



# ANNUAL REPORT 2015-2016



OLDMAN  
WATERSHED  
COUNCIL

## Note from the Executive Director



It has been a year of growth and change for OWC and exciting to see our hard work paying off. About three years ago we embarked on a new path focusing on organizational sustainability and our two completed action plans. We have made big strides in diversifying our funding sources, setting up efficient internal systems, expanding our outreach and solidifying our role as an information hub and facilitator of consensus.

We also have 3 new permanent staff bringing fresh perspectives and energy to the OWC and the strength of our team is second to none.

As of January 2016 we have a new downtown Lethbridge office in the heart of our largest community where partners and volunteers feel welcome to stop by anytime and where we are able to reach new audiences.

We are excited about the opportunities that come with having a space and look forward to building 'the Hub' into a household name and go to place for environmental information and action.

The Integrated Watershed Management Plan continues to guide our work and we are proud that we, in partnership with our community, have been able to deliver major accomplishments on our Goal 1 Action Plan about communications and outreach and Goal 3 Action Plan about protecting the headwaters. As you read on you will see the breadth of important activities underway right now.

I am most inspired by the diversity of people who are dedicated to protecting the land and water that supports our culture, economy and society. It is clear to me that nearly everyone cares very much about the watershed and once armed with knowledge and inspired by stories, will become ambassadors to influence their peers, thus building more stewards over time.

At the heart of what we do is connect people so we all see that others are not that different from ourselves. We all have a big impact on the watershed but we can also all have a big positive impact to keep what's healthy, restore what's not and minimize impacts that can't be avoided.

By taking collective action we can achieve a lot more but this is not easy to do when the issues are contentious and opinions are polarized.

That's why the work of Watershed Planning and Advisory Council's is so important, we build consensus around practical solutions and lead the way to demonstrate that there is common ground that can be worked on together.

A huge thank you to all our partners, donors and volunteers who make our work possible. Without you we wouldn't be able to maintain and improve the watershed for current residents and future generations. Your time, energy and enthusiasm as engaged citizens is making a difference and does not go unnoticed. *Keep up the great work!*

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**Doug Kaupp**  
City of Lethbridge  
Chair



**Andrew Hurly**  
Academia  
Vice-Chair



**Claudia Sheedy**  
Federal Government  
Treasurer



**Anne Stevick**  
Wildlife Conservation  
Organizations  
Resigned Treasurer



**Loreena Brave Rock**  
Member at Large



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Municipal Districts  
and Counties



**Cheryl Fujikawa**  
Environmental  
Non-Government



**Terry Kerkhoff**  
Member at Large



**Christina Lam**  
Member at Large



**Blair Painter**  
Towns/villages/hamlets



**Shane Porter**  
Member at Large



**Robert Rippin**  
Health



**Kelly Scott**  
Industry



**Heather Sinton**  
Provincial Government



**LeRon Torrie**  
Resigned



**Martin Van Diemen**  
Irrigation



**Randall WolfTail**  
First Nations

Oldman Watershed Council  
**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
2015-2016



**Shannon Frank**  
Executive Director  
August 2010 - present



**Anna Garleff**  
Communications  
Specialist  
February 2014 - present



**Larin Guenther**  
Planning Manager  
November 2015 - present



**Sofie Forsstrom**  
Education Program  
Manager  
November 2015 - present



**Taren Hager**  
Office Manager  
March 2016 - present



**Cody Spencer**  
Watershed Legacy Program Manager  
January 2016 - present

Oldman Watershed Council  
**CURRENT  
STAFF**  
2015-2016



**Bev Bellamy**  
Administrative Assistant  
February 2009  
- February 2016



**Pauline Smith**  
Administrative Assistant  
February - April 2016



**Connie Simmons**  
Planning Manager  
July 2012-July 2015



**Mairin Gettman**  
Communications Intern  
September  
- December 2015



**Jayme Cabrera Lopez**  
Communications Intern  
September 2014 - June 2015



**Riley Sawyer**  
Communications Intern  
September 2015  
- February 2016



**Rowan Garleff**  
Seasonal Outreach  
Assistant  
July - October 2015



**Adam Janzen**  
Seasonal Outreach Assistant  
June - September 2015

Oldman Watershed Council  
**ALUMNI**

# FINANCIAL DONATIONS 2015-2016

## \$300,000+

Alberta Environment and Parks

## \$25,000-38,000

City of Lethbridge  
Roundtable on the Crown of the  
Continent

## \$2,001-5,000

Canadian Constitution Committee  
Centre for Large Landscape  
Conservation  
Crown of the Continent  
Conservation Initiative  
Lethbridge Northern Irrigation  
District  
Lethbridge County  
St. Mary River Irrigation District

## \$1,001-2,000

Vulcan County  
Town of Claresholm  
Town of Pincher Creek  
Cardston County  
Porcupine Hills Watershed Group  
Municipal District of Willow Creek  
Municipal District of Pincher Creek

## \$501-1,000

Town of Nanton  
Glen and Kelly Hall  
Town of Picture Butte

## \$251-500


Anne Stevick  
Heather Sinton  
Alberta Irrigation Projects  
Association  
Bruce Falconer  
Meyers Norris Penny

## \$101-250

Anna Garleff  
Bev & Mark Bellamy  
Village of Barons  
Terry Kerkhoff  
Cheryl Fujikawa  
Village of Cowley  
Andrew Hurlly  
Rosemary Jones  
Hays Stock Grazing Co-Op Ltd.  
Douglas Kaupp  
Kasko Cattle Co

## \$1-100

Linda Cerney  
Shane Porter  
Gerhardt Hartman  
Wendy Ellen Inc.  
Graeme Greenlee  
Simon Teather  
Loreena Brave Rock  
Tetra Tech EBA Inc.  
Dan Telfer  
Joseph Hnatiuk  
Jim Fujikawa  
Elsbeth Nickle



A heartfelt thank you to all our  
financial supporters big and small!  
Your donations make a big difference  
for the watershed and we appreciate  
your support!

# COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH HIGHLIGHTS

The OWC is into its second year of expanding staff to include a full time Communications Specialist and the investment is paying off. We have grown our audience and attracted many new volunteers and donors by increasing our communications channels and by using more effective strategies.

Watershed residents are hungry for unbiased, credible information and we have established ourselves as an information hub for all stakeholders and communities. Our partnerships and large network are invaluable, allowing us to share expertise and factual information on a wide range of topics. We believe in the power of engaging people in our work to foster long lasting ambassadors for the watershed.



## Twitter Followers

This year: 1,899 / Last year: 1,073  
averaging 5 new followers per day.



## Facebook Likes

This year: 1,020 / Last year: 446  
Our most popular post reached 8,768 people in just one day.



## Blog

31,943 blog page views



## E-Newsletter subscribers

This year: 1,036 / Last year: 854



## Social Media Grows our Impact

We are in our second year of using social media channels and they have been powerful tools for us. We are now able to reach thousands of people every week. The strength of our social media means that related organizations depend on us to “get the word out” for events such as garbage cleanups, weed pulls, restoration events and so on.

On the basis of our social media success, we were contacted by Fish Tales Fly Shop in Calgary who designated us as their charity of choice and did a fundraiser on our behalf at their annual Film Festival. Our Film Project Trailer premiered on the big screen to a packed house at the Crowfoot Cinema in Calgary.

Our blog is our main outreach tool and we invite collaborators to share their expertise and personal stories by contributing guest blogs, narrated PowerPoints or videos. The blog is searchable by author, date and topic. We also invite collaborating organizations to take part in our full day Social Media Training at cost.

## Oldman Emblem becomes a star

May through October 2015 saw the appearance of the Oldman emblem on a billboard at the entrance of Lethbridge at Brewery Gardens and served as the launch of our new emblem. The billboard was a gift from City Parks, who offered the opportunity to us, based on the strength of our outreach work.

The new emblem is a huge hit with every demographic as is the new line of merchandise - t-shirts, vests, hats, stickers, which have become coveted rewards or available for purchase. This new branding element now forms the core of a powerful, new interactive display that is widely used at events, presentations and media scrums and borrowed by a variety of other groups.

## Volunteers and Interns Help us Achieve Results

Reaching out to our core group of existing volunteers is as important as laying the foundations for new ones. The downtown location has been a real boon in this regard and we have several dedicated and active volunteers who we are mentoring. Volunteer recruitment, training and retention has picked up considerably over the past year: we have volunteers helping us set up our new office, with admin work, and assisting at events and on projects.

We mentored 3 interns this year - two New Media interns and one Political Science intern, all from the University of Lethbridge. All successfully completed their degrees and contributed over 300 hours each to the OWC.

## Digital Photo Archive Documents our Work

Our digital archive on Flickr is complete and is used by organizations across Canada for photos about the OWC, the Oldman watershed and Southern Alberta. Photos are added on an ongoing basis by both staff and volunteer contributors. It is a visual historical record of the OWC's outreach work and helps us tell stories about the people working hard to maintain and improve the watershed.

## Events Bring People Together

We organized our first Lunch & Learn, held at Country Kitchen Catering to a full house of 50 people, which was a strong signal for the receptivity of similar events going forward as we set up our new downtown office as an event space.

The first #greendrinksyql was held in November, and continues to be a popular point of contact for professionals and volunteers in the watershed/environment sector – including people from Southern Alberta Council on Public Affairs (SACPA), Helen Schuler Nature Centre, Farming Smarter, Volunteer Lethbridge and the Crowsnest Pass Quad Squad, to name only a few. The event is part of a global network and places Lethbridge on the map in terms of a #meetup.

As a result of our first meeting, OWC was invited to speak at SACPA and we presented a talk on Engaging Recreationists which was filmed and released as a podcast. The house was overflowing and there was a strong turnout from the off highway vehicle community, who thanked us personally after the speech for presenting both sides of the issue.



## #OLDMANGOESTOHOLLYWOOD

The OWC launched the Film Project in November 2014 at the Southern Alberta Art Gallery with support from 5 Founding Partners: Real Estate Centre, University of Calgary Faculty of Law, Canadian Institute of Resource Law, Alberta Irrigation Projects Association and South Central Welding.

The Film Project involves one core film and many shorter videos highlighting specific watershed topics. The core message is “we are all downstream” and will feature where water comes from, where it goes and what happens in between. A critical part of the project has been involving people in the process; bringing new partners into the OWC family, giving a voice to residents and demonstrating how to inspire a community into collective action.

From April to October 2015 we focused on gathering footage from across the watershed so that we are able to showcase the diversity of landscapes, people, challenges we face and solutions that are making a difference. We interviewed about 300 people at 18 locations and have captured rich stories and passion for the land, water and biodiversity. We can't wait to share these unique perspectives through the film and videos; they truly are inspiring.

In June 2015 the Film Project Trailer was completed and continues to be at the heart of our outreach work. It has been copied onto flash drives which staff and partners take with them to all meetings and events and are given out both as an outreach tool, and in support of further donations to the project. If you haven't seen it yet, please visit our website [oldmanwatershed.ca](http://oldmanwatershed.ca).

The basis for the film is a historical timeline which shows what key decisions were made in the past that continue to have a profound impact on the watershed. Thanks to the many volunteers who contributed their expertise to the timeline, it is in the final stages of editing and sourcing historical photos and once complete, will be featured on our website as a 3D interactive tool. The timeline will be a powerful educational tool to showcase how past events and decisions have shaped our watershed and will tell the stories of people who lived through it. Thank you to the Galt Museum and Archives for providing the historical photos required to complete the timeline and we look forward to the water exhibit that will open next year at the Galt; another great partnership where our timeline will form the backbone for this exhibit.

The City of Lethbridge and Potato Growers of Alberta are Collaborative Partners on the Film Project who invested \$5000 each to support the project and have their watershed story told through 3 short videos – one for the public, one for kids and one for scientists. Everyone has a unique watershed story to be told and we welcome more collaborative partners to join us in telling yours.

Two additional collaborations on the Film Project include one with QuickDraw Animation in Calgary who we are working with to mentor a student animator to create the unique opening sequence that will be featured in every video. The second is with the ALCES Group created by Dr. Brad Stelfox, whose data we are using to create a time series of unique land use maps from 1905-2060 that will form an integral part of the film production.

These partnerships reinforce the message that “we are all downstream” and must work collectively to solve watershed challenges. Please contact us to get involved!



## 5 Founding Partners

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## Collaborative Partners

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## Grant Funders

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The Chawkers Foundation

## Friends

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Klaus Jericho, Connie Simmons, Shannon Frank, Cheryl Bradley (In memory of Bill Brown), Andrea Vaxvick, Anna Garleff, Andrew Hurly, (In memory of Sam Zoeteman), Jim and Cheryl Fujikawa, Glen and Kelly Hall, Canadian Constitution Committee

## THE HUB

When OWC moved our office to downtown Lethbridge in January 2016 we weren't looking for a place to sit quietly with our laptops. We chose a space that maximizes opportunities to engage watershed residents and build partnerships - a hub for environmental information and action.

We are just starting down this path but have already hosted 4 events at the Hub and look forward to many more. We offer the space for free for educational events and are looking to develop stronger relationships with green businesses and other not-for-profits to truly make the space a Hub.



### Open House and Farewell to Bev

Our first event was an open house coupled with a farewell for Bev Bellamy, our Administrative Assistant who retired in February. We had a good turnout of 50 well wishers checking out our new space and enjoying conversation and refreshments.

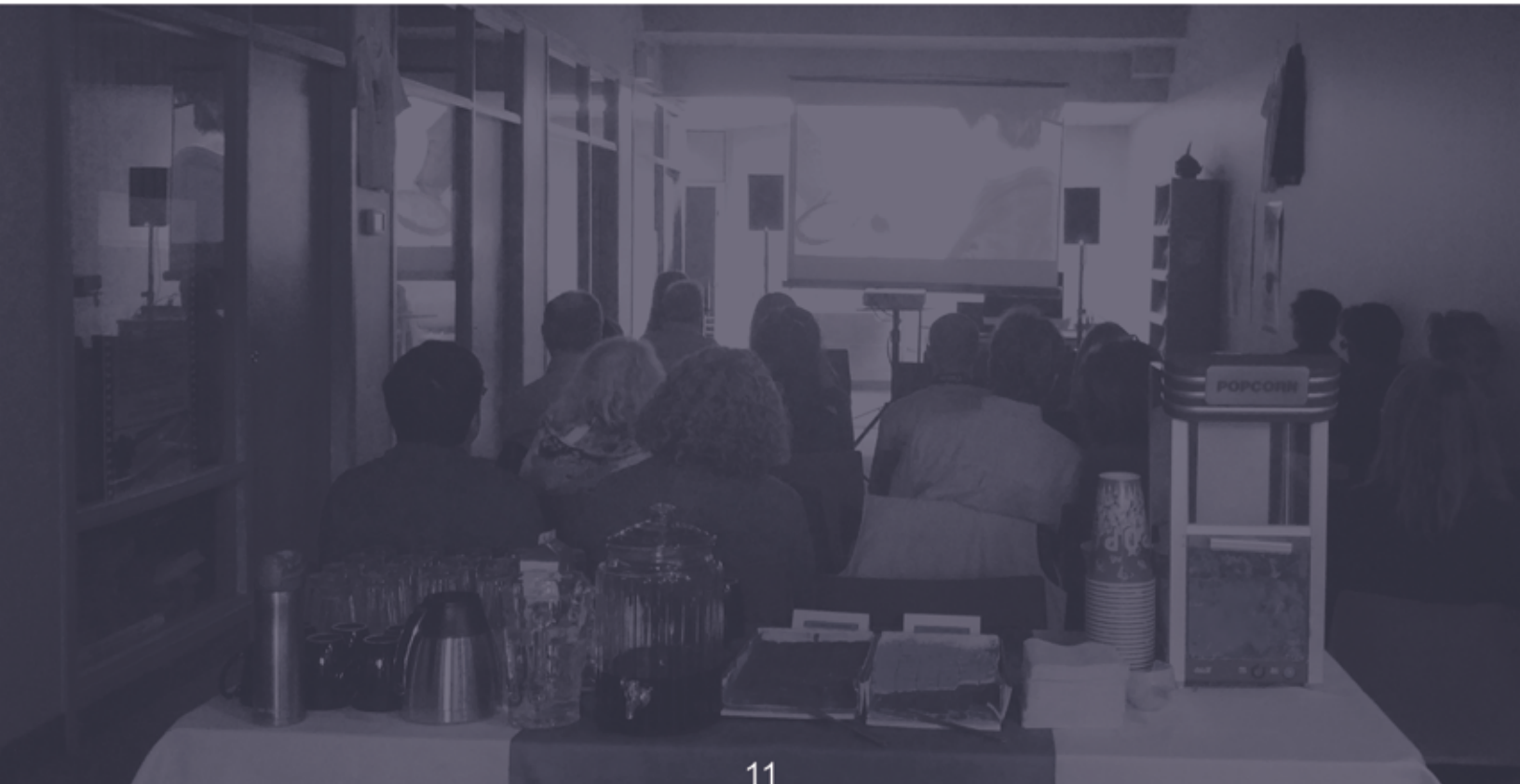


## World Water Day Film Festival

World Water Day (WWD) was designated by the United Nations in 1992 as an opportunity to learn about and be inspired about water and water issues. 2016's WWD theme was Water and Jobs. On WWD, the OWC partnered with Environment Lethbridge and showcased our new office with a debut of The Hub by co-hosting a mini film festival focused on water. Three films were screened including:

- **One Water for Sustainable Development** (Stockholm International Water Institute) - Water is health, energy, food, climate, equality. Water is central to sustainable development.
- **Water Everywhere and Not a Drop to Drink** (The Water Brothers) - In one of the most water rich countries in the world, 1 in 5 First Nations communities lacks access to clean, safe, and sustainable water.
- **Wetlands Matter** (Rick Searle, EKOS Communications) - This documentary examines the problems caused by wetlands drainage on the Canadian prairie and possible solutions to the issue.

**OWC's film trailer for the OWC Film Project** was also showcased at the event. This film will become a signature communication piece for southern Alberta, highlighting a core message of "We are all downstream." With the three films, and the OWC film trailer, the event on World Water Day lead attendees down a path of water wins and water woes - from large scale and global concerns to matters directly within our own Oldman watershed.



# IN KIND DONATIONS

## 2015-2016

Action Surface Rights Association	\$3,126
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada	\$7,252
Agriculture and Forestry	\$80,028
Alberta Conservation Association	\$260
Alberta Environment and Parks	\$4,421
Alberta Health Services	\$3,603
Alberta Irrigation Projects Association	\$1,763
ATCO Power	\$5,400
Amos Art Projects and Studio	\$875
Chimney Rock Bed & Breakfast	\$200
City of Lethbridge	\$5,330
Farming Smarter	\$911
Film Project	\$25,000
Headwaters Action Team	\$21,765
Jayme Javier Photography	\$400
K. Manuel Consulting Inc.	\$2,000
Lethbridge College	\$3,401
Lethbridge County	\$3,101
Mayor & Reeves Association of Southwest Alberta	\$7,648
Member at Large	\$45,448
Nature Conservancy of Canada	\$5,906
Piikani Nation	\$4,263
Recreation Advisory Committee	\$5,030
Restoration for Recreation Event	\$32,000
Rick Andrews Wildlife Photography	\$1,299
South Central Welding	\$10,000
Southern Alberta Group for the Environment	\$5,253
Taber Irrigation District	\$2,500
University of Lethbridge	\$4,989

**Total**

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**\$293,172**

*“A big thank you to all our in-kind donors! Your contributions are valuable and much appreciated!”*

# HEADWATERS ACTION PLAN

Goal 3 of the Integrated Watershed Management Plan for the Oldman Watershed is to manage and protect the integrity of the headwaters and source waters. In order to address this goal, the Headwaters Action Team (HAT) formed in 2014-15 and the past year has been focused on implementing the Headwaters Action Plan (HAP). Four priority actions were selected out of the HAP to focus implementation efforts of the whole community.

## OWC's Role

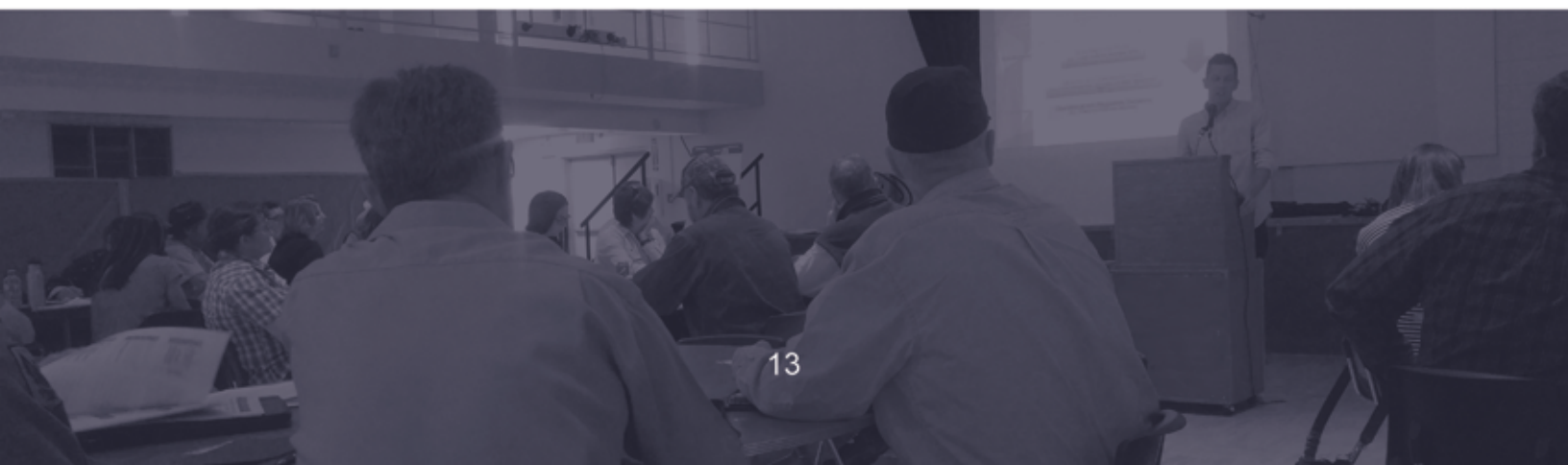
OWC's role is multifaceted but everything we do is to maintain and improve the watershed for current residents and for future generations.

**First**, we bring the stakeholders together who are working in the headwaters so they can share perspectives and knowledge and understand what each other is doing so that common ground is established, contentious issues are depolarized and working together becomes possible.

**Secondly**, the HAT is also an advisory group to the OWC so we understand stakeholder perspectives on headwater issues and can see where there is common ground to move forward and what concerns need to be addressed. This information is crucial and we consider it carefully when crafting our key messages on issues and making recommendations to the Government of Alberta.

**Thirdly**, OWC showcases the communities progress on implementing the HAP through our many communications channels and encourages the community to keep up the great work. Through our Watershed Legacy Program we also provide funding for on the ground projects.

**Lastly**, OWC models the way by leading demonstration pilot projects such as the Engaging Recreationists Project (see pages 17-18).

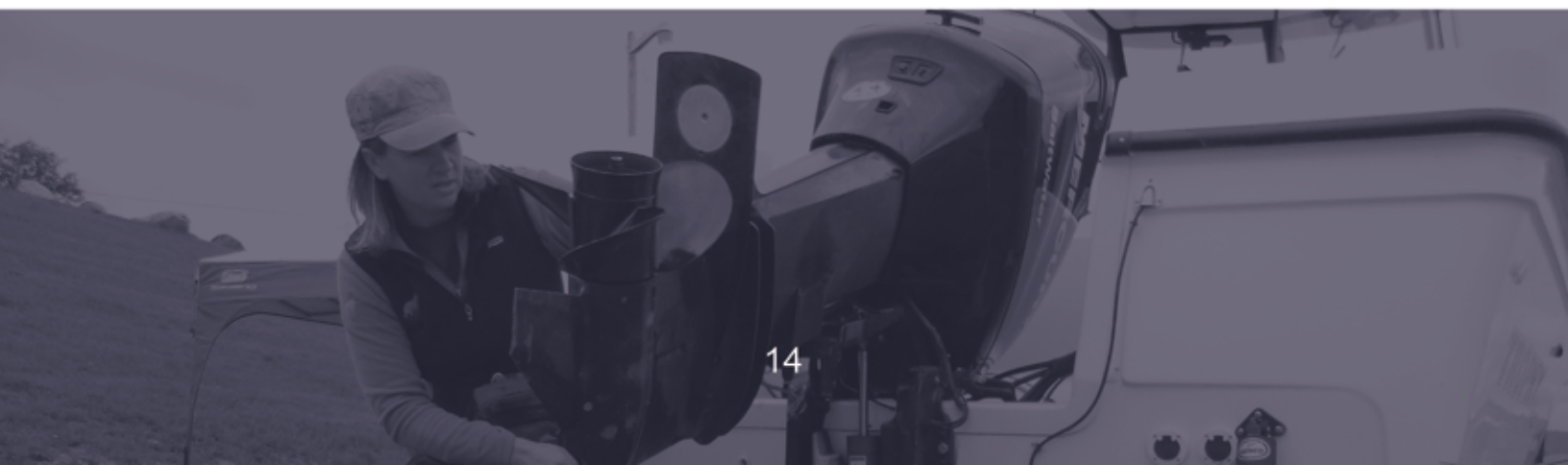


# ACTION TEAM MEMBERS

- Ted Smith - Agriculture/land-owners (Livingstone Landowners Group)
- Tony Bruder – Agriculture/land-owners (Drywood-Yarrow Conservation Partnership)
- Jim Lynch-Staunton - Agriculture/land-owners (Rocky Mountain Grazing Association)
- Daryl Ferguson – Recreation (Crowsnest Pass Quad Squad)
- Wade Aebli - Industry (Spray Lake Sawmills)
- Terry Yagos - Municipal Government (MD Pincher Creek)
- Bill Kovach - Municipal Government (Municipality of Crowsnest Pass)
- Oscar Anderson - Municipal Government (MD Ranchlands)
- Lorne Fitch – NGO (Cows and Fish)
- Richard Burke – NGO (Trout Unlimited Canada – Oldman Chapter)
- Carolyn Aspeslet – NGO (Castle Crown Wilderness Coalition)
- David Green – NGO (Southern Alberta Sustainable Communities Initiative)
- Jason Blackburn - NGO (Alberta Conservation Association)
- Mike Bryski - Government of Alberta (Fisheries)
- Mike Wagner – Government of Alberta (Forestry)
- Craig Johnson - Government of Alberta (Fisheries)

Thank you to Rachelle Haddock, Miistakis Institute and Adam Driedzic, Environmental Law Centre for their expertise and support throughout this project.

Thank you to our funders for making this possible!



# PROGRESS ON HAP IMPLEMENTATION

## Priority Action 1 – Complete a Classification of Linear Features Project.

Although the Dutch Creek Linear Features Classification Project was completed October 2014 (more information here <http://oldmanwatershed.ca/projects-list/dutch-creek-pilot-project>) linear features continue to be a focus of OWC's advisory role.

The Government of Alberta is developing a Linear Footprint Management Plan (LFMP) for the Porcupine Hills and Livingstone areas, followed by Recreation Management Plans (RMP) for each area. OWC has been actively participating in these planning processes and will continue to provide recommendations as the plans develop in 2016-17.

OWC's leadership in mapping and developing a field protocol to classify linear features was instrumental to the Government of Alberta's work and they continue to use our scientific reports in their planning processes.

## Priority Action 2 – Complete a fine scale cumulative effects assessment of fish populations and habitat streams.

This priority action took a big leap this year when the Federal Government announced the Critical Habitat Order for Westslope Cutthroat Trout (WSCT) in Alberta in December, 2015. Also, because WSCT, Alberta population, were added to Schedule 1 of the Species at Risk Act, listed as threatened, this required the Federal Government's Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and the Minister responsible for the Parks Canada Agency to devise a Recovery Strategy for WSCT.

The strategy, complete with identification of critical habitat, was finalized in March 28, 2014 with the help of some organizations who are also members of the Headwaters Action Team (HAT) – Cows and Fish, Spray Lake Sawmills, Trout Unlimited Canada, Alberta Conservation Association and Government of Alberta (GoA).

Once a recovery strategy is posted as final on the species at risk public registry, and the critical habitats are identified in strategy, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans must ensure that the critical habitat is legally protected – often carried out through a Critical Habitat Order.

Further research on WSCT and Bull Trout include HAT member Jason Blackburn's work with the Alberta Conservation Association (ACA). Sediment surveys have been conducted to determine average sediment quantity and proportion of fine deposited sediments per electrofishing reach (300-500m sites) along Dutch Creek, Hidden Creek, White Creek and headwater tributaries. The ACA will be able to use this information to model the abundances of WSCT in the main-stems and further estimate the abundances by stream of juvenile sized fish and adult sized fish, producing a curve of where abundance fluctuation occurs.

Combined, this information can help determine where fish are at highest risk and where they are holding strong. These details will be used by the GoA and will help to formulate the Fish Sustainability Index (FSI) on WSCT and Fisheries Management Objectives (FMO) and Habitat Management Objective (HMO) for certain WSCT populations.

The FMOs and HMOs will highlight management actions, such as fishing regulations and habitat management, to achieve the objectives laid out by the Federal Government's Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

The ACA and GoA are also looking into stream temperature studies, with the Government likely leaning towards a citizen science project for the upcoming summer.



### **Priority Action 3 – Assist Environment and Parks with the awareness and education program (“Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers!”) for stakeholders and the public on how to prevent these aquatic invasive species from entering Alberta.**

The GoA has approved mandatory watercraft inspections, found at every major road coming into Alberta and making it the largest inspection program in Canada.

When watercraft inspection stations are open, as indicated by highway signage, all watercraft must be inspected or individuals may face a fine of up to \$100,000 or 12 months in prison for violation of the Fisheries Act.

The new inspections include human inspectors as well as sniffer dogs, trained to detect zebra and quagga mussels.

OWC continues to raise awareness about aquatic invasive species by sharing information on our social media channels and website, at Hub events and meetings. The whole community has done a great job keeping this issue in the media and top of mind with decision makers.

Thank-you to our Headwaters Action Team Members, who continue to implement the Headwaters Action Plan within their organizations by practicing stewardship and conservation in the Oldman Watershed.

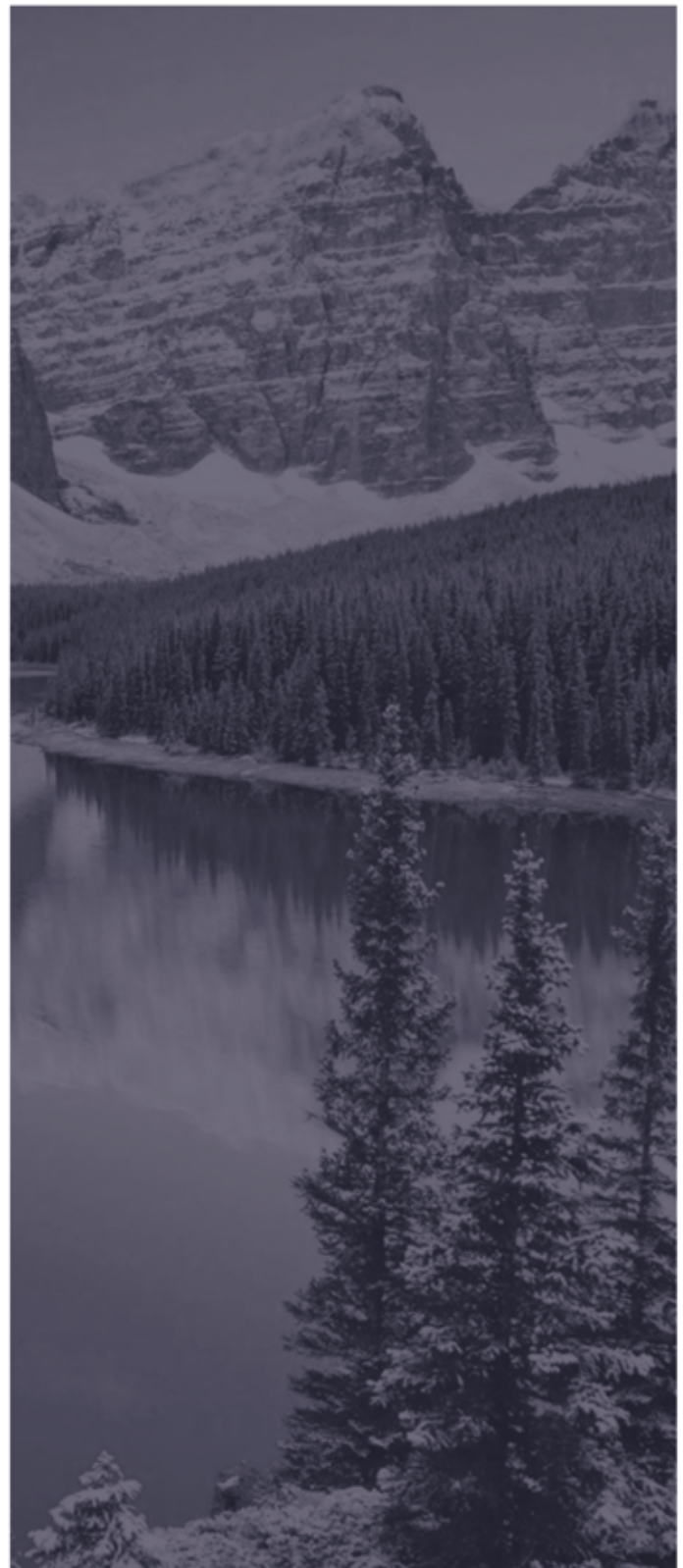
### **Priority Action 4 - Explore options for recreational user fees to fund enforcement education and stewardship projects.**

OWC's partner, the Environmental Law Centre, has been researching how other jurisdictions manage access on public land with permits and user fees and shares these results with stakeholders so Alberta can learn from the experience of others.

In 2015, workshops were held to discuss access management and education of users and present research and recommendations.

Potential solutions and recommendations are provided to decision makers regularly.

There is also a Priority Action 5 that weaves through it all: education and awareness programs are foundational and required to build public understanding and support for projects aimed at improving headwaters health. OWC's Engaging Recreationist Project (see pages 17-18) was created for this purpose.



# ENGAGING RECREATIONISTS

## PILOT SEASON

The Headwaters Action Plan includes the development of an education and outreach program to address the cumulative effects threatening our headwaters. This involves supporting a stewardship ethic in motorized recreation users, and encouraging these users to adopt practices that reduce sediment in streams. Thus, 2015 was the pilot season for the Engaging Recreationists project.

### Outreach Surveys & Interviews

Outreach was an important part of the OWC's work in 2015. The OWC hired two student interns, Adam Janzen and Rowan Garleff, in the summer and fall of 2015 to build relationships with off-highway vehicle users and backcountry campers on public land in the Oldman watershed.

They did a great job and were a critical part of the project. The student interns approached 75 campers in the backcountry and engaged them in conversations about watershed health, by conducting in-person surveys to understand recreationists' values and concerns. The students were able to engage people easily, and found them both welcoming and pleased to have the opportunity to voice their thoughts.

Two behaviour-change specialists conducted in-depth interviews with off-highway vehicle riders to assess their perceptions and barriers to change, in order to guide the development of an effective behaviour change program. Behaviour-change expertise is critical to the project success; by understanding users' self-identities, personal motivations, and barriers to change, we can develop effective, targeted programs and messaging that will reduce the impact of recreational use. The results of these surveys and interviews will inform our programming as the project moves forward.

### Restoration for Recreation

The OWC promoted and participated in two riparian restoration events, one along Hidden Creek and one along Dutch Creek. In partnership with Cows and Fish, Trout Unlimited Canada, and Spray Lake Sawmills, the OWC organized a "Restoration for Recreation" event along Dutch Creek in October 2015.

Over 50 volunteers spent a chilly day planting willow cuttings, bioengineering the stream bank to stabilize slumping banks and reduce erosion and sedimentation, and erecting signage reminding land-users to "Steer Clear of ponds & creeks." It was hard work, but everyone enjoyed the day. This was our first streambank restoration event and we learned a great deal that we will use in future to continue this work to restore more streambanks.



*Restoration for Recreation Continued* - Another key goal over the past year was to build relationships with off-highway vehicle groups, and we did this by assisting the Crowsnest Pass Quad Squad with bridge decking events. Being on the ground is vital to demonstrating our commitment to the area and the people who use it.

## Collaboration & Communication

We have been working hard to build inter-organizational partnerships and to solidify the OWC as a credible science-based authority and collaborator. Area-specific maps have been designed and published on our website. A presentation of the project at the Southern Alberta Council on Public Affairs (SACPA) was well-attended in November 2015. Information was—and continues to be—shared through various channels, including our blog, digital archive, podcasts, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and on our website.

## Highlights of 2015 Pilot:

- Outreach assistants spoke to 75 people camping in Dutch Creek
- Over 50 volunteers participated in our “Restoration for Recreation” event
- We reach an average of 2000 people per week through social media, with exceptional posts reaching over 4500 people.
- We have increased our Facebook followers from 475 to 1020, have gained 1,899 followers on Twitter, and reach many more through our social media and blog posts.

## Looking Ahead

In the fall, the OWC welcomed a new Education Program Manager to the team. Sofie Forsström will oversee the Engaging Recreationists project as we move beyond the pilot and expand our outreach.

We have also engaged representatives from various off-roading organizations and local retailers to form the Recreation Advisory Team, who will ensure our programming is effective and help spread our message about watershed health.

## We couldn't do it without your engagement!

We continue to leverage the community, partner, and volunteer support we have garnered for this project as a priority action out of the Headwaters Action Plan, which enjoys commitment from multiple stakeholder groups including representatives from industry, government, agriculture, recreation, and non-government and nonprofit organizations.

This project aligns with our mission to improve and share knowledge, build and strengthen stakeholder partnerships, promote community action and stewardship, and develop and implement integrated land and water plans.

# THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

## Project Funders



The Hanen Society

## Project Partners



# RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

As part of the Headwaters Action Plan, the OWC has engaged representatives from local Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) retailers and community groups to form the Recreation Advisory Committee. The RAC plays an important role in helping us understand the perspectives of their stakeholder groups and providing on-the-ground knowledge and expertise to ensure that education programs and government led plans are effective at minimizing the impact of motorized recreation.

Thank you to the Recreation Advisory Committee 2015 for their support:

<b>Alf Gurr</b>	Lethbridge Honda Centre
<b>Darren McFadden</b>	Lethbridge Honda Centre
<b>Casey Wilson</b>	New Way Motorsports
<b>Barry Harper</b>	Individual
<b>Gary Clark</b>	Crowsnest Pass Quad Squad
<b>Gary Smolik</b>	Sustainable trail builder (GSCM Inc)
<b>John Bader</b>	Lethbridge Motorcycle Club
<b>Keith Routley</b>	Alberta Motorsports Association
<b>Scott Kjarsgaard</b>	Calgary Snowmobile Club
<b>Wayne Lowry</b>	Alberta Fish and Game Association
<b>Wayne Page</b>	Alberta Off-Highway Vehicle Association



# LETHBRIDGE STORM WATER OUTFALLS MONITORING STUDY

## Microbiological, Pesticides, and Nutrient Analysis (2012-2014)

This 3-year monitoring project aimed to assess water quality within Lethbridge storm water drains and the Oldman River.

Samples from 9 stormwater outfalls, collected once a month and after rainfall events between April-September 2012-2014, were tested for bacteria, pesticides, and nutrients.

Results were compared to a similar study by Saffran (2005) to see whether Lethbridge water quality had changed since 2000-2002.

Bacteria, primarily *E. coli*, were detected at varying densities in stormwater samples from all sites in 2012-2014. Bacteria counts in stormwater were as high or higher than observed in 2000 to 2002, and frequently exceeded Alberta Surface Water Quality Guidelines for irrigation and recreational water.

In general, there were lower levels of bacteria in river water upstream of Lethbridge relative to downstream of Lethbridge.

Nutrients end up in the river due to runoff of lawn fertilizers, etc. and can have aesthetic, human health, and ecological consequences.

Since the 2000-2002 study, there are higher concentrations of nutrients in the Oldman River and stormwater (with the exception of nitrate and total nitrogen) in Lethbridge.

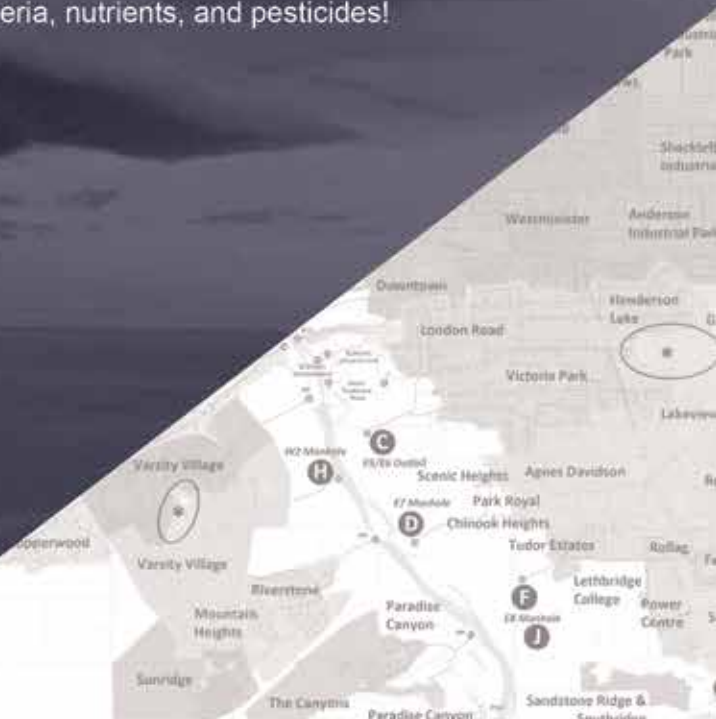
This study found more than twice the concentration of plant- and algae-stimulating phosphorous available in storm water than in the Oldman River water.

Pesticides detected both in this 2012-2014 study, and in the 2000-2002 study, were at higher concentrations in storm drains compared to surface waters of the Oldman river and tributaries.

However, several pesticides detected in 2000-2002 were not detected in 2012-2014 samples, which could be a reflection of changes in pesticide use, and/or the phasing out of certain pesticides de-registered for use in Canada. Lawn care products account for the most prevalent pesticides in stormwater, highlighting the need for education about proper pesticide use and disposal.

Overall, the study concluded that water quality in Lethbridge storm water drainages has not changed significantly over the last 15 years. Large concentrations of bacteria, nutrients, and pesticides are being detected. Storm water in Lethbridge is not treated, meaning that nutrients, bacteria and pesticides are running off our lawns and ending up in the Oldman River.

Runoff from every neighbourhood in Lethbridge ends up, untreated, in 1 of 9 storm water outfalls along the Oldman River. Let's keep our storm drains, and our river, free of excess bacteria, nutrients, and pesticides!



A huge thank you to John Derksen (Lethbridge College), G. Douglas Inglis and Claudia Sheedy (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada), who led the study and produced a very detailed final report.

Thank you as well to the following individuals and organizations who assisted with the study:

- Robert Rippin (Alberta Health Services) and Natalie Kromrey (Alberta Environment & Parks) for information and lab materials;
- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada staff & technicians and Lethbridge College students who contributed to the project;
- Kara Rowan for editing the final report.

**Thank you to our partners who made this project possible!**





[www.oldmanwatershed.ca](http://www.oldmanwatershed.ca)

Working together for the *long* term.

# COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS



## Caring for Our Watersheds

Through our various social media outlets, the OWC supports Agrium's "Caring for Our Watersheds" program, which asks Grade 7-12 students to submit a proposal that answers the question, "What can you do to improve your watershed?" Thank you to University of Lethbridge Applied Studies intern, Kelsey Cartwright, for her volunteer efforts to help promote this program!

## Taber Irrigation District Integrated Watershed Management Project



OWC is working with the TID to promote TID's Integrated Watershed Management and Natural Restoration Project using the OWC's lines of communication to highlight the project within the watershed and to encourage this type of stewardship. In partnership with other collaborators including the Government of Alberta - Agriculture and Forestry, Alberta Conservation Association, Municipal District of Taber, St. Mary River Irrigation District and the Town of Taber, TID's proposed project will improve watershed health through constructed wetlands, riparian enhancements and/or open canal improvements.

## Environment Lethbridge(EL)



As a member of EL's Executive Committee, the OWC is working with EL on many common goals. One focus is to co-champion The Hub – a multi-stakeholder focused space dedicated to showcasing environmental projects, concerns and interests in Lethbridge and in the Oldman Watershed. In addition, the OWC is involved in a partnership between EL and the City of Lethbridge to establish key indicators to monitor the city's environmental health. The first year of this project will provide a baseline for Lethbridge's current environmental health which will be used to set future goals.

## City of Lethbridge Environment and Historic Resources Strategy Community Liaison Group



The OWC participates on the multi-stakeholder Community Liaison Group (CLG). The CLG provides input and feedback, as well as recommendations on the content and direction of the Environmental and Historic Resources Strategy. OWC is focused on the environmental strategy – the relationship between development and the environment - and as such is providing recommendations that will assist in maintaining and improving the health of the watershed in and around Lethbridge.



## Porcupine Hills Coalition

### Porcupine Hills Coalition

The OWC participates in this informal multi-stakeholder group representative of those who have a vested interest in protecting the Porcupine Hills. The OWC provides stakeholder feedback and recommendations related to the Linear Footprint Management Plan and the Recreation Management Plans coming out of the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan. By participating, the OWC can help to assure that the voices of all stakeholders are represented and that recommendations take into consideration the needs of all stakeholders in the area.

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### Lethbridge Chamber of Commerce Natural Resources and Environment Committee (NREC)

The OWC participates as a member of the CFC organization. The goal of the OWC is to highlight the connection between food and water and overall watershed health. The OWC is helping to organize a teleconference series on food-related topics that will run April-July, 2016. By bringing a watershed perspective to CFC, this group is now better informed on the connection between food and water and we can work in partnership to raise awareness.

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### Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent

The OWC supports the Leadership Team in areas of the Crown that pertain to the Oldman Watershed. The Crown is made up of various organizations located in Montana, British Columbia and Alberta who work to promote stewardship activities across the Crown of the Continent. The Roundtable provides a collective engagement opportunity to share successes, collaborate on projects and hold trans-border and multi-organizational events to promote conservation, culture and community in the Crown.

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### Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils of Alberta

The 11 WPACs of Alberta meet regularly to learn from each other and to maintain a strong provincial voice with the Government of Alberta. We are also currently working together on 4 initiatives: a 2016 WPAC Summit in the fall, establishing an online WPAC library of reference documents, exploring sustainable funding models for WPAC operations and the Xtreme Science program where youth monitor water quality.

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### South Saskatchewan River Basin Intra-basin Water Coordination Committee

The OWC participates on this committee to provide advice to the Government of Alberta on managing water during periods of water shortage and how to best meet the Master Agreement on Apportionment, which shares water between the Prairie Provinces.



## Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program

The OWC participates on the WRRP Advisory Team to provide advice and recommendations to the Government of Alberta to guide the refinement of WRRP and its alignment with the Agriculture Watershed Enhancement program under Growing Forward 2. By participating we can help ensure that the outcomes of these two programs best serve the needs of those actively involved in watershed restoration and management.

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## Alberta Water Council

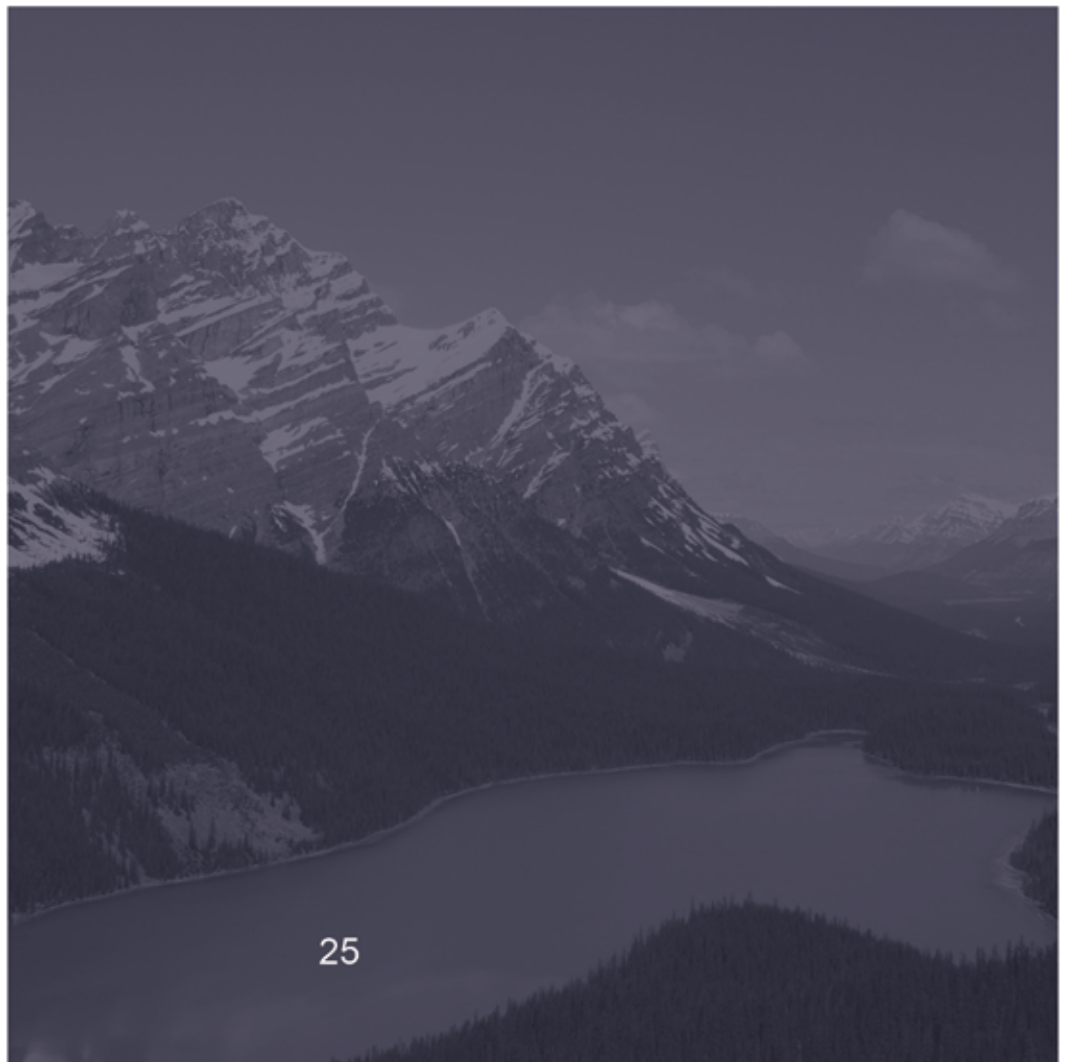
The AWC is a provincial non-profit that provides policy recommendations to the Government of Alberta and tracks progress on the Water for Life Strategy. The Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils of Alberta have a seat on the AWC's Board of Directors and the OWC is now serving as alternate on this Board. OWC also provides input to project teams on a wide range of topics.

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## *Kainai Environmental Protection Agency*

## Kainai Environmental Protection Agency

OWC liases with KEPA to offer support as the organization is setting up and participates in events, such as the Climate Change and Resilience Summit where OWC presented about the Oldman watershed in a changing climate.





# Holding the Reins

Landowners Summit for the Oldman Watershed

Holding the Reins provides watershed residents an opportunity to hear about rural issues and initiatives in the Oldman watershed. Presentations are given on a wide range of rural topics and landowner stewardship groups share their expertise, experiences and stories of their efforts to protect their local watershed.

Holding the Reins 2016 was held on March 10th at the Fort Macleod Community Hall. The event was a great success, with a turnout of over 100 people, 40 of which were students from the Lethbridge College Agriculture Sciences program. The audience was immersed in the knowledge of presenters who spoke about everything from farm sustainability, protecting land using conservation easements, to the future of land use in the Porcupine Hills.

PowerPoints from the day are available at <http://oldmanwatershed.ca/htr-2016>, as well as 4 news stories courtesy of the Lethbridge Herald.

**Thank you to our sponsors for making this event possible:**



And to the Watershed Legacy Program Team for helping organize the event!





The Watershed Legacy Program supports agricultural producers who are implementing stewardship projects on their land. Most successful projects involve restoring riparian areas through fencing, weed control, off stream waterers or hardened stream crossings. Through a granting process OWC provides a maximum of 50% of the cash costs of a project to successful applicants and also assistance with sharing their story with the broader community.

The WLP had a really successful year, helping fund 11 projects that will improve water quality and riparian health, control invasive species and provide support for our rural and urban land stewards. The 2016 Watershed Legacy Program recipients, including the sub-basin they are located in, are:

- Castle Crown Wilderness Coalition, Castle River Basin:**  
invasive species removal field days
- Clancy Holthe, Little Bow River Basin:**  
off-stream watering system
- Erin McIlwraith, City of Lethbridge - Oldman River mainstem:**  
invasive species removal field days
- Gerald Vandervalk, Willow Creek Basin:**  
riparian fencing of Lyndon Creek
- Glen & Kelly Hall, Mosquito Creek Basin:**  
spring development, wetland fencing
- John Cross, Mosquito Creek Basin:**  
off-stream watering system
- Julia Palmer, Waterton River Basin:**  
riparian fencing of the Waterton River
- Leta Pezderic, Lower Oldman River mainstem:**  
creation of watershed stewardship group on Lower Oldman River to control invasive Leafy Spurge
- Reid Moynihan, Willow Creek Basin:**  
spring development
- Reno Welsch, Upper Oldman River Basin:**  
spring development
- Stafford Bezak, Willow Creek Basin:**  
off-stream watering system

To build on this year's successes, we look forward to sharing the stories of our recipients, showing the communities of southern Alberta the value these land stewards and projects provide, while building more partnerships along the way.

Thank you to the Watershed Legacy Program Team for all your assistance and expertise. We couldn't do it without you!

**Anne Stevick**, Nature Conservancy of Canada  
**Dwayne Rogness**, Lethbridge County  
**Jamie Puchinger**, Farming Smarter  
**Kristi Stebanuk**, Cows and Fish  
**Lindsey Cockerill**, MD Pincher Creek  
**Mike Uchikura**, Alberta Conservation Association  
**Stephen Bevans**, Cardston County  
**Troy Ormann**, Alberta Agriculture and Forestry

Thank you to our funders who make this program possible:



# OLDMAN WATERSHED

A watershed is an area of land that drains into a water body, like a creek, river or lake. So the Oldman watershed is all the land that eventually drains into the Oldman River through its tributaries.

The Oldman watershed is a large, diverse land and water system in southwestern Alberta, covering 23,000km in southwestern Alberta and 2,100km in Montana.

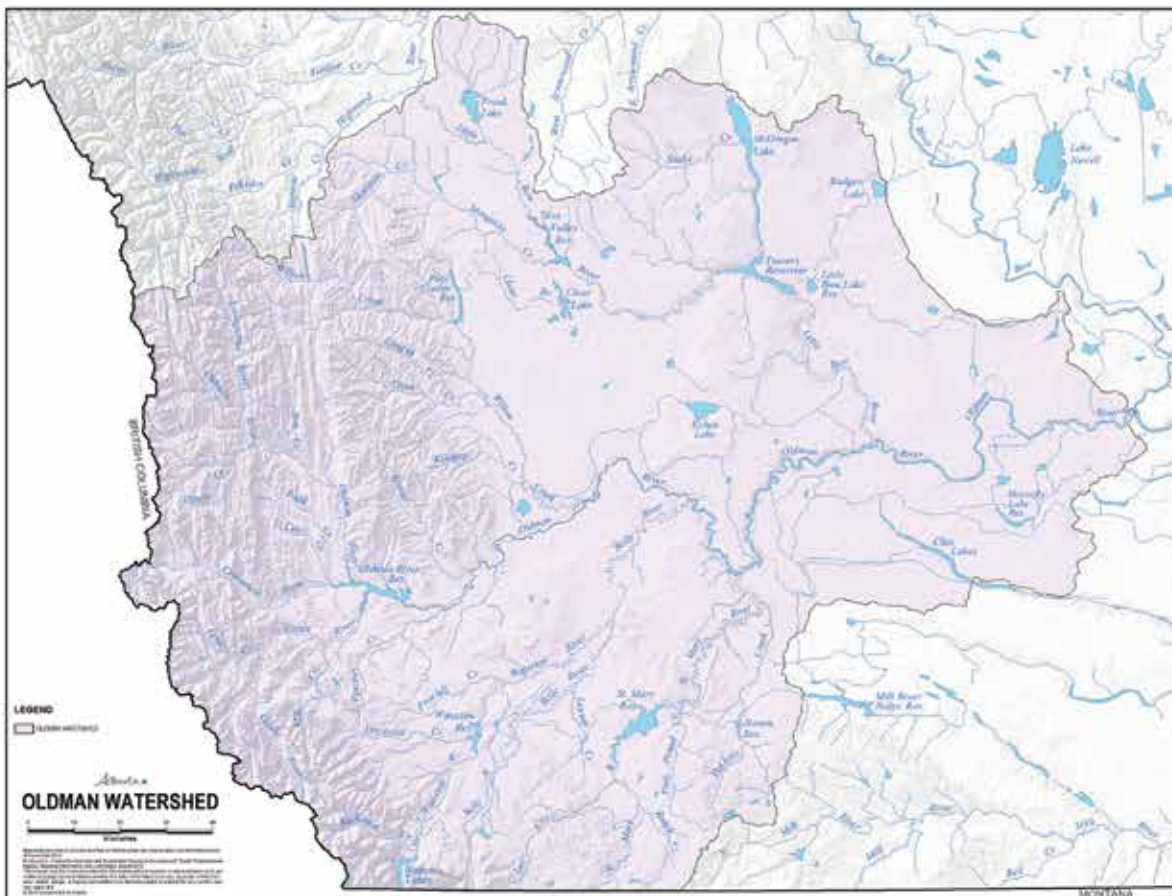
It extends eastward from the forested slopes of the Rocky Mountains, through rangelands in the foothills, dryland and irrigated agricultural plains, to the prairie grasslands.

The Rocky Mountains feed the headwaters of the Oldman mainstream and its tributaries (Crownsnest and Castle rivers, Willow and Pincher creeks), while the headwaters of the Belly, Waterton and St. Mary rivers rise in Montana.

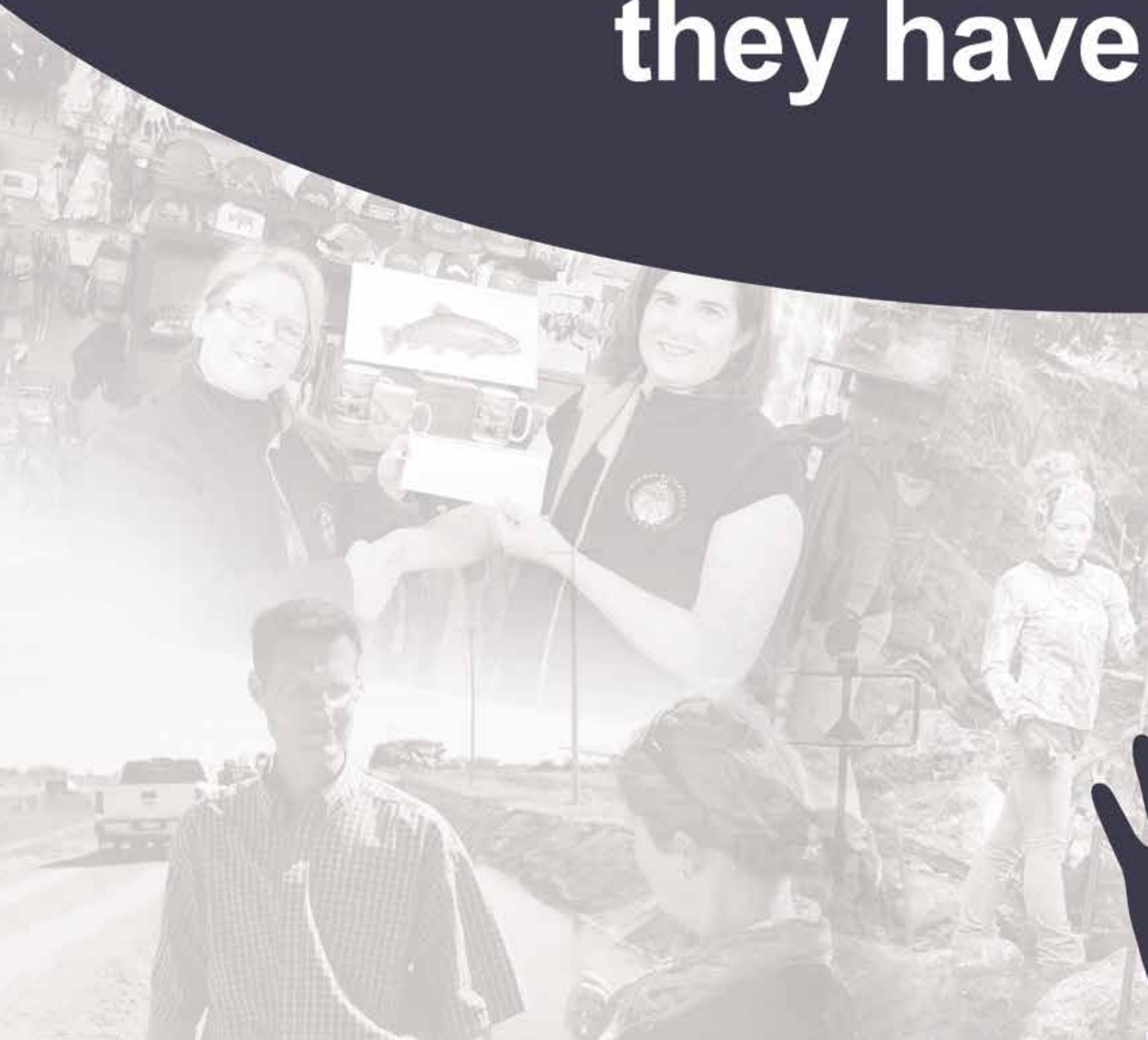
The watershed varies greatly, both in terms of the status of the land and water resources and impacts from human activities.

In headwater sub-basins, water quantity is adequate, quality is fair to good, and riparian ecosystems are generally healthy.

However, as the Oldman River flows east, water quality deteriorates and available water supplies diminish creating challenges.



**Volunteers and  
necessarily have  
they have**



**Volunteers do not  
have the time; but  
they have the heart.**

**Thank you!**





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