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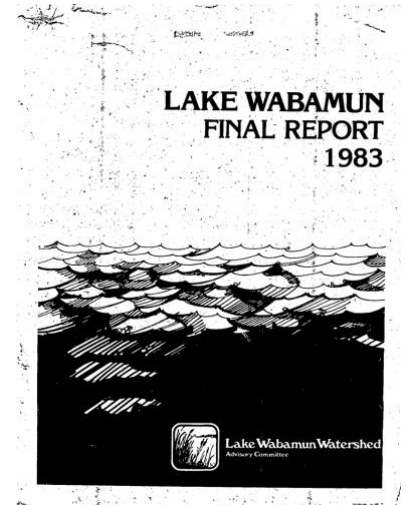
No. 31

Fall 2023

## A Guide for 'Making Things Happen'

Sue Styles, WWMC Chair

Forty-three years ago (November 1980), the provincial government of the day appointed a Lake Wabamun Watershed Advisory Committee "to look at the problem of weed growth in the lake." The committee held numerous meetings and public events, conducted research, and published a report in 1983 (go to our [Studies & Reports page](#) and scroll down to the bottom). The committee determined that several environmental factors affected weed growth in Wabamun Lake, and recommended that "a lake management plan covering both water and land use should be prepared and implemented." Such a plan was [published in 1985](#) but was never really implemented. Instead, it gathered dust on the office shelves of the various municipalities and organizations involved, and was soon forgotten. Why wasn't it implemented? 1) there was no strategic plan to order and prioritize the actions required, and 2) there was no single entity to champion the plan and **make it happen**.



Making the [2020 Wabamun Lake Watershed Management Plan](#) (WMP) happen is what the WWMC is all about these days. We recognize that publishing a WMP is only the beginning. Actioning the plan is what is going to protect the health of the lake and encourage its stakeholders to take lake stewardship seriously.

The WWMC utilizes 4 key strategies ([2022-2025 WWMC Strategic Plan](#)) to address the 4 overarching goals of the WMP:

WMP 4 Overarching Goals	WWMC 4 Key Strategies
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Good water quality</li> <li>2. Healthy aquatic ecosystems and biodiversity</li> <li>3. Wise land use</li> <li>4. Engaged stewardship</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Maintain a functioning sustainable organization</li> <li>2. Collaboration and advocacy</li> <li>3. Maintain, improve, and monitor the health of Wabamun Lake and watershed</li> <li>4. Maintain communication role and provision of information regarding watershed health</li> </ol>

This [Lakescape](#) newsletter is one of the WWMC communication tools used to inform members and all stakeholders about implementation of the WMP, in other words, about lake stewardship happenings in the Wabamun Lake watershed.

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## What is Happening

So, what is and what has been happening over the past summer in our watershed?

Overall, the WWMC is completing open-water field work and turning attention to planning for the 2023 WWMC Annual General Meeting on October 18<sup>th</sup>, and next year's stewardship program. During the summer months the WWMC:

- completed the Alberta Lake Management Society's (ALMS) 2023 summer [LakeWatch](#) water quality monitoring program—Wabamun Lake water samples were taken in June, July, August and September. It is anticipated the 2023 LakeWatch report will be available in early summer 2024. To review previous reports - see [Lakewatch reports](#).
- participated in water sampling for the "[Satellite Derived Algae Monitoring](#)" project for Wabamun Lake in July, August and September.
- organized a Highvale Mine tour and mine reclamation presentation in July for municipal and collaborative-partner stakeholders, and WWMC board members to better understand TransAlta objective re: Highvale Mine reclamation particularly as it relates to hydrology. We sincerely thank TransAlta staff Stacey Lauder, Brandon Stewart and Rick Wallace for hosting us, and planning and executing a highly informative tour and presentation.
- proceeded to strengthen our relationship with Indigenous people to emphasize the voice of the lake and make lake stewardship even stronger—
  - WWMC Board of Directors adopted a Land Acknowledgement (e.g., scroll to bottom of [wwmc.ca](http://wwmc.ca) home page)
  - WWMC board members and members of the Wabamun Management Plan Implementation Steering Committee (Technical Sub-committee) met with Paul First Nation (PFN) members to discuss lake health perspectives and access to Wabamun Creek for outflow sampling.

We express deep appreciation and many thanks to Donny Rain (PFN Industry Relations representative) and Paul First Nation Elders Leonard Bearhead and Simon House for welcoming us at Paul First Nation, for facilitating a Wabamun Creek Weir site visit and for robust discussion on lake health concerns.

- launched the 2023-2024 WWMC Fundraising Campaign—to make a financial contribution to the WWMC go to [Get Involved](#). To all who have provided financial contribution to WWMC to date, thank you for supporting the work of the WWMC!
- organized and participated in the Bulrush Restoration Pilot Project planting day. For this pilot project, hardstem bulrush was planted at 4 different sites around Wabamun Lake—see related article in this newsletter).  
The second component of this project will be a **hands-on educational bioengineering workshop on October 28, 2023** at one of the Seba Beach bulrush planting sites. The workshop will entail a hands-on demonstration of riparian/shoreline enhancement using willow-staking (bioengineering technique) and increased awareness of aquatic and shoreline vegetation conservation and preservation. All stakeholders are invited to participate/attend this free workshop. Details will be forthcoming in a future email-out to members. This project is financially supported by the Alberta Conservation Association, Land Stewardship Centre of Canada and the Summer Village of Point Alison.
- continued stewardship engagement efforts:
  - held an outreach/information booth event in conjunction with the Dragon Boat Festival at the Wabamun Boat Launch.
  - renewed collaborative engagement with Stony Plain Fish and Game Association/Wabamun Gun Club (SPFGA/WGC); delivered a presentation to the SPFGA/WGC September general meeting entitled 'Wabamun Watershed Stewardship' which focused on increasing awareness of the WMP and implementation of the WMP.



**Bulrush seedlings ready for planting. Photo courtesy of Kristen Anderson**

## Annual General Meeting

We look forward to having all WWMC general members and corporate members attend the WWMC Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Wednesday October 18<sup>th</sup> @7:00 p.m. This AGM will be a hybrid meeting event (may attend in-person or via Zoom). If you are not already a WWMC member - go to [Get Involved](#).

To conclude, the need for a Wabamun Lake Watershed Management Plan has been evident for over 40 years. The 2020 WMP is an effective, realistic, and achievable guide for making positive things happen in the watershed. The implementation of this guide is driven by many individuals and collaborative partners. A heartfelt thank you to all the WWMC Board of Directors and Representatives, and collaborative partners for making good things happen in the watershed this past summer season. And finally, thank you to all the informed lake stewards out there, quietly and persistently caring about the lake and its watershed...You are appreciated!

## WWMC Bulrush Restoration Project

by Stan Franklin



Hardstem Bulrush-photo courtesy of Kristen Anderson

Bulrushes, have historically been described by cottagers as "reeds" or "weeds" that got in the way of their view of the shoreline, the lake and their recreational use of the lake. Hence in many parts of the lake bulrush beds were removed by regular cutting or manually digging out the plants. The unintended long-term consequence was the reduction in fish habitat, shoreline erosion, impact on water quality and increased presence of non-native invasive species.

With respect to shoreline erosion caused by fluctuations in lake level and ice movement, it is instructive to compare the condition of shorelines protected by bulrush beds versus those where the beds were removed. Regarding shoreline fish habitat that remained, the reclamation following the 2005 CN spill resulted in the removal and disturbance of a number of established bulrush beds on the north shore of the lake. Those beds will take years to re-establish and recover.

The WWMC considered the re-establishment of bulrush beds in areas where they had been removed to be the best natural long-term mitigation and the most cost-effective strategy for reducing shoreline erosion. It is also sound lake stewardship in respect of fish and waterfowl habitat, runoff filtration and management of invasive plant species.

The Bulrush Restoration Project was made possible by grants from the Land Stewardship Centre and the Alberta Conservation Association. This is a pilot project to determine the viability of small scale plantings in 4 different locations: 2 at Seba Beach, 1 at Sundance Meadows and 1 at Kapasiwin. Associated Environmental managed the project, and an experienced restoration contractor from Vulcan produced the bulrush plantings grown from seeds or collected from bulrushes transplanted from existing beds in 2022. Michael Short of "Let's Go Outdoors" nicely captured the scope of the project [in his video](#).



Transplanting bulrush-photo courtesy of Michael Short, "Let's Go Outdoors"

The plantings will be monitored and the viability will be assessed initially once the ice is off the lake in 2024 and the plants hopefully start to emerge. This monitoring will likely continue beyond 2024. Any potential expansion of the project will be considered when next year's results are observed and evaluated.

## Water Sampling

by Neil Fleming

As we transition from summer to winter, our water sampling excursions are on pause while we wait for the ice to form. Under the direction of the Alberta Lake Management Society (ALMS), we sample 4 times in the summer and 4 times in the winter. Data collected from these events is combined with data from over 100 other lakes in the province to monitor how our lakes are responding to changes, both seasonally and longer term in response to increased development, inflow of nutrients and other factors such as climate change.

We are fortunate to have the ALMS people doing this valuable work on our behalf. In September, members of the WWMC attended the ALMS workshop in Sylvan Lake, where speakers discussed a wide range of water related topics including Indigenous-based monitoring in the oil sands, managing invasive fish species in stormwater, the denial of a feedlot operation in the Pigeon Lake watershed, satellite monitoring of cyanobacteria, water diversion to Gull Lake, our own experiment with bulrush restoration and much more. Kudos to ALMS executive director Bradley Peter and his staff for a most informative 2 days. These workshops are open to anyone interested in learning more about our lakes. To learn more about [ALMS](#), and the work they do, you can check out [their website](#). The results of the water samplings are found under "Programs-Lakekeepers".

### Join Us

We like to use our water sampling outings to involve interested lake stakeholders to share our passion for the lake and our efforts to preserve it for future generations. Anyone interested in spending a day with us on the water (or on the ice) is welcome to join us by contacting [info@wwmc.ca](mailto:info@wwmc.ca). Get to know us a little better and see if there may be a fit for you in our organization. The CBC produced [a short video presentation](#) on our water sampling and bulrush restoration project for their website. There is also a link to a story on the satellite tracking of blue-green algae.

### Satellite Tracking

As we described in our Spring 2023 *Lakescape*, we have been assisting ALMS in sampling the water at the same time a satellite photographs the lake to establish the link between water color and species in the algal blooms. The CBC [posted an article on the satellite tracking program](#). As well ALMS has released some of the satellite photographs taken of Wabamun Lake at the time of water sampling to show how differently the algal concentrations appear from space. Here are a couple of examples:



Satellite photo of Wabamun Lake, June 28, 2023, showing spread of algal blooms. Photo courtesy of ALMS.



Satellite photo of Wabamun Lake, September 21, 2023, showing spread of algal blooms. Photo courtesy of ALMS.

## Membership Report

As we reported in the spring *Lakescape*, the WWMC adopted a new membership program this year to comply with our charity status obligations. As a result, all WWMC General Memberships must now be renewed annually (for free) by June 30<sup>th</sup>. Of the 250+ members on the old list on June 30, as of this writing, 100 have renewed their memberships until June 30, 2024. We also had 35 new members sign-up for a total of 135 general members, who are welcome to attend meetings, vote at the AGM, be eligible to serve on the WWMC Board of Directors and receive email notices about the lake and the WWMC (including *Lakescape*). If you haven't renewed your membership and still wish to do so, or want to become a new member, go to the [General Membership page](#) on the WWMC website, fill out and submit the application. Thank you for your support.

### Our Partners

The WWMC thanks the following governments and organizations for their support of specific WWMC projects:



### Donors

The WWMC gratefully thanks the following people who have donated to the WWMC to continue our work protecting the health of Wabamun Lake: Kelly & Mary Aldridge, Margaret Bakker, Todd Baldwin, Rob Cowley, Sandy Drummond, Carol & Keith Epton, Neil Fleming, Colleen & David Judge, Kobylko Family, Averie & Carman McNary, Don Meredith, Peter & Jordyce van Muyden, Julia & Tony Nelson, Cliff Richard, Robarts Family, Bill & Kate Russell, Denise & Bernie Wade. Edmonton Community Foundation: *Stan & Janet Franklin Fund, McIvor Kent Endowment Fund.*

**Remember:** Donors to the WWMC will now receive a tax receipt. Go to our [Donate page](#) for more information.

### Corporate Members

The WWMC thanks the following businesses, governments and organizations for joining the WWMC as corporate members and helping the council achieve its goals. Go to [Get Involved](#) for more information about Corporate Membership.

#### Gold Members



Wabamun



#### Silver Members



## Bronze Members

### SHORESIDE INN & SUITES

5100-51 Ave  
Box 300  
Wabamun, AB  
T0E 2K0  
Phone: 780-892-4773  
Cell: 780-903-7414  
Fax: 780-892-4614  
Website: [www.shoresidesuites.com](http://www.shoresidesuites.com)  
E-mail: [shoreside.reservations@shoresidesuites.com](mailto:shoreside.reservations@shoresidesuites.com)



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**Seba Beach Heritage Society, Wabamun ATB Financial, Wabamun Hotel**

**Special Note:** The WWMC would like to publicly acknowledge and give a huge shout out to one of our partner organizations for their generous contribution to WWMC earlier this year. Thank you to the **Summer Village of Point Alison** for your generous funding of WWMC projects.

