

Lakescape

newsletter of the



WABAMUN WATERSHED MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Box 1005, Wabamun, Alberta, T0E 2K0

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Meetings: 3rd Wednesday of each month

Spring 2016

Council Update

Stan Franklin, WWMC Chair

Over the winter months the WWMC has continued to work with the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance and Alberta Environment and Parks to move forward with longer term watershed management planning as well as projects that can be undertaken at the present time.

Boat Launches

Boat launch sites and boat launch capacity will continue to be a challenge for property owners adjoining launch sites and for the boating public seeking to access the lake. We understand there will be increased enforcement of parking restrictions around some of the launch sites. Preliminary work is being done to investigate the development of an additional launch site on the south shore but even if this proceeds it will take a few years to complete. Even at the established launch sites in the Village of Wabamun and the Provincial Park there is no oversight or inspection of boats for invasive species such as quagga mussels. Boats being brought back from the United States are being inspected at some border crossings but there is no guarantee that a contaminated boat will not slip through. The math is quite simple. One boat will kill one lake.



Mine Reclamation

Coal mining and coal fired power generation have been features of the watershed for over 50 years. Aside from the provincial government's stated objective of eliminating coal-fired power generation by 2030, the Sundance Plant and the Highvale Mine are reaching the end of their respective lives and will probably do so before 2030. The area of the Highvale Mine represents approximately 1/3 of the Wabamun watershed. When the mine is reclaimed and the current pumping operations are replaced with natural runoff, it is vitally important that the reclamation will have been designed and completed to ensure that natural runoff will not have an adverse effect on the health of the lake. It is also critical that the volume of runoff will be equivalent to the pre-disturbance levels. The reclamation plan comes under the jurisdiction of the Alberta Energy Regulator. We have and will continue to advocate with the AER, TransAlta and Parkland County for a reclamation plan and land use planning that will achieve these two important objectives.

Habitat Destruction

Don Meredith, WWMC Board Member and Lakescape Editor

The track machine cut a wide swath through the bush, creating a trail of destruction through some prime shore-side wildlife habitat of poplar and various shrubs. Beavers work here and many species of birds and other wildlife nest in the trees and shrubs. The area is also an important filtering zone for runoff water coming to the creek and lake. The erosion caused by these new trails will not help this process.

Beaver Creek enters Wabamun Lake on the south shore. As one of the few creeks flowing into the lake, it is an important source of lake water and a spawning area for fish such as northern pike. I am the designated volunteer steward of the Beaver Creek Conservation Site for the Alberta Fish and Game Association. The site is a protected area along the shore of Beaver Creek and Wabamun Lake where the creek enters the lake. TransAlta Utilities donated the

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site to the AFGA Wildlife Trust Fund last July (see the Summer 2015 Newsletter, available at www.wwmc.ca), and I volunteered to be its steward last fall. My job as steward is to inspect the land, assess its plant and animal life, report any problems to the AFGA and generally look after its welfare.



As I was preparing to make my initial inspection this spring, I received a complaint from a resident who lives near the property that one of his neighbors had cut some trails on the north side of the creek. So, my inspection started there, where indeed I found the trails. I also found that someone, obviously upset with what had happened, had dragged some beaver-felled poplar trees over the trail to block access to motorized vehicles (AFGA Wildlife Trust Fund properties are open to the public but only to foot traffic and there is no camping or fires). The damage was extensive and I reported it to the Report-A-Poacher (RAP) hotline (1-800-642-3800). A Fish and Wildlife Officer soon got back to me for more information and said he would investigate.

Despite the efforts the government and organizations have made to inform people about the need to protect vital wildlife and lakeshore habitat, there are still people who believe they can do whatever they want in our wild lands. Well, it's time for all of us who care about our wild places and the health of water bodies to step up and report violations. The RAP hotline has made such reporting much easier!

Report-A-Poacher Now Available to Report Public Land Abuses

From the May 19 news release: "Anyone who witnesses serious public lands abuse can now phone the 24-hour Report A Poacher line to notify an officer. The line is being added to heighten enforcement efforts through government's multi-agency approach to address public lands abuses."

1-800-642-3800

Crowded Lakes

Don Meredith

As more and more people poured into Alberta during the past economic boom, more and more boats were purchased and hauled to lakes. We see the results of that on Wabamun each summer weekend, as people come out to enjoy the lake. As Stan Franklin observed in his council update (above), the strain on boat launches and people's patience is a problem. Crowding can also be an issue for the health of the lake, including damage from wake/prop wash and pollution. I wrote about this in my column in the April *Alberta Outdoorsmen* that I have since uploaded to my blog (<http://bit.ly/22moCIA>). We may be approaching a time when it will be necessary to regulate recreation on our lakes to preserve the reasons we go to them. The WWMC is monitoring the situation and studying what other jurisdictions (mostly in the States) have done to handle the issue. Right now, the biggest problem is an inadequate number of boat launches and related amenities (e.g., parking, rest rooms) to handle the growing traffic.



Wetlands

The wetlands around Wabamun Lake are important components of the lake ecosystem. Wetlands filter runoff water coming to the lake, absorb nutrients—slowing the eutrophication of the lake and algae growth. As well, they are important nesting habitats for shore birds, waterfowl, frogs, toads, aquatic insects, and spawning habitats for fish. Unfortunately, many people believe these important areas are wastelands that should be filled to provide better access to the lake, for example, or just abused. Parkland County has commissioned a study of the wetlands in the county from recent and past aerial surveys to determine the distribution of surviving wetlands, how many wetlands have been lost, and those that might be restored. The WWMC is planning to use this information to identify the wetlands in the watershed and assess them on the ground, starting this summer. Stay tuned.

Corporate Members

The WWMC thanks the following businesses, governments and organizations for partnering with the WWMC as corporate members and helping the council achieve its goals.



Camp Oselia Society, Falher Drugs, Seba Beach Ice Cream Stop, Summer Village of Betula Beach, Summer Village of Point Allison, Wabamun & District Lions Club

If you own or represent a business or organization that is concerned about Wabamun Lake and would be willing to help maintain its health, become a corporate member of the WWMC for just \$100 a year. Corporate members will be acknowledged at WWMC functions, in each newsletter and on the website. For more information contact Neil Fleming by e-mail, nfleming@shaw.ca or telephone, 780-437-3204.

If you are already a corporate member and would like to see your logo here and on the WWMC website, please send a digital copy to Don Meredith at wmc@donmeredith.ca