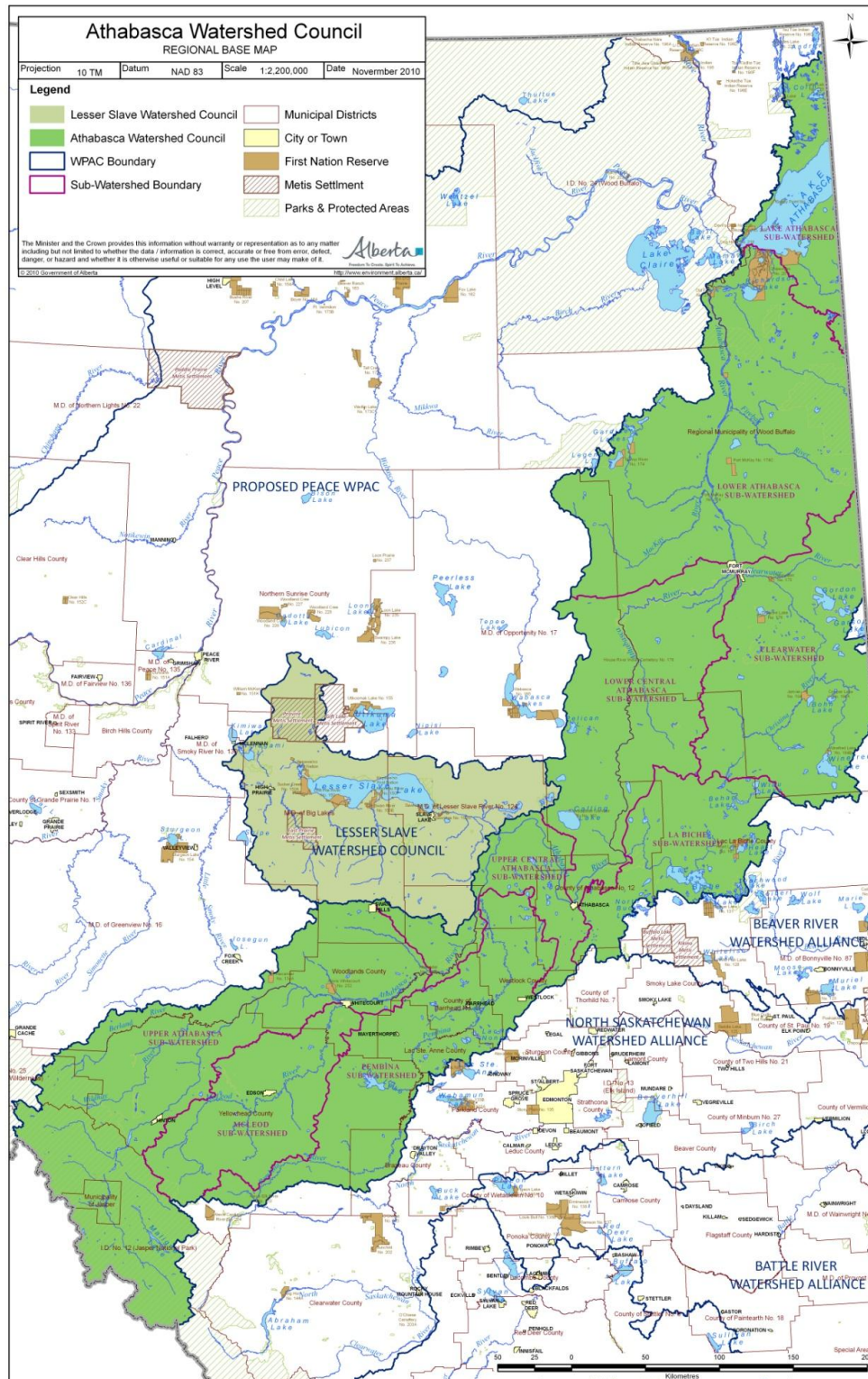




*...from the mountain headwaters  
to the delta lowlands...*

# ***2010-2011 Annual Report***

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The Athabasca Watershed and Sub-basins

## About the Athabasca Watershed Council

The Athabasca Watershed Council (AWC-WPAC) is a registered Alberta not-for-profit Society working with sectors, communities and interested citizens who have interest and commitment to the ecological health, and the social, cultural, and economic sustainability of the Athabasca Watershed. The AWC-WPAC is the 10<sup>th</sup> Watershed Planning and Advisory Council (WPAC) created to address the key outcomes of Alberta's **Water for Life Strategy**.

- Safe, secure drinking water
- Healthy aquatic ecosystems
- Reliable, quality water supplies for a sustainable economy

The AWC-WPAC's key focus is to achieve the outcomes of the **Water for Life Strategy** through:

- a) A **State of the Watershed** assessment of the health of the Athabasca Watershed using the best of western science and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK);
- b) Planning, engaging and facilitating sectors, communities and people who have an interest in the Athabasca Watershed in order to complete an **Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP)**.

The AWC-WPAC fosters collaborative partnerships with sectors, communities, and people to work collectively on solutions to the many challenges facing the Athabasca Watershed. Open and inclusive engagement of the greater watershed constituency is a foundation for the upcoming Integrated Watershed Management Planning process

(IWMP). The IWMP will provide advice and recommendations to the Government of Alberta on how to achieve the outcomes of the **Water for Life Strategy**, and the vision and mission of the AWC-WPAC.

**The Athabasca Watershed Council is guided by its vision, mission, goals, and shared values:**

**Vision:** The Athabasca River is ecologically healthy, diverse and dynamic.

**Mission:** The Athabasca Watershed Council promotes, fosters respect for, and plans for an ecologically healthy watershed by demonstrating leadership and facilitating informed decision-making to ensure environmental, economic and social sustainability.

### Goals:

- Ensure that the AWC is an effective, efficient and sustainable WPAC;
- Improve watershed knowledge and understanding within the WPAC;
- Champion increased awareness by providing information and education to all;
- Facilitate development and implementation of integrated management for the watershed;
- Encourage and work towards protection, conservation and enhancement of the ecological integrity of the watershed;
- Promote best practices to help achieve healthy aquatic ecosystems, safe and secure drinking water supplies and reliable quality water supplies for a sustainable economy.

## Shared Values:

### *We are:*

- Purpose-driven;
- Inclusive of all people, communities and points of view;
- Responsible and accountable to all members.

### *We believe water is a blessing and a gift essential for:*

- The environment;
- Society;
- The economy;
- The spirit.

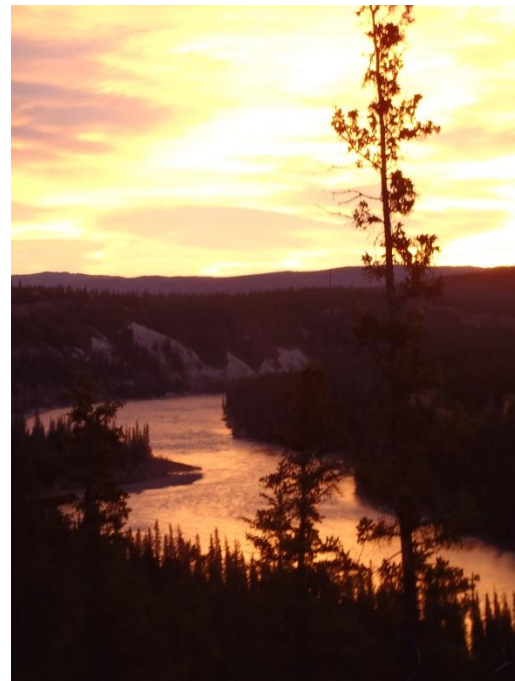
### *We value and respect:*

- Ecological health as foundational to all life;
- Water conservation;
- The environment and people;
- Aboriginal communities
  - Their cultures
  - Historical use of natural resources
  - Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK);
- The histories and values of all communities in the watershed;
- Consensus-based decision-making;
- Integrity, trust and transparency;
- Creativity, innovation and risk-taking;
- A high standard of achievement and conduct;
- Timely responses to issues;
- Economic necessities.

## About This Report

This is the second Annual Report of the Athabasca Watershed Council, and covers the period of the first full fiscal year of operation from April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2011. The year has been a busy for the Council, with key projects initiated and completed to build administrative capacity, begin assessment of the Athabasca Watershed, as well as focusing on active engagement of the people, sectors and communities in the greater watershed. During the first couple of years of any fledgling organization, the commitment of the Board of Directors is key to successful planning and the achievement of key goals.

The AWC-WPAC Board of Directors provided significant in-kind contributions of time, expertise and commitment to the first year operations and projects of the AWC-WPAC, and we are now looking forward to continuing this important work into 2012.





## Message from the President



We live in one of the most beautiful and diverse watersheds in the world. I think it's so important we recognize how fortunate we are to have fresh, pure water.

We have many accomplishments this past year to celebrate. We are very proud of Phase 1 of the Athabasca State of the Watershed Report. This first report on existing research tells us where we have good information and where there are data gaps. In 2011 we will move forward with Phase 2, select watershed indicators and in the future develop a Watershed management plan. Also, we have developed a new brochure and a website.

We need to fully understand how the **Water for Life Strategy**, under which the Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils are formed, will integrate with other emerging planning processes, in particular, the Land Use Framework and the Alberta Land Stewardship Act. We also need to have a better understanding of how watershed management plans will be implemented.

The word "*Athabasca*" means "*a meeting in the reeds*". The Athabasca Watershed Council has been busy this past year meeting with communities and people within our watershed to better understand issues and concerns. We have attended the Keepers of the Water IV Gathering, provided presentations to a number of advisory groups and hosted forums for Watershed Stewardship Groups and Municipalities.

It has been an honor for me to have been president for the past year and a half. I would like to thank the Board of Directors and our administration staff for all their hard work and dedication.



Lawone Olson

## Athabasca Watershed Council Financial Highlights

The April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2011, fiscal year was the first full year of operation for the AWC-WPAC. Utilizing the Simply Accounting Pro software program, Administration initiated a system of tracking project expenditures and budgeted funds allocated in the Annual Operational Plan and Budget.

On February 25, 2010, the Athabasca Watershed Council received \$500,000 from Alberta Environment as two year core operational funding. Of the \$500,000 in core operational funding, \$250,000 was released from investment for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2011, while the remaining \$250,000 was retained in a Term GIC to be utilized the following fiscal year. The AWC-WPAC also received \$100,000 in project funding from Alberta Environment for completion of the State of the Watershed - Phase 1 Report.

Administration prepared a Financial Statement in accordance with generally accepted Canadian accounting principles, audited by Juan Grande (Councillor, Town of Whitecourt), and Donna Mendelsohn (Watershed Steward – Central Athabasca Stewardship Society). As a responsibility to Alberta Environment, the Council has also contracted the services of Virginia Stafford Professional Corporation, C.G.A., of Hinton, Alberta, for the completion of a Review and Engagement Report for this fiscal year.

The audited financial statements will be posted on the AWC-WPAC website ([www.awc-wpac.ca](http://www.awc-wpac.ca)) upon completion, and will also be available upon request. The following financial highlights summarize the financial position of the Athabasca Watershed Council as of the fiscal year ending March 31, 2011:

### ASSETS

Cash	\$ 18,577
GIC	\$ 250,000
Receivables	\$ 40,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 308,577</b>

### REVENUE

Donations	\$ 120
Operating Grant	\$ 250,000
Project Funding	\$ 100,000
Bank Interest	\$ 1,828
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 351,948</b>

### LIABILITIES & EQUITY

Payroll Payable	\$ 3,082
GST Payable (Refund)	\$ -7,583
Deferred Cont. (Grant)	\$ 250,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 245,499</b>
Equity (Retained Earnings)	\$ 63,078
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES/EQUITY</b>	<b>\$ 308,577</b>

### EXPENSES

Subcontracts – General	\$ 12,078
Subcontracts – Project	\$ 100,000
Salaries & Benefits	\$ 101,692
Advertising & Promotion	\$ 5,509
Office & Administration	\$ 19,392
Travel	\$ 40,852
Forums/Engagement	\$ 7,980
Board/Staff Development	\$ 1,283
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 288,786</b>

**NET INCOME (Revenue less Expenses) \$63,162**

### *The 2010-2011 Board of Directors*

SECTOR	MEMBER	AFFILIATION
<b>Non-Government Organizations Sector (3)</b>	Paula Evans (Treasurer)	Crooked Creek Conservancy Society of Athabasca
	Mark Spafford	Tawatinaw River Watershed Stewards
	Tom Weber	Clearwater River Committee
<b>Industry (3)</b>	Janice Linehan	Suncor Energy Inc.
	Daniel Moore	Alberta Newsprint Company /Alberta Forest Products Association
	Janice Pitman	National Farmers' Union
<b>Government Sector (3)</b>	Richard Chabaylo	Alberta Environment / Government of Alberta
	Sonny Flett	Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo
	Lavone Olson (President)	Yellowhead County
<b>Aboriginal Sector (3)</b>	Doug Badger (Vice-President)	Regional Environmental Action Committee
	Bill Loutitt	Métis Nation of Alberta
	Lou Pawlowich	Métis Settlements General Council
<b>Other Sector (3)</b>	Wayne Brehaut	Public Member-at-large
	Charlie Ashbey	Public Member-at-large
	Marsha Hayward	Public Member-at-large
<b>Past-President (1)</b>	Vacant	



**The Athabasca Board of Directors and Staff** (left to right): Dan Moore; Charlie Ashbey; Janice Pitman; Tom Weber; Janice Linehan; Sonny Flett; Richard Chabaylo; Mary Richardson (alternate for Paula Evans); Marsha Hayward; Lavone Olson; Doug Badger. **Front** (kneeling): Connie Simmons (staff); Wayne Brehaut. **Missing:** Bill Loutitt; Paula Evans; Darlene Carifelle; Brenda Taillefer (staff).

## **Working Subcommittees of the AWC-WPAC**

Working Sub-committees are important to the function of the AWC-WPAC in their focus on the organization and direction of key year operational year projects.

**Executive Committee:** The purpose of the Executive Committee is to provide oversight and management decisions on the business of the AWC-WPAC, including administration of funds, setting human resources policy, staff direction, and addressing process concerns of the Board of Directors.

**Technical Committee:** The purpose of the Technical Committee is to guide and facilitate work to communicate and improve understanding and knowledge about the physical state of the Athabasca watershed including the state of current knowledge, knowledge gaps and priorities for further research, monitoring and management actions.

**Communications and Community Engagement Committee:** The purpose of this joint Committee is to keep those that live, work and play in the Athabasca basin informed of the activities and progress of the Athabasca Watershed Council, and to effectively engage people and communities in the work of the Athabasca Watershed Council by providing opportunities to build trust, share information and provide input.

**Finance Committee:** The purpose of the Finance and Fundraising Committee is to ensure the Athabasca Watershed Council is financially solvent and fiscally responsible.

**Nominations Committee:** The purpose of the Nominations Committee is to ensure all fifteen board positions are filled with the best possible candidates; selected in an open, fair and transparent manner.



**Jackfish River - lower Athabasca Watershed in spring**



## Highlights of 2010-2011

During the first full year of operation, the Athabasca Watershed Council worked on three key directions:

1. Continuing to build the administrative foundation for the AWC-WPAC;
2. The Athabasca State of the Watershed – Phase 1 Report as a first step towards the Final Athabasca State of the Watershed Report;
3. Introduction of the AWC-WPAC to the greater Athabasca Watershed constituency.

These key directions are reflected in the work completed under the six overarching goals of the AWC-WPAC:

### ***Goal A: Ensure that the AWC is an effective, efficient and sustainable WPAC***

- The Council hired a full-time Executive Director in May 2010 to assume the duties of administration of the AWC-WPAC under the direction of the Board of Directors.
- An Executive Assistant was hired in September 2010 to assist in the ongoing administrative duties of the Executive Director and the AWC-WPAC.
- Contract Consultant (Hatfield Consulting, Vancouver) was selected to complete the *Athabasca State of the Watershed – Phase 1 Report* for the period of July 10, 2010 – March 31, 2011.
- A permanent office was created at the Hinton Training Centre, Hinton, AB, with office space provided as an in-kind donation from Alberta Sustainable Resource Development.
- Strategic Planning Retreat (September 22-24, 2010) - completion of strategic planning direction of the organization up to fiscal years 2012-2014. Team-building for the Board of Directors was facilitated by Pat Letizia, Executive Director of Alberta Ecotrust.
- Completed a Three Year Strategic Plan for the AWC-WPAC for 2011-2014.
- Completed a One Year Operational Plan and Budget for 2010-11.
- Alberta WPAC Summit – October 20-22, 2010 – Cypress Hills. Alberta WPAC's agree to work collaboratively to address overarching watershed concerns throughout Alberta.
- Council financial accounting systems set up in preparation for application for charitable organization status with Revenue Canada.
- Application for Operational Year funding for 2012-12 submitted to Alberta Environment.
- Application for Project Funding submitted to Alberta Environment.
- AWC-WPAC Executive Director participation on Alberta WPAC Managers meetings, working towards common understanding and solutions for watershed assessment and planning in Alberta.

- Submitted the Annual Societies return for the AWC-WPAC.
- Submitted the Final Report to Alberta Environment on Project funding for the Athabasca State of the Watershed – Phase 1 Report.



**AWC-WPAC Board of Directors on tour of reclamation of Tailings Pond 1  
Suncor Energy Inc., Fort McMurray, AB – May 28, 2010**

### ***Goal B: Improve watershed knowledge and understanding within the WPAC***

- Completion of the Athabasca State of the Watershed – Phase 1 Report. The report is a working document that provides an extensive review of the current and available literature, data and traditional ecological knowledge of the Athabasca Watershed. The report provides a solid foundation for the State of the Watershed Phase 2 Report and the future Integrated Watershed Management Planning process.
- Board of Directors tour of Suncor Energy Inc. facilities, Fort McMurray, AB - including a presentation and tour of the reclamation project for Tailings Pond 1.
- Tour of Cheviot Mine (Teck Resources Ltd.) and their work to address selenium contamination issues was provided to the Board of Directors courtesy of Teck Resources Ltd. The AWC-WPAC toured Cheviot Mine in September 2010, and participated in an introductory workshop to their selenium management program. The AWC-WPAC will continue to work with Teck Resources Ltd. as they proceed on innovative methods to control selenium release in their mining operations.
- Meghan Payne, Executive Director of the Lesser Slave Lake Watershed Council, provided an introduction to the LSLWC, a watershed planning and advisory council responsible for the Lesser Slave Lake watershed, a sub-basin of the greater Athabasca watershed.



AWC-WPAC Board of Directors on tour of Cheviot Mine, Teck Resources Ltd. – September 2010

- Alberta Environment – presentation on the Cumulative Effects Management System and implications for the Athabasca Integrated Watershed Management Plan process.
- Presentation to the Board of Directors – a Primer for an Integrated Watershed Management Plan, by Tom Cottrell (North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance).
- Presentation by Karina Andrus (Alberta Environment) addressing the role of Government and of Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils regarding consultation with First Nations people, communities and leadership.

***Goal C: Champion increased awareness by providing information and education to all***

- Watershed Stewardship Group Forum – Athabasca, January 29, 2011. Watershed Stewardship Groups (WSG's) from throughout the Athabasca Watershed attended the first forum hosted by the AWC-WPAC. There are over twenty WSG's in the greater Athabasca Watershed providing essential stewardship work on various local watershed projects, from restoration of fish habitat and re-vegetation of riparian zones, to more complex local Watershed Management Planning processes. The WSG Forum provided an opportunity for the WSG's to introduce their groups and their work to the AWC-WPAC, and for the WPAC to provide an introduction to the vision, mission and goals of the Council.



Watershed stewardship groups gathered to share stories of their projects with other stewards and the Athabasca Watershed Council. The Alberta Water Council, the Alberta Stewardship Network and the Cows and Fish Program also participated in providing support to WSG's.

- Municipal Forum – Athabasca, February 16, 2011. The Athabasca Watershed Council invited all Municipalities within the Athabasca Watershed to participate in a Forum that provided both an introduction to the AWC-WPAC, but also showcased municipalities that have taken innovative approaches to water and watershed stewardship. The response from municipal representatives was very positive; the AWC-WPAC will be actively working with municipalities in preparation for the Athabasca Integrated Watershed Management process.

Melissa Mucha (Lac La Biche) addresses the gathering of Municipalities during the first introductory Municipal Forum hosted by the Athabasca Watershed Council.



- Communications to the general membership of the AWC – WPAC through the ***Athabasca Dispatch*** – quarterly newsletter, and the website [www.awc-wpac.ca](http://www.awc-wpac.ca). Website development will continue as watershed assessment and planning processes provide relevant information for the membership and general public.
- Participation in stewardship group support and public awareness – *Lakes-the Naked Truth II* booth at the Edmonton Boat and Sportsman Show and the Edmonton Outdoor Show.
- AWC-WPAC introductory presentations were made to the Millar Western (Whitecourt); the Forest Resource Advisory Group (West Fraser Ltd. – Hinton); FAAMA (Fort Assiniboine, AB); Hinton Chamber of Commerce; and the Lakeland College natural resource management program.

#### ***Goal D: Facilitate development and implementation of integrated management for the watershed***

- While the timing of the initiation of the AWC-WPAC precluded participation with the Land Use Framework – Lower Athabasca Management Plan’s Regional Advisory Council, the Council provided initial input to the LARP process in the fall 2010, and will continue to work with the LUF to foster better integration of both the regional planning processes and the Integrated Watershed Management Plan process.



***Goal E: Encourage and work towards protection, conservation and enhancement of the ecological integrity of the watershed.***

- Working towards the protection, conservation and enhancement of the ecological integrity of the watershed is implicit in all work of the AWC-WPAC, and includes encouraging and working with Watershed Stewardship Groups, as well as engaging and working with municipalities and industry in their efforts to improve environmental management practices. The Athabasca State of the Watershed assessment process also addresses key areas of concern for the ecological integrity of the Athabasca watershed, and will help to set priorities for specific assessment and recommendations for management.

***Goal F: Promote best practices to help achieve healthy aquatic ecosystems, safe and secure drinking water supplies and reliable quality water supplies for a sustainable economy.***

- As the three primary outcomes of Alberta's **Water for Life Strategy**, the focus and direction of the AWC-WPAC is to continue to incorporate these key elements into all aspects of watershed assessment, planning, awareness and education, and engagement of the great watershed constituency.

***What is next for the Athabasca Watershed Council?***

The AWC-WPAC has completed an update of their Three Year Strategic Plan and a One Year Operational Plan and Budget for 2011-12 and will be proceeding with key directions.

- The Council's focus continues to be on engaging the people and sectors who live, work and have an interest in the health and sustainability of the Athabasca watershed. Outreach to all sectors within the watershed will continue, building on the initial introduction with Municipalities and Watershed Stewardship Groups, and extending to the industry sector, and aboriginal people and communities who live in and have a profound connection to the Athabasca watershed.
- A second key focus in 2011-2012 will be to continue the watershed assessment process through the Athabasca State of the Watershed – Phase 2 Report. In order to facilitate the SoW process, the AWC-WPAC will be hiring a Watershed Science Coordinator in 2011 to facilitate the organization and management of the State of the Watershed Report process.
- The Council has also initiated the creation of an Athabasca Watershed Science Advisory Team, comprised of experts in four important watershed science disciplines:
  - **Hydrology and climate change** – Dr. Ernst Kerkoven (Alberta Environment)
  - **Groundwater** – Dr. Margaret Klebek (Alberta Environment)

- **Water Quality** – Dr. David Schindler (University of Alberta)
- **Fisheries and Aquatic Ecosystem health** – TBA

The Council will be working with the science team over the course of the State of the Watershed – Phase 2 project, and will be actively requesting the participation of other experts in key watershed science areas as well as Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) as required.

- Preparation for the Athabasca Integrated Management Planning process will also be initiated, with a focus on learning from other WPAC experiences, and inviting academia to help chart the building blocks of the Athabasca IWMP process.

## **Supporters**

The Board would like to thank the many individuals who have been instrumental in helping the AWC-WPAC accomplish a successful first full year of operation. Dave Mussell (AENV) in his assistance with the Athabasca State of the Watershed – Phase 1 Report; Tom Cottrell, North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance for a first look at the Integrated Watershed Management Plan process; Rob Galon, Director of the Hinton Training Centre (ASRD), Hinton for providing office and communications support; and Petra Rowell for her able support as Interim Administrator. Also thanks is extended to Hatfield Consulting, Martin Davies and Adrienne Gilbride, for their timely and professional work on the Athabasca State of the Watershed – Phase 1 Report, and to Dr. William Donahue for his review of the SoW – Phase 1 Report.

Other active partners contributed to the success of the Watershed Stewardship Group Forum, and include Terry Sly (Alberta Water Council); Michelle Riopel (Alberta Stewardship Network), and Kerri O'Shaughnessy (Cows and Fish Program).

Special thanks also go to the following for financial and in-kind support for 2010-2011 without which, the work of the Council would not have been possible: Alberta Environment, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, Alberta Newsprint Company, Athabasca University, Suncor Energy Inc., Teck Resources Ltd., Yellowhead County, and OuiPrint Ltd., a local printing business in Hinton, AB.



**Our Watershed – Our Responsibility**

***For more information, contact:***

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