



watershed management – watershed health



Photo Credit: Rochelle Coffey

# OLDMAN WATERSHED COUNCIL

## ANNUAL REPORT 2012 - 2013

# CONTENTS

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## **About the OWC**

- Mission, Vision, Long Term Goals, Three Year Strategic Goals p 1
- OWC Milestones p 3

## **Board of Directors & Staff**

p 4

## **Financial & In-Kind Donations**

p 6

## **Team Highlights**

- Communications & Outreach Activities p 8
- Rural Team p 10
- Urban Team p 12
- Watershed Science Team p 14
- Watershed Planning Team p 16

## **Partnerships & Projects**

p 18

## **Looking Ahead**

p 20

# ABOUT THE OWC

The OWC is one of Alberta's 11 Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils (WPACs) designated by the Government of Alberta to work directly with local communities to assess the condition of watersheds and prepare and implement plans to address issues. WPACs bring people together to find practical solutions to environmental issues that also consider social, cultural and economic needs of communities.

## Mission

Our vision is a healthy, resilient watershed where people, wildlife and habitat thrive.

## Vision

The Oldman Watershed Council (OWC) is a not-for-profit organization of southern Albertans that maintains and improves the Oldman watershed by:

- improving and sharing knowledge
- building and strengthening stakeholder partnerships
- developing and implementing integrated land and water plans
- promoting and facilitating community and institutional action and stewardship

## Long Term Goals

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.

## Three Year Strategic Goals

1. The OWC earns recognition for its expertise and leadership in the Oldman Watershed.
2. The OWC is filling important knowledge gaps.
3. The OWC optimizes resources to carry out its mission.
4. Actions and activities of the board, staff and working teams are aligned in addressing the OWC's priorities.
5. The OWC is addressing the 8 priorities set for the Oldman watershed.

**2010\***  
Oldman  
Watershed  
Planning  
Vision: A  
Process  
Summary

**2011\***  
Oldman  
Watershed  
Planning  
Priorities:  
Process  
Summary  
and Rec-  
ommenda-  
tions

Priorities  
for the  
Oldman  
Watershed:  
Promoting  
Action to  
maintain  
and im-  
prove our  
watershed

Action plan completed to achieve Goal 1 of the IWMP.

Willow Creek Watershed Aquifer Mapping and Groundwater Management Planning Study completed.

Grass to Xeriscape Cost-Benefit Analysis and Qualitative Study completed.

Deep Roots educational videoconference to showcase native prairie ecosystems in partnership with Prairie Conservation Forum.

34 risks were identified and prioritized for IWMP.\*

Risks were then grouped and formed into 8 goals.\*

First Research and Monitoring Project Directory created.

First Water Conservation, Efficiency and Productivity Planning Workshops held for municipalities.

Wetland Interpretive signs installed at Birds of Prey Centre in Coaldale.

First Watershed Science Tour held.

First Watershed Stewardship Tour highlighting landowner projects.

Prairie Urban Garden begins to promote xeriscaping principles. First garden tour held.

Caring for Our Watershed Youth Contest initiated in partnership with Agrium.

First Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup held in partnership with Helen Schuler Nature Centre.

Headwaters Indicators Project completed.

Action plan underway to achieve goal 3 from IWMP.

Crowsnest Watershed Aquifer Mapping and Groundwater Management Planning Study completed.

Lethbridge Stormwater Outfalls Monitoring Project completed.

First "Xeriscape Your Yard" workshop hosts 14 participants.

2012 Research and Monitoring Directory updated.

Oldman River State of the Watershed Report completed.

Created the community vision for the Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP)\*.

Watershed Legacy Program was created to provide financial and technical assistance to landowners.

First Green List awards held recognizing environmental actions in Lethbridge in partnership with Lethbridge Environmental Awareness Team.

First Annual Holding the Reins: Landowners Summit held.

Yellow Fish Road stormwater education program is started in Oldman watershed.

First Watershed Science Forum held.

First Lethbridge Home & Garden Show booth to share information about good backyard practices.

Wetland Interpretive signs at SunRidge - Lethbridge's green neighbourhood in partnership with City of Lethbridge.

OWC officially incorporated as a not-for-profit society.

Lethbridge Storm Water Education Program - Design and Evaluation Report completed.

# OWC Milestones

Aerial photo of Oldman River - Credit: Dan Johnson

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS & STAFF

## Academia

Andrew Hurly - Vice Chair

## Agriculture Producers

Ryan Kasko

## Environmental Non-Government

Cheryl Fujikawa - Treasurer  
Richard Burke

## First Nations

Randall Wolf Tail - Piikani  
Paulette Fox - Blackfoot

## Federal Government

Shane Petry

## Health

Robert Rippin

## Industry

Kelly Scott

## Irrigators

Keith Francis

## Member at Large

Tony Bruder  
Shirley Pickering  
Anne Stevick  
LeRon Torrie

## Municipalities

Terry Kerkhoff - Chair  
Jeff Coffman

## Provincial Government

Bill Dolan  
Ian Dyson

## STAFF

Shannon Frank - Executive Director  
Andrea Vaxvick - Program Coordinator  
Bev Bellamy - Administrative Assistant  
Connie Simmons - Planning Manager  
Leta Pezderic - maternity leave



## Board and Staff Retreat - January 2013

From left to right:

Andrew Hurlly, Robert Rippin, Ryan Kasko, Bill Dolan, Connie Simmons, Anne Stevick, Ian Dyson,  
Bev Bellamy, Richard Burke, Cheryl Fujikawa, Andrea Vaxvick, Shannon Frank, Terry Kerkhoff, Keith Francis

Missing: Randall Wolf Tail, Shirley Pickering, Jeff Coffman, Paulette Fox, Tony Bruder, LeRon Torrie

# FINANCIAL & IN-KIND DONATIONS

## Financial

Alberta Beef Producers	5000	Rochelle Coffey	350
Alberta Ecotrust	15,000	Shell Canada Ltd.	20,000
Alberta Irrigation Projects Assoc.	500	St. Mary River Irrigation Dist.	4224
Anne Stevick	300	Taber Irrigation District	2303
Anonymous	25	Terry & Virginia Grinevitch	100
Cheryl Fujikawa	63	Town of Cardston	1074
City of Lethbridge	26,722	Town of Claresholm	1110
County of Lethbridge	3091	Town of Coalhurst	586
Drama Nutz Production	451	Town of Nanton	637
EBA, A Tetra Tech Company	100	Town of Picture Butte	497
Government of Alberta	380,000	Town of Pincher Creek	1106
Greg Bialobzyski	25	Town of Stavely	149
Joanna Fraser	65	University of Lethbridge	500
MD of Ranchland	250	Village of Barnwell	244
MD of Taber	2014	Village of Barons	98
MD of Willow Creek	1601	Village of Carmangay	78
Raymond Irrigation District	300	Village of Cowley	100
Shannon Frank	100	Village of Nobleford	207
		<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$468,970</b>





## In-Kind

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada	\$6,165	Lethbridge College	\$8284
Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development	\$103,750	Mayors & Reeves Assoc. of Southwest Alberta	\$5,729
Alberta Conservation Association	\$1,275	Members at Large	\$23,789
Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Dev.	\$54,849	Nature Conservancy of Canada	\$2,4491
Alberta Health Services	\$8,184	Piikani Public Works	\$1,021
Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation	\$9,065	Southern Alberta Group for the Environment	\$20,255
Atco Power	\$772	Southwestern Alberta Conservation Partnership	\$70,150
Blood Tribe	\$381	Taber Irrigation District	\$6,792
City of Lethbridge	\$9,829	Town of Cardston	\$4,484
County of Lethbridge	\$2,541	Trout Unlimited Canada	\$3,969
Ducks Unlimited Canada	\$163	University of Lethbridge	\$6,446
Fisheries and Oceans Canada	\$600	Water Matters Society of Alberta	\$100,000
Kasko Cattle Co. Ltd.	\$1,000		

**Total: \$473,984**

## Summary of Expenses

Staff and Operations	\$291,935
Planning, Outreach and Stewardship	\$87,953
Science and Research	\$142,308
Partnerships	\$12,500

**Thank you to all of our  
donors and volunteers for  
their time and support on  
behalf of the OWC!**

# TEAM HIGHLIGHTS

## COMMUNICATIONS & OUTREACH ACTIVITIES



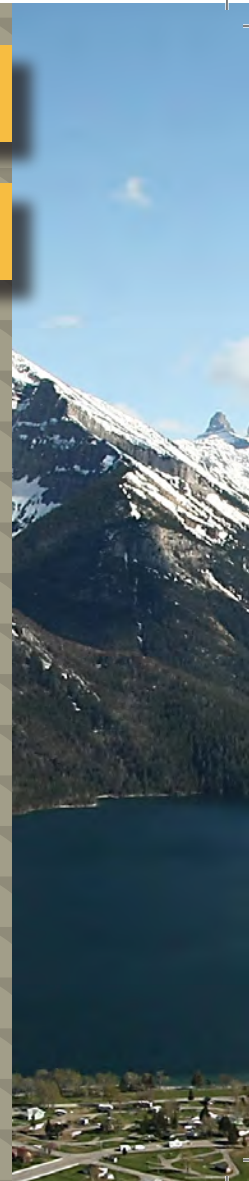
Word on the Street Festival



South Country Fair

### Accomplishments this year:

- E-newsletter emailed to 600 subscribers each month.
- Events advertised in printed media.
- Media releases distributed for all events and major accomplishments leading to coverage 15 separate times.
- 18 presentations given to various groups.
- Attended and set up informational displays at 33 events.
- Website and Facebook page maintained.
- Annual Report completed.



## 2012 Annual General Meeting Highlights

- Celebration of the source of our water with the theme “Headwaters: Source to Tap”.
- 3 Members at Large were elected to the Board of Directors – Anne Stevick, Tony Bruder and LeRon Torrie.
- Each OWC Team presented their accomplishments from the past year.
- Departing Board Members Rodney Cyr, Brian Valgardson and Jeff Carlson were thanked for their service on the Board of Directors.
- Audited financial statement presented by YPM and bylaw changes adopted.



Lorne Fitch, Keynote Speaker

- Dinner, raffle and silent auction raised \$2300 for headwaters stewardship.
- Inspiring talk from Lorne Fitch highlighted the tremendous value of the headwaters.
- Lethbridge East MLA Bridget Pastoor spoke about the importance of OWC’s work and value as a partner with the Government of Alberta.



# RURAL TEAM

## Watershed Legacy Program

- Provides funding for watershed stewardship projects.
- Provides administrative, technical and communication assistance.
- Funded 12 watershed stewardship projects:
  - 2 community weed pulls:
    - Municipality of Crowsnest Pass,
    - Pincher Creek Watershed Group (Blueweed Blitz)
  - 5 off-stream watering sites to encourage cattle away from streams
  - 2 bioengineering projects to reduce erosion
  - 2 riparian fencing projects to prevent cattle from accessing streams and riparian areas
  - 1 watershed stewardship group start up barbeque: Lee Creek Watershed Group



Off stream watering site





Glen and Kelly Hall, Keynote Speakers

## Holding the Reins

- 120 people attended the 7th annual event held in Fort Macleod that offers attendees insight into rural issues and opportunities in the watershed and their impacts on agricultural producers.
- Landowner and watershed stewardship groups gave updates on successes and struggles over the year.
- 2013 theme was "Fire Impacts and Stewardship in the Watershed".
- Keynote speakers: Glen and Kelly Hall, Stavely area ranchers who have implemented sustainable farming practices on their land for over 20 years.
  
- Topics included:
  - The Lost Creek Wildfire: Southern Rockies Watershed Project - effects of fire on water quantity and quality and aquatic ecosystem health.
  - Granum and Milk River fire impacts.
  - The Highwood Management Plan: Public Advisory Committee - helping identify and address local watershed issues to improve management of the broader Oldman River watershed.
  - Protecting watersheds and ecosystems for future generations through stewardship and sustainable farming and ranching practices .
  - Stewardship stories, told both verbally and through "Digital Stories".



# URBAN TEAM



## Prairie Urban Garden

Demonstrates the beauty and benefits of having a prairie urban garden with native and drought tolerant plants that require less or no water, fertilizers and pesticides once established and in comparison to traditional lawn.

- 14 people attended “Xeriscape Your Yard” Workshop in March to learn how to test soils from their yard for pH, salinity and texture and tips for planning and designing their yard, amending their soil, selecting plants, mulching, watering and maintenance.
- Fabricated 15 “Welcome to My Prairie Urban Garden” signs and 3 sets of interpretive signage for community xeriscapes.



## Applied Study

Applied study student Kyra Dziedzic, completed “Grass to Xeriscape Cost Benefit Analysis and Qualitative Study” surveying several garden owners on the difference in water, maintenance, fertilizer and pesticide inputs in their yard conversion from traditional lawn to xeriscape.



## Municipal Awareness/ Education

- Educates residents on the negative impacts of invasive plant species on our watershed and what can be done to manage them.
- Held 2 knapweed pulls in Cottonwood Park - 32 volunteers pulled 48 bags of knapweed.





## Lethbridge Home and Garden Show Yellow Fish Road

- This year's theme: "This is our Oldman Watershed: We are all Connected!"
- Engaged hundreds of people, covering topics on stormwater quality and programs, where our water goes and comes from, what a watershed is, the Oldman and Canada's watersheds and xeriscaping.
- Distributed 100 of the "50 Best Plants for Prairie Urban Gardens in Southern Alberta" booklets, and 200 of "The 7 Principles of Xeriscaping" posters and many other handouts.
- 1 rain barrel and 1 composter were awarded as prizes.
- 48 people signed up for info on the 2013 Prairie Urban Garden tour .
- Recruited at least 1 school from Taber for the Yellow Fish Road program.

## Lethbridge Stormwater Outfalls Monitoring

- See under Watershed Science Team

Youth volunteers paint "yellow fish" symbols next to storm drains and distribute fish-shaped brochures to nearby households, to raise awareness about stormwater pollution and remind people that anything that enters storm drains ends up in the local water body untreated.

In 2012 – 2013, the following communities participated:

**Lethbridge** - 384 stormdrains painted by over 200 youth, 1108 door hangers distributed.

**Cardston** - 110 stormdrains painted by volunteer fire department.

**Municipality of Crowsnest Pass** – 5 storm drains painted by 12 volunteers, 35 door hangers distributed.

**Fort Macleod** - 10 storm drains painted by 10 youth, 40 door hangers distributed.

# WATERSHED SCIENCE TEAM

## 2012 Science Forum & Tour

A Forum and Tour to highlight research in the Oldman Watershed.

- Nearly 90 people attended the Forum, 40 people attended the Tour.
- The Forum and Tour offered a great avenue for researchers, students and the general public to network and learn about the health of their watershed.
- 12 presentations were given and 4 posters were displayed at the Forum.
- Attendees of the Forum learned about:
  - why riparian health matters to a Westslope Cutthroat Trout,
  - stream temperature response to environmental change,
  - pesticides in Lethbridge stormwater,
  - the water quality of Alberta irrigation districts in 2011-2012, regarding pesticides and much more . . .



Participants of the tour learned about:

- the Oldman Dam,
- the First Nations' traditional connection to the headwaters,
- the Lost Creek wildfire: impacts of wildfire and post-burn salvage logging on water quality and aquatic ecology,
- testing watershed assessment procedures as an approach to manage cumulative effects on water values in the eastern slopes and the impacts of stream channelization on its aquatic inhabitants.







## Lethbridge Stormwater Outfalls Monitoring

From April to September 2012:

- 9 Lethbridge stormwater outfalls monitored for nutrients, pesticides and bacteria.
- Results compared to study of Lethbridge outfalls in 2000-2002 by Karen A. Saffran.
- Research will continue in 2013 and likely 2014.
- Study provides data to better inform, guide and improve Urban and Science Team programs targeted at educating about and taking action to improve water quality.
- Data from study will be used in Urban Team's resurvey in 2014, of Lethbridge residents' lawn watering habits and knowledge about stormwater and water quality (initial survey done in 2004).

### Crowsnest River Watershed Aquifer Mapping and Groundwater Management Planning Study

- Aquifers and geology were mapped and a preliminary analysis of existing data was completed.
- Based on the limited data available, the study shows that estimated recharge is greater than current use and groundwater quality varies and is linked to the geology of the area.
- One of the key objectives for the study was to develop recommendations for a long term monitoring plan to fill the groundwater knowledge gap.
- Consultant recommended five monitoring locations as well as management actions such as improving the Government of Alberta's current data collection and coordination system and promoting groundwater stewardship to well owners.

### Research and Monitoring Project Directory

Features continuing and current surface and ground water research and monitoring projects occurring in the Oldman watershed .

Hired Research Assistant, Jenice Smith, to update projects already in directory and add new projects.

39 projects updated, 27 new projects added .

# WATERSHED PLANNING TEAM

The Watershed Planning Team began the first year of work to address IWMP Goal 3: “Manage and protect the integrity of headwaters and source waters through the initiation of a Headwaters Action Plan”. This work included:

## Scientific assessments of headwaters health:

- **Headwaters Indicators Report** – a focused assessment of headwaters health at 4th order sub-watershed scale, using 5 indicators of watershed integrity.
- **Historical Trends mapping** - a cumulative effects assessment of development in the Oldman watershed from 1905 - 2010.

## Community Engagement:

- worked in partnership with Water Matters on two phases of ‘Source to Tap’ community meetings (8-9 communities in each phase) in or near the Headwaters area to hear public perspectives on headwaters health and priorities for stewardship action and integrate this information into the Headwaters Action Plan process.



Source to Tap - Crowsnest Pass



Source to Tap - Springpoint Hall

**First Nations Engagement:** sent an invitation to participate in the Headwaters Action Plan to the Piikani and Kainai First Nations. The OWC wishes to foster a good relationship with First Nations to gain a deeper understanding of the importance of water and the headwaters to their culture and communities.

**Stakeholder Engagement:** creation of the Partnership Advisory Network, a multi-sector/stakeholder group with interest in the health of the headwaters and who are open to participating in the Headwaters Action Plan process.

**Engagement of the Partnership Advisory Network included:**

- **Orientation meeting** to the Headwaters Action Plan – January 23, 2013.
- **Headwaters Indicators Forum** – February 5, 2013 - a review of scientific assessments and concerns related to headwaters health in the headwaters area.
- Development of the **first iteration** of the **Headwaters Action Plan** – an appreciative enquiry and inventory of the diversity of stewardship action being undertaken now for headwaters health - to be used as a platform to build on in successive years of stewardship effort in the Headwaters Action Plan process (March-May 2013).

The Watershed Planning Team also integrated IWMP Goal 1: Improve the understanding and strengthen the commitment of residents to the health of the Oldman watershed into the work of the Headwaters Action Plan process throughout 2012-13.



Source to Tap - Pincher Creek

# PARTNERSHIPS & PROJECTS



## Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup

- A one day garbage pickup event held every September to clean up the Nature Reserve along the Oldman River in Lethbridge, organized in partnership with the Helen Schuler Nature Centre.
- Removing litter is important because wildlife can be trapped or injured by it - our City looks better when it's clean too!
- In 2012, 20 volunteers removed 8 full garbage bags of litter, several tires and other larger items.
- Among other valuable volunteers were kayakers from High Level Canoes and Kayaks and members of the Myles family with their wetsuits to clean up items in the river and islands in the middle of the river.



Cassandra Schinkel, 2013 Award Recipient

## Caring for Our Watersheds

- A youth contest sponsored by Agrium and promoted by the OWC.
- Youth answer the question "what can you do to improve your watershed?" by proposing a project that they could accomplish.
- Winners and their schools receive a cash reward and funds to implement their project.
- In 2013, Cassandra Schinkel, Grade 9 LCI student from Lethbridge won 3rd place in the grade 7-12 category.

### **Prairie Conservation Forum**

- OWC participates on the Education Team instilling an appreciation of grasslands in Albertans, especially youth.
- A training program was developed and piloted for the delivery of the PCF videoconference presentation, “Deep Roots: Exploring Alberta’s Grasslands” and activities for use with classrooms and youth groups were developed.

### **Environmental Awareness Team (EAT)**

- Formerly the Lethbridge Environment Week Committee, this team organizes the Lethbridge Green List that recognizes individuals, organizations and businesses taking green actions for the environment.
- Promotes events held in Lethbridge during Environment Week to engage people in environmental activities.
- 8 individuals, 5 organizations and 13 businesses nominated to 2012 Green List.
- Green List Celebration Event held in October 2012 to recognize nominees.
- 65 people attended the celebration which included MC Dory Rossiter, a keynote presentation from Lori Harasem on climate change and displays from environmental groups.

### **This year the OWC supported many events and programs:**

• A permanent riparian exhibit at the Helen Schuler Nature Centre	5,000
• Alberta Invasive Species Council outreach and education	1,000
• Prairie Conservation Forum Operations	1,000
• Edacity Youth Science Program	500
• Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry Prairie Northern Chapter conference	250
• Walk to the Headwaters celebration coordinated by Castle Crown Wilderness Coalition	2,500
• Prairie Conservation and Endangered Species Conference	250
• Landscapes Analysis Literature Review	2,000
<b>Total OWC contributions to partnerships</b>	<b>\$12,500</b>



Photo Credit: Brian Coffey

# LOOKING AHEAD

The OWC is looking forward to these events and accomplishments in the next fiscal year. Stay connected through our newsletter, website ([www.oldmanbasin.org](http://www.oldmanbasin.org)) and Facebook page!

## Watershed Planning Team

Continue working with the Partners Advisory Network (PAN) and community to build onto the Headwaters Action Plan with more actions, specific environmental targets and policy solutions.

## Science Team

- Science Tour – attend the much anticipated Science Tour in September, 2013.
- Research and Monitoring Project Directory – have any projects for the directory? Let us know.

## Rural Team

- Watershed Legacy Program – project applications are due by February 1, 2014.

## Urban Team

- Prairie Urban Garden Tour - Saturday, June 22. Come out to see beautiful xeriscapes in Lethbridge that use native and/or drought tolerant plants to conserve water and reduce or eliminate the use of pesticides and fertilizers – aesthetically pleasing for us, good for the environment!
- Xeriscape Your Yard Workshop, March, 2014. Attend the workshop to learn more about what you need to keep in mind when converting your yard to a prairie urban oasis!
- Knapweed Pull - Join us at the Cottonwood Park on July 4 to help annihilate knapweed from this beautiful upstream park.
- Yellow Fish Road – need something interactive and educational to do this summer? Get involved in the Yellow Fish Road program to raise awareness about stormwater pollution in your neighborhood!

**For more information or to get involved in Team events contact Leta, Program Coordinator at 403-381-5801.**

*The OWC has accomplished a great deal in the past year because of the support we received.  
Please show your support by making a donation of your own at [www.oldmanbasin.org](http://www.oldmanbasin.org).*

*Thank you!*



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