BRWA] turned into a really, in my mind, a stellar organization. Like with our reputation in Alberta Environment and Parks. I think we are an example for a lot of those ones [WPACs] that were slow getting off the ground. I just really like the way we operate. And all of you working there in the office there, such a core of people there working together. That's really rare, I think."

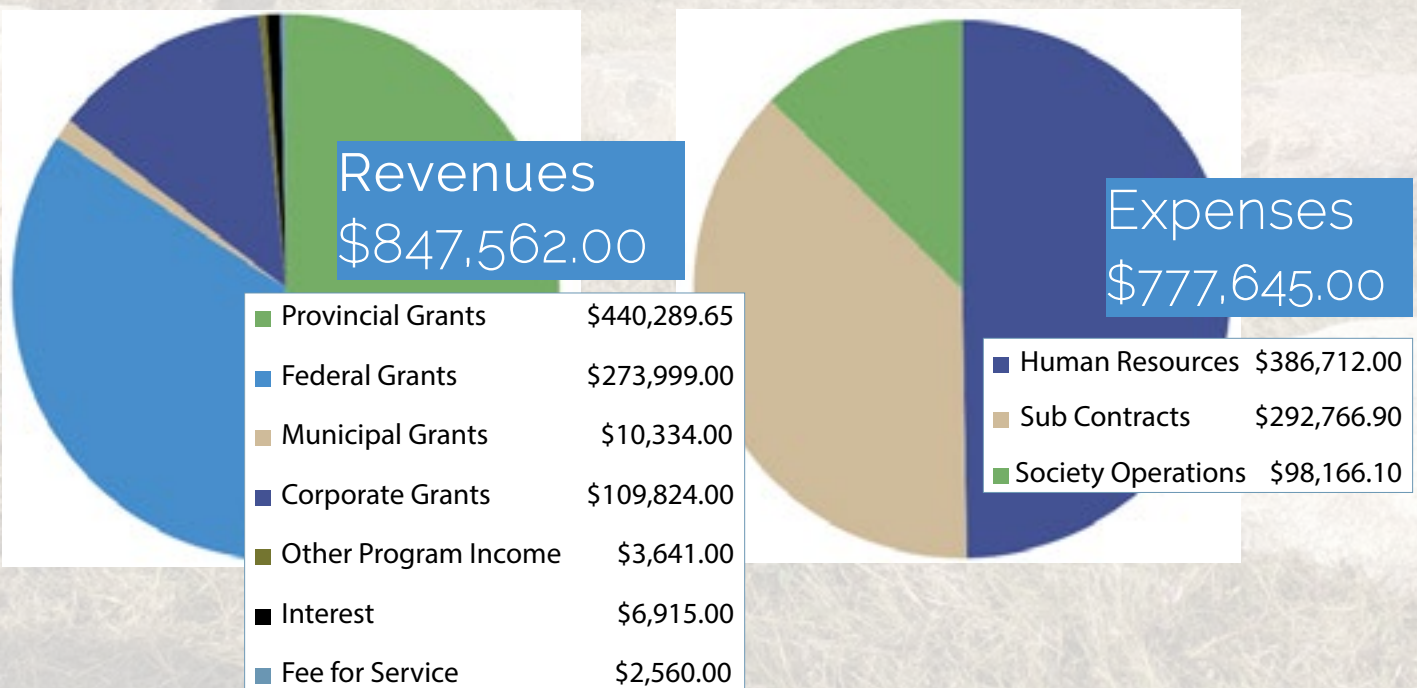
-Midge Lambert, BRWA Board Member





2020-2021 Financial Report

The BRWA appreciates the financial contributions from all of our partners. We work hard to use funds as efficiently as possible to make the biggest impact within our budget.



Members who would like a complete audited financial statement for the BRWA should contact Sheila Logelin at 780.672.0276. You can also find it at battleriverwatershed.ca/resources/about-brwa/

Outdoor Classroom at Camrose Habitat Property. A project with the Camrose and District Fish and Game Association and Cargill.

