

# Lakescape

newsletter of the



WABAMUN WATERSHED  
MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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No. 21

Spring 2019

## Samco/Ridge Water Resort

A lot has happened since our last newsletter was published in the summer of 2018. After last winter's frenzy of activity with regard to the January ice heave and the resultant workshop in May, your volunteer Board was looking forward to a relatively peaceful summer and fall, looking after the watershed management plan and investigating the various unauthorized boat launches around the lake. Then along came the Ridge Water Resort proposal for the north shore of the lake (<http://bit.ly/2P66sIo>).

As I'm sure most of you know, the quarter section of forest, east of Fallis, was cleared of vegetation in 2011-12. Many people expressed concerns about the resultant erosion and tons of earthen material washing into the lake and flooding neighbouring properties. As a result, Alberta Environment and Parks and Parkland County issued enforcement and stop orders, respectively, to the developer, Samco Developments Ltd. However, the erosion continued. Then last September we learned what was being planned for that land: a 300-lot Recreation Vehicle campground.



Shortening a very long story, Samco applied for a development permit from Parkland County for the campground. After much back-and-forth, Parkland refused the permit and Samco appealed the refusal to Parkland's Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB). To accommodate all the people who wished to speak to the board, the SDAB held two hearings on January 14<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> with regard to Samco's appeal. On February 12, the SDAB released its decision: **Samco's appeal was denied**. In other words, **the development cannot proceed**. The decision was largely based on the development being "not compatible with neighbouring uses."

The WWMC thanks all those who took time out of their busy lives to attend the two hearings, and especially those who stepped up to make presentations. The SDAB saw, heard and felt your concerns, and they were reflected in the decision. We would like to especially thank **Shirley Munro** for her dedication and persistence in getting people to show up and express their views at the hearings. She quickly organized the Wabamun Area Stewardship Association (WASA) as a way for people to oppose the development. As a result, WASA was able to hire a lawyer who ensured the legalities the SDAB needed to hear were indeed heard.

The WWMC researched, wrote and submitted a written brief to the SDAB and made a presentation at the hearing, largely based on the law the SDAB would be using to make its decision. We feel our brief and presence was reflected in the decision. We have learned a lot in the process and will put that knowledge to good use in the future.

**What happens next?** Samco had 30 days after the SDAB decision to appeal to the Alberta Court of Appeals (if the decision erred in law or jurisdiction). According to Parkland County, the deadline of March 14 passed without Samco filing a leave to appeal. So, Samco must wait one year from the appeal decision before it can apply again for a permit to develop such a campground on the property. However, it can at any time apply for a permit for any other type of development.

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Unfortunately, the SDAB ruling will not stop the continuing erosion and washing of earthen materials into the lake from the property. Those materials include phosphorus and other nutrients that accelerate the eutrophication of the lake, eventually leading to toxic algal blooms. We trust Parkland County and Alberta Environment and Parks will continue to monitor and enforce their orders. We all must be vigilant.

## Managing Eutrophication and Cyanobacteria

by Stan Franklin

There was quite a good turnout on January 30<sup>th</sup> at the Alberta Lake Management Society's In-Lake Treatment Seminar on methods to manage cyanobacteria (blue-green algae). The speaker, Dr. Miquel Lurling of Wageningen University in the Netherlands, went through all of the various theories and products that have been brought to bear to deal with "legacy phosphorus loads" in lake sediments. When I saw the title of the presentation I thought there was going to be an announcement of some major breakthrough. Turns out that was not the case. There is ongoing research, particularly in China as they have a major nut to crack with all of the contaminated water bodies in that country.



Cyanobacterial bloom on Pigeon Lake in 2006. Photo courtesy of Dr. Ron Zurawell

To make a long story short and to use Dr. Lurling's words, "there is no magic bullet". He debunked such things as aeration, ultrasound, chemical coagulants (alum, etc.), organic products and biological measures. He mentioned an experiment using mussels confined in crates to act as a biological filter. In the experiment, 1600 crates were placed in a particular water body. In three years, the mussels were all dead as they did not reproduce in that setting.

Blocking the release of phosphorus from sediment is the most effective option. In the Netherlands the product "phoslock" is used on small water bodies quite effectively. In one example a lake of less than 3 hectares was treated with phoslock at an initial cost of 50,000 Euros (C\$75,500) and 4500 Euros (C\$6,800) a year thereafter. The anticipated costs for treating larger affected lakes in central Alberta would seem prohibitive.

This is apparently a very widespread problem in Europe, largely a result of historic agricultural practices. There is a lot of research going on and a lot of junk science and snake oil remedies being marketed. Wabamun so far has not reached the threshold where legacy phosphorus loads are a serious problem. The findings of Dr. Lurling that there are no economic solutions available should inform a communications strategy highlighting the importance of stewardship in the watershed—as there is no turning back once the lake goes over the precipice.

## Aquatic Invasive Species

by Don Meredith

At our February 13<sup>th</sup> regular meeting, Janine Higgins of Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) gave a very well received slide show and presentation about what the province is doing with regard to aquatic invasive species that threaten our lakes and waterways. The following are some of the highlights of her talk:

- Zebra and Quagga Mussels are the biggest concern for Alberta right now. They attach to vegetation and any structure in the water, rapidly reproduce and cause much destruction of habitat and obstruct use of recreational water structures. They came from Europe and Asia in the ballast of freight ships and quickly spread from the St. Lawrence River and Great Lakes to the west. The most likely agents of the spread are boats being hauled between provinces. Without proper cleaning, boats can carry the mussels or their larvae in undrained water or attached to hulls and motors. So far, they have not established in Alberta. AEP has placed boat inspection stations at border crossings into Alberta to prevent the mussels from entering the province. But individual boat owners must also be vigilant if we are to keep these invaders out.
- Invasive aquatic plant species are causing problems on many lakes. For example, Flowering Rush is a major problem on Lake Isle, where it is spreading and choking out native vegetation, destroying fish and wildlife habitat, and preventing beach access. It is difficult to remove. On Wabamun Lake in recent years, Purple Loosestrife has been an issue. It crowds out native plants, eliminates open-water areas needed by waterfowl and reduces wetland biodiversity.



- Janine briefly mentioned whirling disease, which affects members of the trout family. Whirling disease is not an issue on Wabamun Lake because none of the fish in the lake are affected. However, its spread throughout much of the lake and river systems in the province illustrates how fast an invasive species can be distributed by the use of fishing, wading and boating gear not cleaned between waterbodies.
- For more information on aquatic invasive species check out our invasive species web page (<http://bit.ly/2u3nxWn>) and AEP's Aquatic Invasive Species page (<http://bit.ly/2u6kTiA>).

## Can You Help?

Would you be willing to volunteer some time a few weekends this summer to help lake users learn how to protect the lake from invasive species and other lake-health issues? The WWMC is planning to be present at boat launches this summer to talk with people about invasive species and how users can help keep the lake healthy. We will also be continuing our inventory of watershed wetlands and ad hoc boat launches. Training will be provided. It will be a good way to meet people, learn about the lake and share your passion for it. If you are interested, send a message to [info@wwmc.ca](mailto:info@wwmc.ca) and we'll put you on a list to receive further information as the program is developed. Any time you can give will be appreciated.



Purple Loosestrife invading native vegetation on Wabamun Lake. Photo courtesy of Hugh Wallis.

## Please Donate

We appreciate everyone who has signed up for the email list and become members of the WWMC. As you know, membership is free so we can reach as many people as possible with our conservation messages. But we still have expenses delivering the programs and activities we do. If you can afford to do so, please give a donation to the WWMC to help further our work. Although we do not have charitable status, we can guarantee that every dollar donated goes directly to helping steward the lake. To donate, go to [www.wwmc.ca](http://www.wwmc.ca), click on the Get Involved tab (at the top) and Donate using PayPal. Otherwise, send a cheque by postal mail to: **WWMC, Box 1005, Wabamun, AB T0E 2K0**. \$10, \$20, \$50 or more will help. **Thank you!**

## Sundance Boat Launch

**Good News!** On November 13, 2018, Parkland County Council voted to begin construction of the \$2,000,000 boat launch on the south side of Wabamun Lake, near the Sundance power plant. The funds have been set aside, the lease agreement has been signed with TransAlta and the environmental impact assessment has been completed. Construction is expected to begin in 2020. Parkland County has posted a draft design of the launch site on its website: <http://bit.ly/2FntRNH>

The Sundance Boat Launch should help alleviate some of the crowding at the other launches around the lake, especially on the weekends. Because of the crowding, many people use unauthorized launch sites around the lake where the lakeshore is unsuitable for launching and there is little parking for vehicles and boat trailers.

## Duck Boxes

One of the glories of spring is the arrival of waterfowl to our lakes, ponds and streams from their winter homes. Many diving ducks (e.g., Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead) nest in trees close to wetlands or a waterbody. Development around the lake has removed much of this habitat. However, you can help restore it by the use of duck boxes, as some Wabamun residents have done with success. If you have an area near water that might be suitable for such a duck, and would like to place a duck box, check out Ducks Unlimited's "Nest Box Guide for Waterfowl": <https://www.ducks.ca/assets/2016/01/nestbox-guide-feb2.pdf>, which includes plans for building a box and how and where to install it.

## 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, Dairy Queen, 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 (go to Get Involved at [www.wwmc.ca](http://www.wwmc.ca)). Corporate members will be acknowledged at WWMC functions, in each newsletter and on the website. For more information contact Neil Fleming by e-mail, [fleming.neil@outlook.com](mailto:fleming.neil@outlook.com) or telephone, 780-953-6345.

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 [wwmc@donmeredith.ca](mailto:wwmc@donmeredith.ca)