

Fall 2012

"News You Can Use"

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Meetings
2nd Wednesday of each
month, 6:30 p.m.
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Lakescape

newsletter of the



WABAMUN WATERSHED MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Enforcement Order Issued to Samco Developments

After receiving an anonymous complaint in January of 2012 concerning the large-scale removal of vegetation along the north shore of Wabamun Lake (near Fallis), Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development issued a Water Act enforcement order in October to Samco Developments Ltd. and its directors, Cindy and Russell Dolanz (as reported in the October 24, 2012 Alberta Government Information Bulletin; <http://bit.ly/Tcyng4>). The order was issued "for unauthorized activities to floodplains on two properties adjacent to Wabamun Lake."



Trees, shrubs and other vegetation had been removed and the land contour altered without taking sufficient measures to prevent erosion and the deposition of sediments into the lake. Such uncontrolled erosion is a major contributor to the premature eutrophication of lakes, including blue-green algae blooms that harm fish and wildlife. Such blooms regularly occur on many other recreational lakes in Alberta, but so far are not common in Wabamun Lake.

Samco and Mr. and Mrs. Dolanz were ordered to cease all unauthorized activities and immediately re-contour and re-grade the land, including installing silt fencing, submitting a written report from an Alberta land surveyor, and submitting and implementing a remedial plan to fully stabilize and re-vegetate the property.

Correction

In the Summer 2012 *Lakescape*, it was mistakenly reported that catch-and-release only fishing for all fish in Wabamun Lake began in 2006. Although there were zero possession limits on most species in 2006, people could still take home some northern pike over 63 cm in length. Catch-and-release for all species began in 2008 and continues to the present.

Board of Directors

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Volume 2, No. 4.

Editor: Don Meredith
(wwmc@donmeredith.ca)

Submissions

Lakescape welcomes contributions from WWMC members and others who wish to inform members about issues or events in the Wabamun area. Please keep submissions brief and to the point. All submissions are subject to editing for length and clarity. For more information, contact the editor: Don Meredith
wwmc@donmeredith.ca

Deadline for the winter edition is January 15, 2013.

AGM a Success

The WWMC AGM, held on October 17 at the Wabamun Seniors' Centre, was a success. Although we would have liked to see more regular members attend, those that did learned a lot about what the WWMC is doing and particularly about what Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development is doing about fisheries management at the lake. Dr. Stephen Spencer delivered an informative and entertaining presentation on the state of the fisheries (a summary of his presentation is in the Summer 2012 *Lakescape*).

As well, those members present elected a new Board of Directors, listed in the left-hand column. At the November 14 board meeting a new Executive Committee was elected, also listed on the left.

"State of the Watershed" Report

At the November 14 meeting of the WWMC, the board decided to proceed with the writing of the State of the Wabamun Watershed Report. Last winter, the board sent out a Request for Proposal to several companies and individuals and Aquality Environmental Consulting won the bid. However, funding for the project had not been as forthcoming as the board had hoped, and Aquality agreed to delay the report until such funding could be secured. The board has since secured sufficient funding for the project to begin and believes it will secure the remainder in due course. So, it is contracting with Aquality to proceed with the report, the finishing of which is dependent upon funds being available.

The State of the Watershed Report will describe the Wabamun Watershed at the present time in terms of its physical, environmental and cultural characteristics. The WWMC will use the report to inform groups, governments and individuals about the lake and its watershed. It will form the basis of the Wabamun Watershed Management Plan which is the next major objective of the WWMC.

Please Renew Your Membership

If you haven't done so already, the WWMC would appreciate members renewing their memberships for 2012/13 so we can continue our work. Either send a cheque for \$25 to the WWMC (address on front page), or if new, go to www.wwmc.ca to download a membership form.

Ice Safety

by Don H. Meredith © 2012

As winter approaches, the character of our lakes begins to change with ice forming over the surface and inviting us to venture out to ice fish, cross-country ski, drive snowmobiles or play hockey. Although the ice might look solid enough, one should always be careful and take the proper precautions before setting out.

As outlined on page 18 of the *2012 Alberta Guide to Sportfishing Regulations*:

- Always test the ice conditions before venturing out,
- Do not walk on ice less than 10 cm (4 in.) thick, or
- drive a vehicle on ice less than 30 cm (12 in.) thick.
- Beware of ice near the inlets or outlets of streams—running water erodes the ice from underneath.

Those are good general rules, but you should also be aware that the strength of ice varies with temperature—the colder the ice, the stronger the crystal structure.

Drive Slowly

A sheet of ice over water is quite plastic. A heavy object, such as a vehicle, actually bends the ice like a ball rolling on a taught blanket. This is why you hear cracking when a vehicle passes near you on the lake and the water rises and falls in your fishing hole; the ice is bending under the weight. As the vehicle moves across the lake, it pushes a wave of bending ice ahead of it. If the vehicle travels fast enough to override the wave, there is danger the ice will break up, regardless of its thickness.

(continued on next page)

Drive slowly and cautiously and don't follow too closely behind another vehicle. The combined weights and possibility of one car overriding the ice wave of another increase the chance of sudden break-up. Likewise, don't park close to another vehicle.

Slush Traps

A heavy snow cover can also bend the ice, pushing it into the lake water and forcing water up to the surface of the ice through cracks. If this water is large in volume and is protected by a layer of snow, it may not freeze right away causing a sticky slush that can be a trap to unsuspecting drivers. You can't see the slush below the snow. Instead of ploughing through snow you suddenly crash through ice and get stuck. You're still above the original lake ice, but that doesn't help the fact you must dig your vehicle out of ice while standing in a sticky soup of slush. Often in these situations the assistance of another vehicle is required provided that it doesn't get stuck as well.

Be Prepared

Despite all these possible problems people still venture safely on lake ice each year and accidents are relatively few. However, when they do occur they can be quite dangerous so it is important that you take a few precautions both before and while you are on the ice.

Always drive on ice with seat belts off, windows at least partially open and doors unlatched. If your vehicle breaks through, get out as quickly as possible. The unlatched doors with open windows will help you swing them against the water pressure.

If you break through the ice outside your vehicle, spread your arms as wide as possible. Kick your feet to get your body flat on the ice surface. You may have to break through thin ice to get to ice thick enough to support your weight. Use a knife, nails or ice pick to help pull yourself out. Once you've squirmed the upper part of your body onto thick ice, quickly roll to the side away from the water's edge.

Now, you've got to get warm and dry, fast! Go to a vehicle or other warm place. Change your clothes, drink warm fluids. If you are too far away, get to shore, build a fire and dry your clothes.

Plan for trouble! Have a knife, ice pick or large nails and a pack of waterproof matches in your parka pocket ready for emergency use. I carry two spikes tied together with a long cord that is strung through the arms of my parka (much like mittens attached on a cord) that I can easily grab if needed. Keep handy an extra set of dry clothes (or a large blanket) and a thermos filled with warm drink. Don't go on the ice alone. If you get into trouble, you'll need help.

Our frozen lakes offer unique opportunities to enjoy our long Alberta winters. However, falling through the ice, especially in a vehicle, is no joke. Take a few precautions before you go, and use common sense when assessing conditions.



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



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Shoreside Management Ltd.
Summer Village of Point Allison
Wabamun & District Lions Club
Wabamun & District Seniors Centre
Wabamun Lakeside Liquor

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 elsewhere. For more information contact Kelly Aldridge by e-mail, ktammaa@hotmail.com or telephone, (780) 953-2695.

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

Watershed Report Sponsors

The WWMC thanks the following sponsors for providing funding for the creation of the state-of-the-watershed report:

