

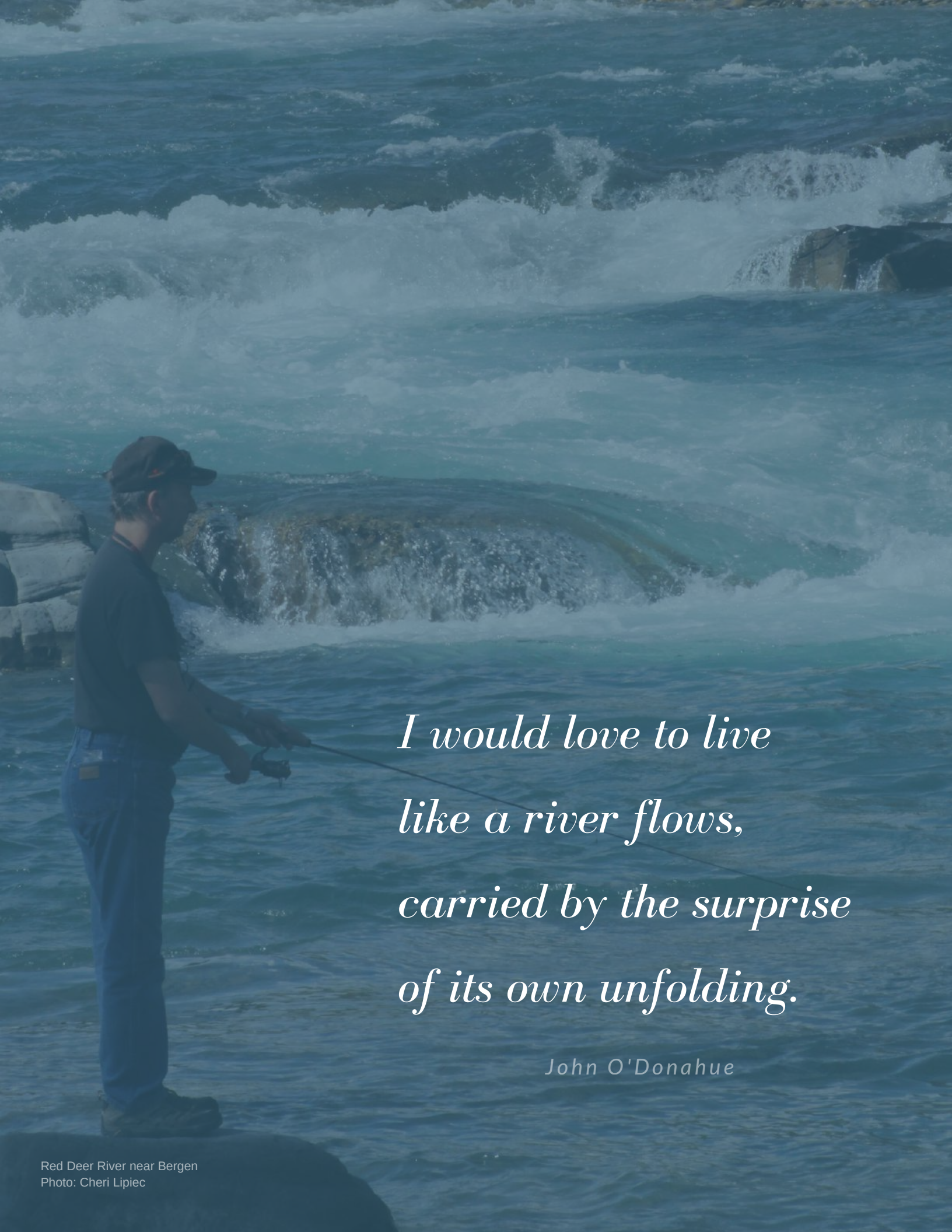


# ANNUAL REPORT

YEAR IN REVIEW | 2018-2019





A man in a dark shirt, blue jeans, and a cap stands on a rock in a river, fishing. The water is turbulent with white rapids. A faint rainbow is visible in the mist created by the rapids. The overall image has a blue tint.

*I would love to live  
like a river flows,  
carried by the surprise  
of its own unfolding.*

*John O'Donahue*



# GREETINGS FROM OUR TEAM

Welcome to the 2018-19 Annual Report of the Red Deer River Watershed Alliance. It is always a pleasure to be able to share our work with our members and people curious to learn more. When our team met to discuss what to include in this year's report, we quickly agreed on a symbol of our work. A swiss-army knife – that multi-functional tool and key companion for any adventure.

As a Watershed Planning & Advisory Council, we have multiple tools for different aspects of watershed management. Whether it is environmental education, watershed planning, research and analysis, policy advice, or getting our hands dirty planting willow stakes – we like to show up and get the job done.

This year we hosted events that brought people together including a Spring Forum, Fall Forum, and even a bike tour. We coordinated a multi-sector review of the *Approved Water Management Plan for the South Saskatchewan River Basin*, issuing recommendations to safeguard regional water security. We continued education programs to schools and other groups, and organized a two-day bus tour for municipal elected officials, staff, and MLAs to the southeastern part of the watershed. In the office, we continued to support implementation of *Blueprint: An Integrated Watershed Management Plan (Phase One: Water Quality)*, reviewed the land-use proposal for Bighorn Country, and laid the groundwork for some exciting projects to map riparian areas and improve water literacy via storytelling in 2019/2020.

Our renewed focus on communications also helped us reach a broader audience this past year, with more people reading the monthly e-newsletter, more social media followers, and more media coverage.

While driven by our staff and Board of Directors, much of this work wouldn't be possible without our vast network of partners – municipalities, stewardship groups, business and industry leaders, the provincial government, subject matter experts, and more.

Your support means the world to us – it's what allows us to continue our vital work to protect the health of the Red Deer River watershed and our communities. To all of you who have pitched in time, money, expertise, or a word of encouragement along the way – we extend a heartfelt thank-you.

Onwards and upwards to an exciting 2019/2020!

Thank you,

Jeff Hanger  
Executive Director

Kent Dyck  
Chair, RDRWA

Coulee near Brooks, Alberta  
Photo: Rosemarie Ferjuc



# YOUR WATERSHED

What image comes to mind when you think of Central Alberta?

A golden canola field. Fly fishing on the banks of the Red Deer River. A doughnut shop. A pumpjack. Straight gravel roads and the radio on blast. A glistening bull trout. Waterskiing on a glassy lake. A pint of local beer.

The Red Deer River watershed stretches across Rocky Mountains, foothills, boreal forest, parkland, and grasslands. From tip to toe, travelling across the watershed can feel like visiting different planets. From the braided fast-flowing waters near Sundre to the starkly beautiful and dry Badlands. From the new suburbs of Red Deer (population 103,000) to the dusty main street of Rowley (population 8).

Water connects all of these places. There are the 15 tributaries that feed the Red Deer River, four major recreational lakes (Gull, Sylvan, Pine, and Buffalo), and many local gems in between. The future of our communities and industries rests in the future of our water.

As time marches on, our watershed is facing numerous challenges. We face some of the highest risks of flood and drought in Alberta, mounting demands for limited water resources, the uncertainty of climate change, and a variety of land-use pressures.

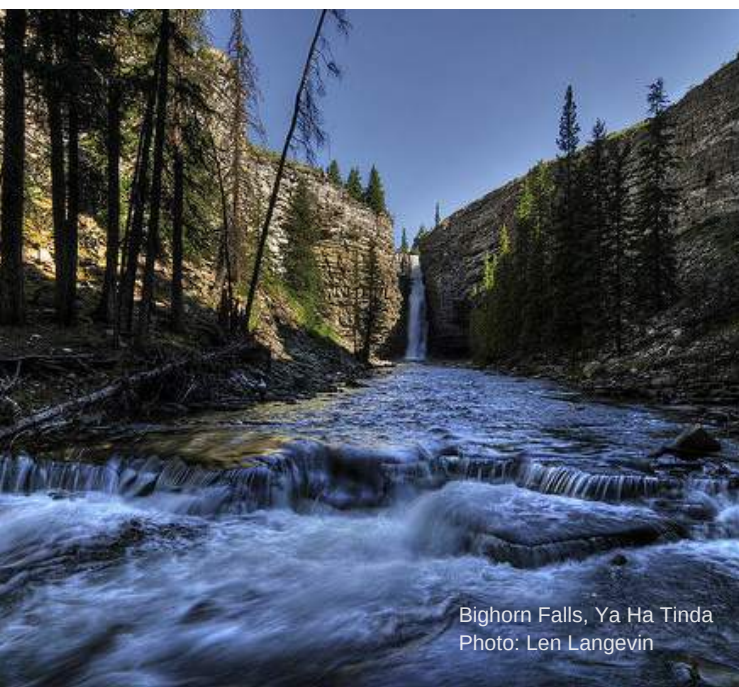
But we also have many opportunities. Time and time again, central Albertans have banded together to make sound decisions regarding how we manage our watershed. Collaborative watershed management, where everyone pitches in and rolls up their sleeves, is a future worth investing in.



Canola Fields near Three Hills  
Photo: Rosemarie Ferjuc



Skoki Valley, Banff National Park  
Photo: Tjarda and Rob Barratt



Bighorn Falls, Ya Ha Tinda  
Photo: Len Langevin

# WHO WE ARE

## STAFF ( 2018-2019 )

Executive Director	Jeff Hanger
Executive Assistant	Kelly Dodds
Watershed Planning Manager	Josée Méthot
Outreach and Communications Manager	Rosemarie Ferjuc
Watershed Program Coordinator (term)	Jessy Rajan

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS ( 2018-2019 )

Phil Boehme (Alberta Environment and Parks)	Amy Jin (Red Deer College-Student)
Jean Bota (Red Deer County)	Brandon Leask (Alberta Agriculture and Forestry)
Al Campbell (Town of Stettler)	Robert Mills (Academic)
Dale Christian (Red Deer River Naturalists)	Adam Minke (Individual)
Michael Dawe (City of Red Deer)	Christine Moore (Red Deer County)
Kent Dyck (NOVA Chemicals)	Alia Snively (Nature Conservancy of Canada)
Kevin Gannon (Town of Sylvan Lake)	JoAnne Volk (Repsol)
Mike Iwanyshyn (Natural Resources Conservation Board)	Natasha Wright (Individual)



# ABOUT THE RDRWA

The Red Deer River Watershed Alliance (RDRWA) was established in 2005 as the official Watershed Planning and Advisory Council (WPAC) for the Red Deer River Watershed, as designated under the Government of Alberta's *Water for Life* Strategy. The Alliance leads on watershed planning, promoting beneficial management practices, fostering stewardship activities, reporting on the state of the watershed and educating users on the importance of water resources.

To date, we have developed a range of resources, including a comprehensive State of the Watershed report, four Background Technical Reports, and in 2016, we released *Blueprint- An Integrated Watershed Management Plan for the Red Deer River Watershed* focused on water quality.

Watershed management is complex, and as a WPAC we have a responsibility to ensure that we engage with many groups of people with diverse perspectives, values, interests and concerns.

All citizens have an important role to play when it comes to deciding how Alberta's water resources are managed, and the RDRWA strives to serve as a collaborative forum where stakeholders are able to have their voices heard.

## *Our Vision*

*The Red Deer River watershed  
will be healthy, dynamic and  
sustainable through the  
efforts of the entire  
community.*



Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park



Downstream from Bassano Dam  
Photo: Rosemarie Ferjuc



Rosebud River Valley  
Photo: Jon Groves

# WATER AND LAND ARE CONNECTED

The Red Deer River watershed is a complex place and there is a lot going on at any given time. There are natural processes like flooding, erosion, droughts, and changing weather and climate conditions. There are industrial activities, small and large-scale farming, new housing developments, municipal water withdrawals, and sewage treatment outfalls.

With over 55 urban centres and 18 rural municipalities within the watershed, there are a number of different levels of government overseeing a diverse range of issues related to land use, water, and economic development. If you add in all the people, plants and animals living in the watershed- well, it's a lot to think about!

Ecosystems are complex and rarely follow simple or predictable changes through time. If we want to understand all of the issues, and to prepare for the inevitable changing social, ecological and economic conditions facing the Red Deer River watershed in the future, we need to recognize that land use planning and watershed management are intimately connected.

A watershed approach provides a unique lens to better understand how activities on the landscape influence water quality and quantity, fosters a deeper connection to the landscape we live in, and helps ensure activities upstream are respectful of downstream users.



Riders on horseback near Sundre, Alberta



# We Are A FORUM

Our regular events are a great place to hear the latest updates on science, policy, and stewardship, while bringing the community together. Some highlights from this year included:

- **Annual General Meeting (June 2018):** Featuring a keynote by biologist Lorne Fitch, a nature walk, an art showcase, and Board elections.
- **Bike Tour (August 2018):** Our first-ever bike tour ran from Lacombe to Red Deer and showcased local businesses and stewardship success stories.
- **Fall Forum (October 2018):** We had excellent turnout for this event with presentations by the Town of Sylvan Lake, Rural Municipalities of Alberta, the Insurance Bureau of Canada, and the Alberta Energy Regulator.
- **Spring Forum (March 2019):** As we try to reach new audiences, this event looked at water through the lens of recreation (see next page).

The Outreach Committee is another great way to get involved. Volunteers from across sectors get together to share updates, attend community events, and partner on projects. From pond dipping at Ellis Bird Farms' Bug Jamboree to organizing field tours, the Outreach Committee helps us leverage the power of community. We are always looking for volunteers, or anyone with an interest in learning more about watershed issues!



Pelicans, Sylvan Lake  
Photo: Monica Schmidt





Ice Hockey, Banff National Park



Ice fishing, Gull Lake



Raven River in winter  
Photo: Rosemarie Ferjuc

## 2019 SPRING FORUM Ice, Ice Maybe?

Our spring forum 'Ice, Ice, Maybe?' on World Water Day, March 22, brought people from across the watershed together to learn more about what increasingly warmer winters may mean for us and our favourite winter sports.

Dr. David Sauchyn, Director of the Prairie Adaptation Research Collaborative (PARC) at the University of Regina helped answer some of these complex questions in his presentation, "The Red Deer River in a Changing Climate" which examined climate variability and hydrology of the past millennium in Canada's western interior.

Our cohort of speakers, including James Gordon from Thompson Rivers University, gave attendees a compelling look at the interplay of climate and hydrology on the natural resources of the western prairies and the Red Deer River watershed.



# WE ARE COMMUNICATORS AND EDUCATORS

A big part of what we do as a Watershed Planning and Advisory Council is to raise awareness about water, watersheds, and our human interactions with these systems. Some highlights from our work this year include:

- A free monthly E-newsletter jam-packed with good information and opportunities
- The first watershed road signs in Alberta (6 and counting!)
- A targeted Grade 5 school program focused on Wetland Ecosystems
- Shaping the content of the new Alberta K- Grade 4 curriculum review to include water and wetlands
- Partnering with the City of Red Deer to deliver a Healthy Waters poster contest for youth

We also provide presentations by request to stewardship groups, schools and camps, municipalities, post-secondary institutions, Hutterite colonies, and more. Please reach out if you or your organization would like to learn more about watersheds and what you can do to help.





# WE ARE A RESOURCE

We strive to be a “go-to” resource for members to learn about the watershed and specific actions that can be taken to support watershed health. In 2018/19, we focused on improving programming for municipalities, recognizing the role of municipalities as major land-use decision-makers and community leaders.

One highlight this year was a bus tour for municipal elected officials, municipal staff, and MLAs with the goal of showcasing water and land-related topics across the southeastern portion of watershed. Over the course of two days, the group toured wetland restoration sites, grazing and range management projects, irrigation districts, the Bassano Dam, and even stayed the night at the UNESCO World Heritage Site Dinosaur Provincial Park on the banks of the Red Deer River.

In 2018/19, we presented to several municipal Councils about watershed management, and participated at key planning tables including the Sylvan Lake Management Committee and the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) Municipal Action Committee. We supported the Red Deer River Municipal Users’ Group workshops on source water protection, and have been building our capacity to help municipalities review draft statutory plans (e.g., Intermunicipal Development Plans and Municipal Development Plans) through a watershed lens.

We will continue to build programs to support municipalities in 2019/2020. Priorities include organizing spatial data to support GIS-based planning, providing input on statutory planning, and participating in municipal committees.



Municipal Bus Tour, Dinosaur Provincial Park  
Photo: Kelly Dodds

# WE ARE PARTNERS

Connecting with others, encouraging collaboration and shared learning, and broadening participation is at the heart of what we do as a WPAC. While the story of watershed management in the Red Deer River basin is a story that is still unfolding, our progress to date has been driven by a vast network of partners and committed citizens.

As a multi-sector organization, we believe that everyone has a role to play in watershed management - stewardship groups, municipalities, industry and business leaders, the provincial government, academia, First Nations and Métis, and citizens (and more). Some key activities this year included:

- **Stewardship of riparian areas along the Blindman River:** We worked closely with the Agroforestry and Woodlot Extension Society and other partners to map riparian areas and coordinate grassroots stewardship and restoration efforts.
- **Promoting lake watershed management:** We hosted a two-day conference in Buffalo Lake with the Alberta Lake Management Society, marking the end of a three-year partnership to monitor water quality in 11 local lakes.
- **Supporting local watershed stewardship:** We worked with the Medicine River, Lacombe Lake and Gull Lake Stewardship Societies to advance community watershed stewardship initiatives.
- **Partnering with scientists and academics:** We work with the Olds College Land & Water Resources program to supervise student projects and are a community partner in the Global Water Futures Prairie Water project through the University of Saskatchewan.
- **Promoting beneficial management practices for hydraulic fracturing:** We met with industry to discuss beneficial management practices for hydraulic fracturing, emphasizing the need for alternatives to fresh surface water sources.



2018 WPAC Summit in Peace River



# YOUR WATERSHED

## Get to Know the Red Deer River Watershed

Watersheds are like Russian nesting dolls. A small one fits into a bigger one, which fits into a bigger one. The Red Deer River watershed is part of the larger South Saskatchewan watershed, which is itself part of the larger Hudson's Bay watershed.

The Red Deer River watershed is also made up of 15 smaller sub-watersheds- or "bite-sized" areas that nest within the larger watershed. These sub-watersheds include a rich diversity of lakes, wetlands, creeks, tributaries and the lands that surround them.

The Red Deer River watershed is 49,650 km<sup>2</sup>- an area home to over 300,000 people and larger in size than Denmark! The headwaters of the Red Deer River originate in the Skoki Valley of Banff National Park and from there the river flows over 724 kilometres to join the South Saskatchewan River in Saskatchewan. The South Saskatchewan then continues through the Saskatchewan river system to Lake Winnipeg, en route to Hudson's Bay.

Land uses and the natural areas in the Red Deer River watershed form a mosaic of interacting landscape elements. Land used within the watershed include urban and rural development, agriculture, forestry, recreation and tourism, linear developments (e.g., roads and pipelines) and industry.

*The Red Deer River watershed is 49,650 km<sup>2</sup> - an area larger in size than Denmark!*



Red Deer River near Garrington  
Photo: Kelsey Kure





# WE ARE PLANNERS AND ANALYSTS

Photo: Mistaya Canyon, Banff National Park

Facts matter. As a science-based organization, the Red Deer River Watershed Alliance works to advance our shared understanding of key watershed issues through research and analysis. Some highlights of our work in 2018/19 included:

- Review of the *Approved Water Management Plan for the South Saskatchewan River Basin*: We coordinated a multi-sector committee to review the implementation of this plan 10 years after its' creation. As the key plan guiding water allocation in our watershed, a periodic review is required, and were able to make specific recommendations to safeguard the water security of our region.
- Implementation of *Blueprint: An Integrated Watershed Management Plan for the Red Deer River watershed (Phase One: Water Quality)*. Released in 2016, the RDRWA continues to engage key partners on actions from the plan.
- Review of the Government of Alberta's proposal for the Bighorn Backcountry: We reviewed the proposal, assessed implications for the headwaters of the Red Deer River watershed, and shared the review with our members and the Government of Alberta.

The RDRWA will continue to engage on key files as required in 2019/2020, and are pleased to share that we will be organizing spatial data and investing in our capacity to support GIS-based mapping in 2019 and beyond. Please reach out if you interested in providing volunteer scientific or subject matter expertise as part of our planning and mapping efforts. .

***The RDRWA works collaboratively with all levels of government to build partnerships and advance watershed management.***



# A DAY In the Life...

We often are asked what exactly it is that WPACs do. Perhaps the better question is what don't we do?!

We like to think that WPACs are the swiss army knives of watershed protection. We can get the complex jobs done in many contexts through our range of tools: education, planning, stewardship, policy, and more.

We often joke that a day in the life of a WPAC staff person should be a movie. Every day is different - but here's an example. First, we might meet with a citizen group concerned about shoreline development on a major lake, and later meet with a hydraulic fracturing company to discuss beneficial management practices for water use. Then, it's time to write some code for our website updates.

*WPACs are like Swiss Army Knives -  
we use a lot of different tools!*

After which we draft a presentation to a municipal council, write up the minutes from a project committee meeting, and then finish a fundraising proposal for a new project to map hydrologically significant areas.

None of this work could happen without our most important resources - the people and the partnerships that we have built through our work as a WPAC.

Over the past few years, we've been thinking about how can we better meet the needs of partners, and where we as an Alliance should focus our energy. There were ups, downs, and detours along the way, but we've come out of it with a clearer sense of what we need to do. We are excited to share our new direction with you, and invite you to join us as we tackle the big challenges ahead together.





Oyster Lake, Banff National Park

# LOOKING AHEAD

## Story of the Watershed

One of the key things we've learned through our work as a Watershed Planning and Advisory Council is that science on its own is not enough to drive behaviour change.

We need to improve water literacy, sure, but it's not just about the facts. It's also about values, and the stories of people in our communities grappling with the issues we care about, whether flood, drought, development, pollution, conservation and more.

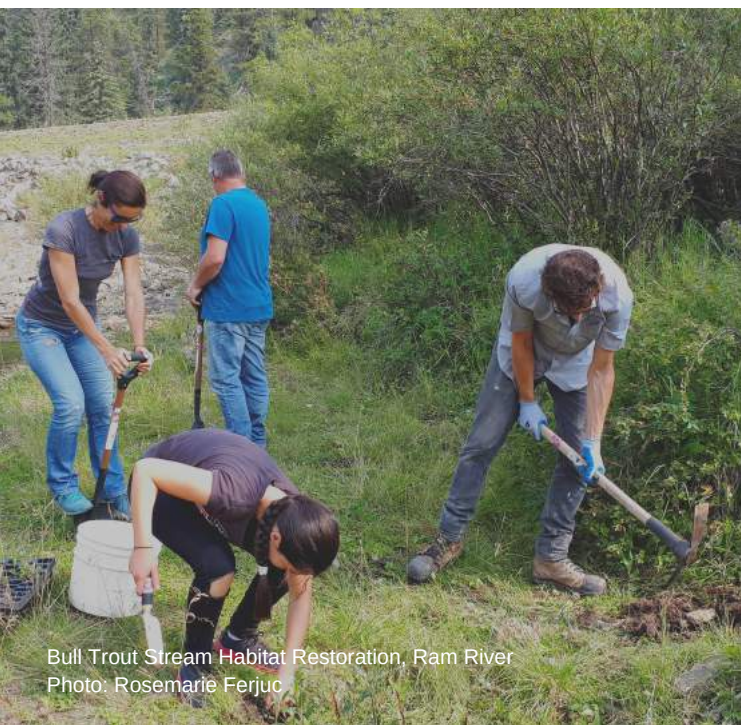
This year a big focus for the RDRWA is “telling the story of the watershed”: our rivers, our people and our communities. We will be combining our best science with our best stories and communications, and using creative ways to start sharing more accessible and engaging content. We are excited, because we will finally have time to invest in building clear messaging and then get out and about to share it.



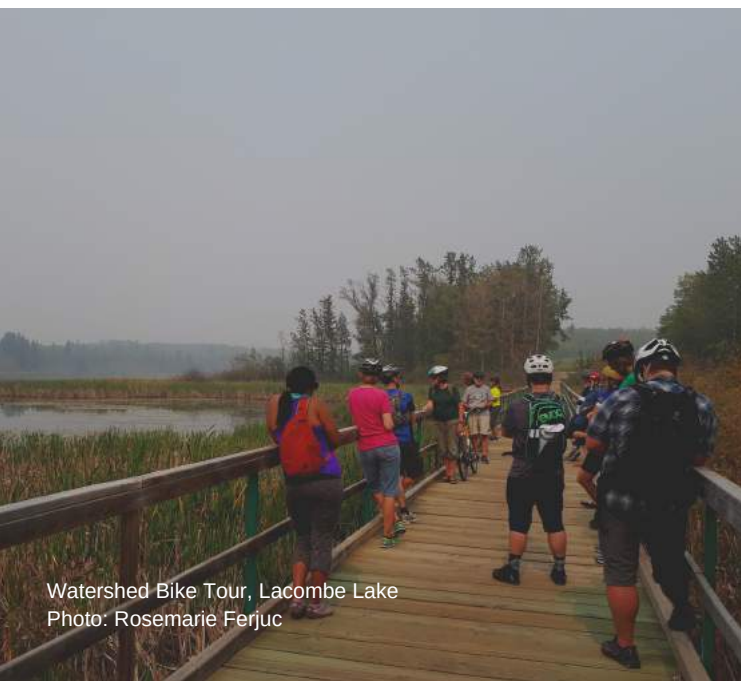




Collaboration at work!



Bull Trout Stream Habitat Restoration, Ram River  
Photo: Rosemarie Ferjuc



Watershed Bike Tour, Lacombe Lake  
Photo: Rosemarie Ferjuc

# HOW TO GET INVOLVED

*Interested in making a difference?  
Here are some ways to stay up to  
date with the RDRWA.*

Become a member of the RDRWA. Membership is free and is a simple way to stay up to date through our monthly e-newsletter. Sign up at [www.rdrwa.ca](http://www.rdrwa.ca)

Learn more about watersheds by taking a look at materials on our website ([www.rdrwa.ca](http://www.rdrwa.ca)) to get your feet wet, and how you can take action.

Use your voice to advance conversations about water and land use in central Alberta. Participate in RDRWA events with partners across the watershed (see [www.rdrwa.ca](http://www.rdrwa.ca) for more information).

Volunteer for one of our outreach, education, and environmental stewardship programs. The RDRWA offers a range of programs to schools, post-secondary institutions, service groups, stewardship groups, and any others. We are always looking for volunteers to help!

## CONTACT US



• Website: [www.rdrwa.ca](http://www.rdrwa.ca)



• E-mail: [info@rdrwa.ca](mailto:info@rdrwa.ca)



• Phone: 403. 340. 7379



• Twitter: @RDRWA

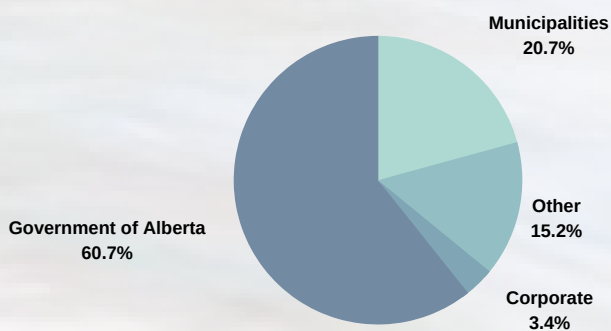


• Facebook: Red Deer River Watershed Alliance

# 2018 - 2019 FINANCIALS

Each year, the Red Deer River Watershed Alliance's (RDRWA) financial statements are reviewed by an independent accounting firm and made available to our members and the public.

## RDRWA 2018-19 FUNDING BY %



## Statement of Operations and Changes in Net Assets Year Ended March 31, 2019 (unaudited)

### REVENUE

Government of Alberta	300,000
Municipal	102,501
Corporate	16,640
Other	74,918
<b>Total (\$)</b>	<b>494,059</b>

### EXPENSES

Salaries, benefits and training	296,951
Programs and events	86,106
General admin and office costs	94,389
Other expenses	5,782
<b>Total (\$)</b>	<b>483,228</b>

### REVENUE - EXPENSES

Surplus	10,831
Interest from Contingency Fund	4,264
Change in Net Assets	15,095

## Statement of Financial Position

	March 31, 2018 (unaudited)	March 31, 2019 (unaudited)
Assets	620,843	711,934
Liabilities	156,615	232,611
Net Assets	464,228	479,323
<b>Total (\$)</b>	<b>620,843</b>	<b>711,934</b>



# FUNDERS



Canada



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Thank you to all of our major sponsors and supporters for your valued financial support of the RDRWA!

A very special thank you to those companies, organizations and individuals who have provided in-kind support!

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Government of Alberta  
City of Red Deer  
Rocky View County  
Government of Canada

Alberta Real Estate Foundation  
Bill Shaw  
Border Paving  
Clearwater County  
County of Newell  
Insurance Bureau of Canada  
Kneehill County  
Lacombe County  
Max Bell Foundation  
Mountain View County  
Municipal District of Big Horn  
NOVA Chemicals  
Ponoka County  
Red Deer County  
Red Deer County Agricultural Service Board  
Red Deer River Municipal Users Group  
Starland County  
Summer Villages : Birchcliff, Half Moon Bay, Jarvis Bay, Norglenwold, Sunbreaker Cove  
TD Friends of the Environment Foundation  
Town of Bentley  
Town of Blackfalds  
Town of Oyen  
Town of Rimbey  
Town of Stettler  
Town of Sundre  
Town of Three Hills  
Village of Big Valley  
Wheatland County

Front Cover Photo: Blindman River, courtesy of Len Langevin  
Back Cover Photos: Dragonfly (Monica Schmidt), Bluebird (Rita McNulty), Wood Frog (Cheri Lipiec), all others (Rosemarie Ferjuc)

The Red Deer River Watershed Alliance (RDRWA) is a multi-sector, non-profit organization that promotes the good use and proper management of water within the Red Deer River watershed.



[WWW.RDRWA.CA](http://WWW.RDRWA.CA)

