

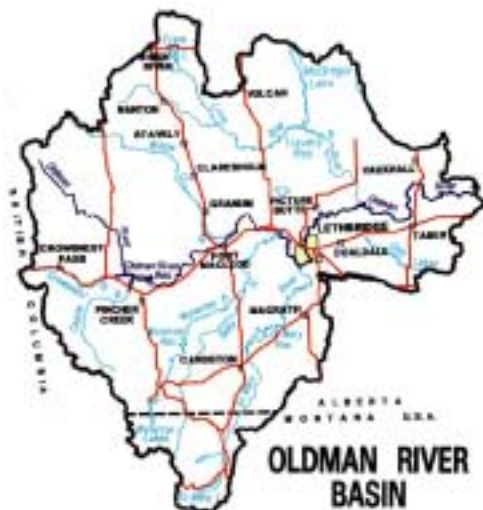


Oldman
Watershed
Council

ANNUAL REPORT 2009 - 2010

Our **mission** is to
maintain and **improve**
the Oldman River Watershed
through **partnerships,**
knowledge and the
implementation and **integration**

of sustainable watershed management
and land use practices.



OWC Highlights

The Oldman Watershed Council (OWC) is a not-for-profit organization working in partnership with communities and residents to improve the Oldman River Watershed. The Council consists of members who live or work within the Watershed, and these members provide leadership and guidance in watershed planning and management, water quality monitoring and stewardship promotion.

The Oldman River Watershed is located in the southwest corner of Southern Alberta. Its boundaries reach west along the border of British Columbia, north of High River, stretching east of Taber and reaching across the 49th parallel into the Montana, U.S.A. The size of the watershed is approximately 25000 km² and covers high alpine landscapes, rolling foothills, lush native grasslands, and productive agricultural land. There is one city in the watershed, the city of Lethbridge, and several towns and hamlets that are home to approximately 200,000 people.

The OWC is striving to manage the watershed responsibly in the face of a growing population and a vibrant economy. By partnering with stakeholders, we are working to plan for our watershed's future.

OWC Contact Information

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Table of Contents

Team Reports

State of the Watershed

Communications & Outreach

Rural

Urban

Visioning for the Integrated
Watershed Management Plan

Watershed Science

OWC Goals

Financial Highlights

Board & Staff

STATE OF THE WATERSHED TEAM

oversees the completion of the State of the Watershed (SOW) Report of the Oldman Basin. The purpose of this report is to gather information that will help us understand the current health of the Oldman River Watershed, to ensure collaborative and educated decision making and to identify future research. The Release of the SOW Report will help guide the OWC to create a stakeholder driven Integrated Watershed Management Plan.

SOW Highlights of 2009–2010

The SOW Team continued to work closely with AMEC Environmental to complete the State of the Watershed Report.

A summary document was created from the State of the Watershed Report, and the summary as well as a copy of the full report on CD, will be distributed at the OWC Annual General Meeting on April 22, 2010.

Communications & Outreach Activities

Communications and Outreach activities include updating the basin residents, partners and members of the OWC through the website, quarterly newsletter, Weekly Updates and Annual Report. They also strive to maintain consistency and coordination of Oldman Watershed Council messages and promotion.

The OWC designed a new display to be used to promote the Council at many different events we attend throughout the year.

The website redesign is almost complete and the launch date is planned for June.



RURAL TEAM

works directly with rural stakeholders in the Oldman Watershed by providing support to existing rural initiatives through forums within the watershed.

We provide support to rural watershed and landowner stewardship groups to help support workshops on topics such as riparian weed control and Best Management Practices.

Watershed Stewardship Tour

The OWC's Rural Team was bound and determined to travel throughout the entire Oldman basin for their first stewardship tour and amazingly they did just that! The tour showcased the diversity of stewardship initiatives implemented by landowners and Watershed Stewardship Groups throughout the basin. Tour stops included:

- Turin Hutterite Colony – Wintering Site Management
- Lower Little Bow – Watershed Evaluation of Beneficial Management Practices (WEBs) site
- Pincher Creek – Rural and Urban community driven watershed stewardship partnership
- Lunch – Drywood/Yarrow picnic area
- Drywood/Yarrow – An Ecosystem approach to stewardship
- Belly River – Watershed Legacy Program Pilot Project – Riparian fencing
- Lee Creek – Bioengineering – Biological control of invasive species
- BBQ

Watershed Legacy Program

The Watershed Legacy Program aims to provide the tools necessary for watershed stewardship groups and landowner cooperatives to take the next steps towards sustainable management of their land, operation, or more importantly the watersheds in which we all rely upon for our quality of life. These tools include funds for stewardship projects in one of 7 key areas as well as administrative, technical and communication assistance. This past year a great deal of planning and garnering support has taken place which will continue in 2010-11. A large fundraising effort is one of the crucial components needed to take this program forward.



Holding the Reins Summit

On March 2nd, 2010 the 4th Annual Holding the Reins: Landowners Summit for the Oldman Watershed was held in Fort Macleod with approximately 80 attendees.

The summit provided landowners and other basin residents an opportunity to hear about issues and initiatives in the Oldman basin.

This year's theme was "Restoration" and included presentations by:

- Jeff Porter – Landowner and Watershed Stewardship Group Updates
- Marilyn Neville – The role rough fescue plant communities play in hydrologic function
- Michael Gerrand – Digital Story Telling
- Dawn LaFleur and Kelly Cooley – Weeds Across Borders
- Jeff Porter and Tim Romanow – Bioengineering: the Alberta Experience
- David Hill – Water for Life, Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability

URBAN TEAM

promotes good water practices for the home and yard because the river starts in our own backyards. Herbicides, fertilizers and other chemicals used in yards are showing up in our waterways, affecting aquatic life as well as downstream users. They also promote water conservation and provide leadership in demonstrating good water management.

Prairie Urban Garden Project

The goal of the Prairie Urban Garden (PUG) project is to demonstrate the beauty and benefits of having a xeriscaped garden in Southern Alberta. Xeriscapes fit in with the dry prairie environment we depend on and allow homeowners to have beautiful yards. Over the past year the PUG subcommittee has promoted the concept of Xeriscaping through their website, brochures, signs and attending events (i.e., 2009 Lethbridge Home and Garden Show, Communities in Bloom Tradeshow). Visit www.prairieurbangarden.ca for more information.

Lethbridge Home and Garden Show 2010

The Urban Team organizes a booth at the Lethbridge Home and Garden Show every March. This year the PUG project was showcased and the displays featured good gardening practices such as using less water and chemicals, composting, using rain barrels and choosing native plants. There was a tremendous amount of interest in the topic - our sign up sheet, asking people if they were interested in attending a prairie urban garden tour or a Xeriscape workshop, had over a 100 names on it by the end of the show! Over 20 volunteers spent time at the booth, many from the Southern Alberta Group for the Environment and OWC. Thank you very much for your help!

Municipal Relations

The Urban Team provided input to support City of Lethbridge Council environmental policy and plans. The Urban Team assisted the Environmental Subcommittee of City Council with water related initiatives (i.e. water conservation or stormwater quality) and provided input on the new drainage bylaw which was passed June 29, 2009. This bylaw applies to everyone and regulates what can and cannot be put into the stormwater system.



Prairie Urban Garden Tour

The PUG sub-committee hosted a garden tour June 27th 2009 to showcase a variety of Xeriscaped gardens in the city. The day started off with a presentation by local xeriscape expert Steve MacRae in his garden. After the presentation people were free to go to which ever gardens they wanted at their own leisure. Over 70 people partook in this event!



Yellow Fish Road

This program increases community awareness that storm water drains convey water directly into the Oldman River and aims to reduce the disposal of harmful substances into storm drains. In partnership with the City of Lethbridge and Trout Unlimited youth volunteers paint yellow fish symbols next to storm drains and distribute door hangers to nearby households. This reminds residents that anything on the street or dumped into storm drains ends up in their local water body. In the summer of 2009 approximately 100 storm drains were painted and over 250 fish shaped door hangers were distributed. This program will continue in 2010.

Home & Garden Show Display Banner

Prairie Urban Garden
www.prairieurbangarden.ca

Growing Beautiful Gardens in a Semi-Arid Environment

XERISCAPE

... a yard or garden that follows certain principles of being practical and environmentally friendly

7 PRINCIPLES of xeriscaping

1. PLANNING IS CRUCIAL
 - Know your site
 - Know your climate
 - Group plants by water requirements
2. MAXIMIZE THE SOIL
 - Mulch organic matter
3. CHOOSE PRACTICAL, LOW WATER PLANTS
 - Choose grass like varieties - but avoid complete avoidance
4. WATER EFFICIENTLY
 - Group by water needs - deep water drainage - water to root of the - use mulch
5. SELECT APPROPRIATE PLANTS
 - Use drought tolerant to native plants - use native plants - group by water needs
6. USE MULCHING
 - Mulch to conserve water - prevent evaporation
7. MAXIMIZE YOUR WATER USE
 - Pump, Waterwise, Rainwater

OW - OILY WASTE
NO OILY WASTE
NO OILY WASTE

VISIONING FOR THE INTEGRATED WATERSHED MANAGEMENT TEAM

have completed the visioning process for the integrated watershed management plan. The VIWMP will provide watershed residents with a set of qualitative outcomes guiding future activity and planning in the watershed.

An Integrated Watershed Management Plan sets watershed scale outcomes and provides recommendations to decision makers. The OWC wants to ensure all facets of the watershed – environment, social, cultural, and economic – are represented and considered in the Integrated Watershed Management Plan. The State of the Watershed (SOW) will provide the scientific knowledge for the plan; however the OWC would like to include the local knowledge and experience of watershed residents and stakeholders. To achieve this the OWC formed the Integrated Watershed Management Plan Visioning Team (VIWMP) to oversee the process of developing a community Vision statement and qualitative outcomes. Stakeholder engagement was an important part of this process which included: 37 one-on-one interviews, 50 online questionnaire responses, 155 Delphi survey response, 65 community workshop participants, 16 post-secondary workshop participants; 33 youth (grades 7-12). The final Vision statement and qualitative outcomes have been developed. For a complete overview of the process see, Oldman Watershed Planning Vision: A Process Summary.

The OWC also hosted a Youth Forum where 33 students from around the watershed joined us for 2 days. Students learned about the OWC and various watershed issues, as well as toured water related sites. It was exciting to see the students learning about the watershed and having fun.

Developing the Integrated Watershed Management Plan is the next step for the OWC; it will involve setting priorities for the watershed. The scientific knowledge from the SOW will be combined with the local knowledge from the Visioning process to develop a plan that meets our needs. The Integrated Watershed Management Plan Team will work with the Board and watershed residents throughout the process.



OWC Youth Forum



Community Workshops



WATERSHED SCIENCE TEAM

facilitates discussion among agencies involved with research and monitoring on the aquatic environment and related land use activities in the basin.

It promotes the diffusion of knowledge by sharing science results through tours, scientific forum and other means. They also provide opportunities for consultation and collaboration with agencies working on water related issues in the basin.

Watershed Science Tour

Many of our basin residents are unaware of the vast amount and diversity of research currently being conducted in the Oldman River Watershed. The Watershed Science Team decided they wanted to give people the opportunity to see some of these projects first hand by getting out in the field where all the action happens.

For their first ever Watershed Science Tour they selected projects around the Pincher Creek; tour stops included:

Piikani First Nation Water Treatment and Municipal Waste Management
– Floyd Provost, Director Piikani Public Works

Water Quality Monitoring Demonstration, Summerview Bridge
– Kristi Bonham, Alberta Environment

Indianfarm Creek Beneficial Management Practices Evaluation Project
– Clair Fitzpatrick, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development

Waterborne Human Pathogens: Campylobacter, Pincher Creek
– Dr. Doug Inglis, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

Didymo Algae, Oldman Dam – Michael Bryski, Alberta Environment

Flow Monitoring Demonstration, Oldman Dam
– Salina Perry and Mark Potvin, Alberta Environment

Riparian Bird Habitat Issues, Fort Macleod – Andy Hurly, University of Lethbridge



Financial Highlights

In-Kind Contributions

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada – PFRA	\$5,000.00	Partners in Habitat Development	\$1,300.00
Agri-Environment Services Branch (AESB)	\$750.00	Parks Division – Tourism, Parks and Recreation	\$2,786.35
Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development	\$129,910.60	Pheasants Forever	\$200.00
Alberta Conservation Association	\$750.00	Piikani Public Works	\$1,573.22
Alberta Conservation Team, AENV	\$550.00	Southern Alberta Group for the Environment (SAGE)	\$5,550.00
Alberta Environment	\$129,450.00	Southwestern Alberta Conservation Partnership	\$10,000.00
Alberta Health Services	\$2,300.00	St. Mary River Irrigation District	\$665.15
Alberta Pork Producers	\$1,622.20	Taber Irrigation District	\$4,487.10
Alberta Sustainable Resource Development	\$1,000.00	Town of Cardston	\$250.00
Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation/Parks Division	\$1,750.00	Town of Coaldale	\$250.00
Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society	\$2,500.00	University of Lethbridge	\$6,670.68
Cardston County	\$12,500.00	Waterton Lakes National Park	\$150.00
City of Lethbridge	\$7,683.33		
Communities in Bloom	\$1,250.00	TOTAL	\$380,795.02
County of Lethbridge	\$2,750.00		
Cows and Fish	\$300.00		
Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada	\$13,060.10		
Ducks Unlimited Canada	\$1,470.20		
Helen Schuler Nature Centre	\$100.00		
Mayors & Reeves Association of Southwest Alberta	\$3,008.05		
Member at Large	\$20,008.05		
MULTISAR	\$5,000.00		
Natural Resources Conservation Board	\$200.00		
Nature Conservancy of Canada			

Cash Contributions

Alberta Beef Producers	\$3,000.00
Alberta Environment	\$144,500.00
City of Lethbridge	\$25,647.60
County of Lethbridge	\$3,090.60
Lethbridge Northern Irrigation District	\$2,500.00
Magrath Irrigation District	\$200.00
MD of Pincher Creek	\$992.70
MD of Ranchland	\$250.00
MD of Taber	\$2,014.20
MD of Willow Creek	\$1,601.10
Municipality of Crowsnest Pass	\$1,724.70
Raymond Irrigation District	\$1,234.68
Ronald Winter	\$100.00
SMRID - AGM coffee break - \$360	\$360.00
St. Mary River Irrigation District	\$4,990.89
Taber Irrigation District	\$2,302.94
Town of Cardston	\$1,073.40
Town of Coaldale	\$1,853.10
Town of Coalhurst	\$456.90
Town of Picture Butte	\$477.60
Town of Vulcan	\$582.00
Village of Cowley	\$65.70

TOTAL

\$199,018.11

OWC Goals

The Oldman Watershed Council has developed a set of goals outlining an iterative process to understand, inform and engage residents in the watershed while seeking out and achieving key environmental outcomes.

Our five goals are:

1. We understand our watershed.
2. Residents are well informed and actively engaged.
3. Basin stakeholders have defined the desired outcomes for the Oldman Watershed that will form the basis for the Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP).
4. The Oldman Watershed Council and stakeholders put into action the capacity and commitment to achieve defined outcomes.
5. Practices that are beneficial to the health and function of the watershed are adopted.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND STAFF RETREAT – JANUARY 2010



Back row: Andy Hurly, Randall Wolf Tail, Terry Kerkhoff, Bill Dolan, Gerhardt Hartman, Jeff Carlson, Reed Davis
Front Row: Cheryl Fujikawa, Keith Francis, Andrea Kalischuk, Stephanie Palechek, Bev Bellamy, Leta Pezderic
Missing: Anne Stevick, Bruce Konynenbelt, Glen French, Sean Robison, Shane Petry