

Information Sheet # 2

Athabasca Watershed Stewardship Group Forum—January 2011

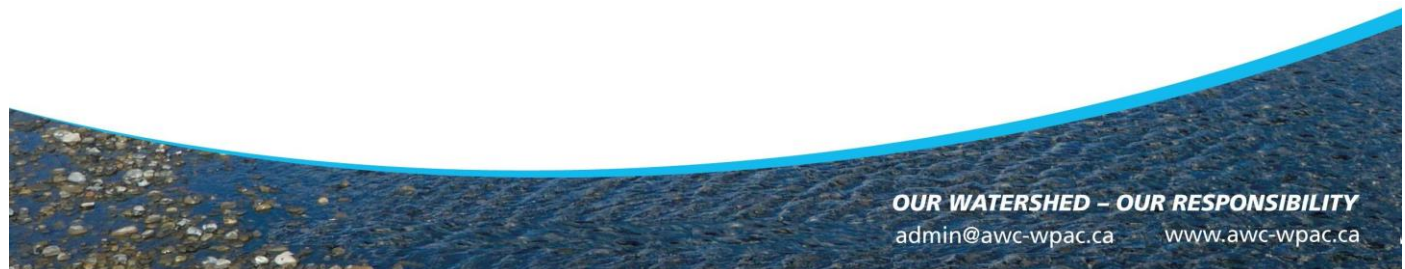
The **Athabasca Watershed Council** hosted a Forum for **Athabasca Watershed Stewardship Groups** on January 29, 2011 and despite freezing temperatures and bad road conditions, stewards from throughout the water-shed made the gathering a success.

After an introductory presentation by the AWC-WPAC, the workshop focused on stewardship action from the upper headwaters to the lower Athabasca at Fort McMurray. Stewardship work is challenging and diverse, and focuses on both local and regional concerns and projects, including (but not limited to) fish passage and habitat restoration in Hinton; watershed assessment and management planning at Lac La Nonne; gravel mining issues along the Athabasca at Fort Assiniboine; water withdrawals for industry from the Clearwater River (a recognized Canadian Heritage River in Canada); and river re-alignment and riparian damage in the Tawatinaw River.



Helping watershed stewards is a worthwhile endeavour, and support groups provide invaluable assistance through funding and providing information for stewardship work throughout Alberta. The **Alberta Stewardship Network** outlined their project grant program and capacity-building opportunities for stewards. The **Cows and Fish Program** provided sound advice on riparian (green vegetated edge along all water bodies) protection as well as resource support for stewards doing innovative work for riparian health.

The WSG Forum provided an excellent introduction for stewards to other stewards, as well as to the AWC-WPAC. The Council looks forward to building a strong relationship with Athabasca stewards in the future.



What We Heard from Watershed Stewardship Groups:

Is there value in meeting together and working together as WSG's?

Yes, sharing support, information, participation, action;

Information sharing; shortens the learning curve;

Yes. One voice is not as strong as many. Can find commonalities, share experiences. Influencing change (legislative and policy);

Obtaining recognition and validity.

Build on what has already been done; learn from other's mistakes;

Sharing resources/ideas/templates;

"Leverage experiences to create efficiencies";

Value in meetings. Yes, learn from others.

What are the most pressing issues?

Municipal and WSG disconnect and common understanding/awareness; Unregulated/uncoordinated land use;

Nutrients in Upper Athabasca (point and non-point);

Oil sands related issues; water quality and quantity;

Tawatinaw bridge replacement; dollars over environmental issues (pay now or pay later); Engaging the grassroots (common people);

Cumulative impacts;

Getting government on board;

What is next for Athabasca WSG's – how do you see the relationship with the Athabasca Watershed Council unfolding?

Regulating development (Gov't is going downward on this);

Helping facilitate communication not just in the major centres but in between too;

Provide or be a coordinator to work with WSG's and take on some capacity (e.g. Administrative, project); Be a voice for WSG's;

Help with funding;

WPAC members should attend REAC! WPAC needs a clear understanding of WSG's Legacy of the WPAC's is unclear in terms of WSG's;

Encourage grassroots participation (communication);

W.S.B. supporting one another on issues of importance; Consult, and provide input AWC;

Feedback coming together

Possible resource remains to be seen though; we need to know what is happening