



Annual Report
2015-2016

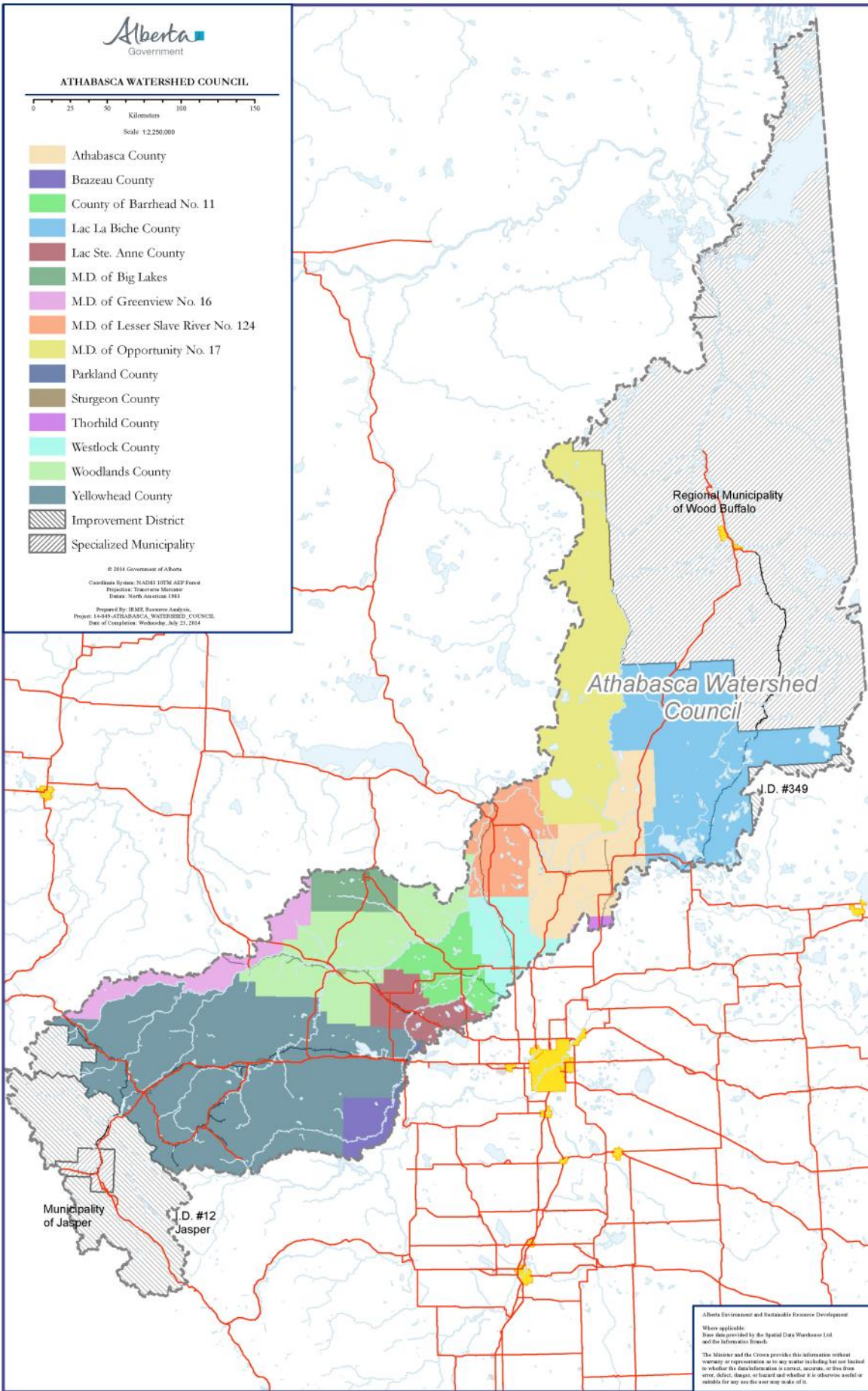


ATHABASCA WATERSHED COUNCIL



- Athabasca County
- Brazeau County
- County of Barrhead No. 11
- Lac La Biche County
- Lac Ste. Anne County
- M.D. of Big Lakes
- M.D. of Greenview No. 16
- M.D. of Lesser Slave River No. 124
- M.D. of Opportunity No. 17
- Parkland County
- Sturgeon County
- Thorhild County
- Westlock County
- Woodlands County
- Yellowhead County
- Improvement District
- Specialized Municipality

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Alberta Environment and Sustainable Economic Development
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Table of Contents

- 4 About the AWC**
- 6 Board Members and Staff**
- 8 Message from the Board Chair**
- 10 Committee Success**
- 12 Financial Statements**
- 14 Our Thanks**

All Photos by Jason Ponto.

About the AWC

Established in 2009, the Athabasca Watershed Council (AWC-WPAC) is a designated Watershed Planning and Advisory Council (WPAC) working in partnership with the Government of Alberta to achieve the goals adopted in the Provincial Government's *Water for Life* strategy.

We work with stakeholders throughout the watershed to facilitate informed decision-making by providing timely and credible information about the Athabasca River watershed.

Our organization currently represents over 200 members, including individuals and organizations from academia, industry, environmental and stewardship groups, various levels of government, communities, and citizens.



The Goals of the *Water for Life* Strategy:

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

Our Vision:

The Athabasca watershed is ecologically healthy, diverse, and dynamic.



Our Mission:

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

Board Members and Staff

Left to right:

*Garry Horton, Jamie Giberson, Carolyn Campbell,
Tim Polzin, Dan Moore, Janice Pitman, Terry Sheehan,
Doug Kariel, Jason Ponto, Brian Deheer, Marv Fyten.*

Missing:

*Doug Badger, Dave Loyie, Janice Linehan,
John O'Connor, Monica Dahl, Kai Ma.*



To ensure that the AWC is representative of voices from across the watershed, the Board of Directors is comprised of elected seats representing specified stakeholder groups.

As outlined in the Board of Directors Terms of Reference, the Board of Directors has a maximum of 21 members (including the past Chairperson) representing specified positions for industry (5 seats), non-governmental organizations (5 seats), governments (5 seats), aboriginals (3 seats), and members at large (2 seats).

In March 2016, the AWC hired an administrative coordinator. Based out of our new office in Athabasca, the administrative coordinator will help the AWC to accomplish the day-to-day tasks required to achieve its vision of an ecologically healthy, diverse and dynamic watershed.

2015-2016 Board of Directors:

Brian Deheer (Chair): Stewards of Lac La Biche Watershed *(NGO)*

Doug Badger (Vice-Chair): Regional Environmental Action Committee *(Aboriginal)*

Carolyn Campbell (Secretary): Alberta Wilderness Association *(NGO)*

Tim Polzin (Treasurer): Individual *(Member at Large)*

Bob Savage: Alberta Environment and Parks *(Government)*

Dan Moore: Alberta Newsprint Company *(Industry)*

Dave Loyie: Aboriginal Alliance of Alberta *(Aboriginal)*

Doug Kariel: Individual *(Member at Large)*

Garry Horton: M.D. of Lesser Slave River *(Government)*

Jamie Giberson: Aspen Regional Water Services Commission *(Government)*

Janice Linehan: Suncor Energy Inc. *(Industry)*

Janice Pitman: Agricultural Producer *(Industry)*

John O'Connor: Individual *(NGO)*

Kai Ma: Natural Resources Conservation Board *(Government)*

Marv Fyten: Individual *(NGO)*

Monica Dahl: Alberta Environment and Parks *(Government)*

Terry Sheehan: Agricultural Producer *(Industry)*

Staff:

Jason Ponto: Administrative Coordinator

Message from the Board Chair



This has been another building year for the Athabasca Watershed Council. We have continued to address challenges, and have tried to make best progress where we can. We are glad to report that some of our efforts have come to fruition.

We began the 2015-2016 year by focussing our efforts on two constraining circumstances: having limited funding and no staff. Understandably, this required us to concentrate on doing our best with what we had. To the Board's credit, we have benefitted from a (nearly full) slate of very talented, conscientious and dedicated Board members, several of whom have gone beyond the call of duty in their service.

As a way of reducing our meeting costs, we have been holding meetings at locations that are central to the watershed, and which require somewhat less travel costs for our Board members: Athabasca and Lac La Biche.

We have made efforts to build relationships with partners in the watershed. Alberta WaterSmart is one example: this agency has invited the AWC to be involved in the Athabasca River Basin Initiative (ARBI), a project that will result in a modelling tool for the watershed, among other things. A Council member will participate in Working Group meetings expected to begin this autumn.

We were privileged to present on the AWC at the ARBRI Days conference in Edmonton in November, 2015, hosted by the Athabasca River Basin Research Institute (ARBRI). We look forward to continued collaboration with the Institute, which is housed at Athabasca University's Athabasca campus.

We have also met with professors from the University of Alberta's Intersections of Sustainability collaborative research network. This research network has a specific focus on the Peace-Athabasca Delta and Mackenzie River Basin, on issues of water governance, climate change, resource development, and on perspectives of rural and Indigenous communities. We hope to develop further in that collaboration as their project carries on.

We also participated in Alberta government consultation and information opportunities, including workshops on the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan and provincial wetland policy, in order to connect with watershed partners and highlight the Council's vision, mission and values.

We have found a new home office for the organization: in the Railway Station building in Athabasca. The appeal of this location is exciting: it's a historic building, on a busy street in Athabasca, and it's directly in front of the Athabasca River, literally a "stone's throw away." (Okay, maybe you'd need to have a good arm.)

Last, but certainly not least, we have hired an Administrative Coordinator: Jason Ponto. Jason is an Athabasca native (born & raised), who is finishing a doctoral dissertation in the field of Sociology. He started on March 7, and he has been working part-time. He's already been a big help and a tremendous asset to the team, and we look forward to his continued contributions.

As we prepare for the coming year, we hope to build on these accomplishments. We will continue building relationships in the basin, and we hope to strengthen our financial position, so that we can better address any and all water-related questions that may come to us. Furthermore, with our series of State of the Watershed reports complete, we look forward to embarking on the process of developing an Integrated Watershed Management Plan to serve the basin and its communities.

Sincerely,
Brian Deheer

Committee Success



Volunteers are the heart and soul of our organization. In addition to the Executive Committee, most of the AWC's work is structured around two committees.

The AWC's Communications and Community Engagement (C&CE) Committee is vital to the stakeholder engagement process. The purpose of the C&CE Committee is to engage watershed residents in the work of the AWC by providing opportunities to build trust, share knowledge, and promote awareness of and participation with the AWC mission. The C&CE Committee, chaired by Janice Pitman, is comprised of eleven volunteers.

The AWC's Technical Committee ensures that our WPAC has the expertise necessary to collect, interpret, and share the information required to support meaningful stakeholder engagement. In general, the purpose of the Technical Committee is to improve our understanding and knowledge of the state of the Athabasca River watershed. The Technical committee, comprised of eleven members, is co-chaired by Carolyn Campbell and Kai Ma.

Report: Communications and Community Engagement (C&CE) Committee

The initial meetings of the C&CE Committee focused on the board directive to develop short and long term outreach plans to improve recognition of the AWC, build trust, renew relationships, and develop communication links. C&CE members recognize the need to establish how aboriginals, municipal governments, industry, agriculture, and citizens expect to be included in the development of AWC-WPAC initiatives and policies (such as the development of the Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP)), and to determine where their priorities and interests lie. Board members decided to attend community workshops directly related to the AWC-WPAC's short-term goals, such as the Lower Athabasca Region Landscape Management Plan and WaterSmart's Athabasca River Basin Initiative (ARBI).

Over the upcoming year, we plan to host meetings to share information compiled from the AWC-WPAC's existing State of the Watershed (SOW) reports. The Technical and C&CE committees will work jointly to determine what major issues are identified in the SOW reports and thereby determine the focus of the summary. The meetings will be held in the upper, middle, and lower Athabasca basin, and in aboriginal communities within the watershed. The SOW summary will spotlight the current conditions in the Athabasca Watershed and thereby initiate discussions to facilitate prioritizing concerns in greater detail than has previously been done. This work will lead to the development of a Terms of Reference for the IWMP.

Janice Pitman,
Chair, C&CE Committee

Report: Technical Committee

In its initial meeting of the year, the Technical Committee agreed to focus on working with the Communications and Community Engagement Committee (C&CE) to relay information to different sectors, and to provide information to the Board to help understand different watershed issues as they arise. Technical Committee members met next to support the development and review of AWC-WPAC's 2016-17 work plan.

At its March 2016 meeting, the Board confirmed a priority to develop a community outreach presentation of the findings of all of AWC-WPAC's State of the Watershed reports. If the incoming Board confirms this direction, the next steps are for the Technical and C&CE Committees to jointly decide on the areas of focus; the Technical Committee can then work with Alberta Environment and Parks to engage technical expertise to prepare the presentation. Future work could also include developing additional information sheets tied to AWC-WPAC priorities.

Carolyn Campbell and Kai Ma,
Co-Chairs, Technical Committee

Financial Statements



**Financial Statement
2015/16 Fiscal Year
As of March 31, 2016**

Statement of Assets and Liabilities

Financial Assets	<i>2015/16 Actuals</i>
Cash	55,300
Accounts Receivable	9,427
Prepaid Expenses	1,883
<i>Total Assets</i>	<i>66,611</i>
Capital Assets	
Computer Equipment	1,207
Liabilities	
<i>Total Liabilities</i>	<i>2,135</i>
Net assets as of March 31, 2016	65,683
General Fund Balance	55,300

Statement of General Fund Operations

<i>Revenues</i>	<i>2015/16 Actuals</i>	<i>2015/16 Budget</i>
Province of Alberta Grant	100,000	
Other Income	112	
Interest Income	32	
<i>Total Revenue</i>	<i>100,143</i>	
<i>Expenditures</i>		
Meeting Expenses		
Board of Directors Meetings	30,281	42,800
2015 Annual General Meeting	4,750	7,300
Other Meetings	4,089	4,000
General and Admin Expenses	46,485	35,136
Outreach and Committees	341	7,264
Staffing	4,666	14,400
Project Funding	-	11,143
<i>Total Expenditures</i>	<i>90,612</i>	<i>122,043</i>
Carry-Over Funding	55,300	33,057

Our Thanks



At 1,231 kilometers in length, the Athabasca River is the longest in Alberta. Gathering and sharing information from such a large area is impossible without help from myriad volunteers and partners from across the watershed.

We would like to send particular thanks to the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance and to Portage College, both of whom generously stored some of our belongings for much of the past year.

Also, thanks to the members of our Peer Support Panel, Dave Trew, David Samm, and Rhonda Clarke-Gauthier, who have been supportive in offering help and counsel when requested. We would also like to extend a big thanks to Dave Mussell, who has been a valuable and much-appreciated support to our organization this year and in the past.

Finally, as always, we are grateful for the long hours spent by the many volunteers and board members that keep our organization moving forward.

Collaborations and Partnerships

We are grateful for the financial contributions and shared expertise of our primary partner, the Government of Alberta's department of Environment and Parks.



We also gratefully acknowledge the support and contributions of the following partners, without whom we could not function:

Aboriginal Alliance of Alberta

Agricultural Industry of Alberta

Alberta Culture and Community Spirit

Alberta Newsprint Company

Alberta Wilderness Association

Alberta WPACs—Peer Advisory Group

Aspen Regional Water Services Commission

Athabasca Bioregional Society

Athabasca Heritage Society

Athabasca University

Crooked Creek Conservancy Society of Alberta

Lac La Biche County

Municipal District of Lesser Slave River

Natural Resource Conservation Board

North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance

Portage College

Regional Environmental Action Committee

Stewards of Lac La Biche Watershed

Suncor Energy Inc.



Athabasca Watershed Council

Office: 5101-50th Avenue, Athabasca, Alberta

Mail: PO Box 1058, Athabasca, AB, T9S 2A8

Email: admin@awc-wpac.ca

Web: www.awc-wpac.ca

