



ANNUAL REPORT

REFLECTIONS
ON 2020-2021





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Greetings from the Executive Director

Welcome to the Red Deer River Watershed Alliance's 2020/21 Annual Report.

I've been spending time at local ponds in Red Deer with my three-year old son over the past year. Equipped with a bug net and rain boots, he shrieks with delight when he catches a snail, or a feather, or some sticky mud. We're learning bird calls together. He thinks loons are hilarious.

After a year filled with Zoom screens, missed gatherings, and social distancing - I treasure those small moments by the water. I'm reminded of the restorative power of our watersheds - the rivers, croplands, wetlands, and forests. In those moments, I can catch my breath and my son stops bouncing off the walls.

As the Executive Director of the Red Deer River Watershed Alliance, I am proud of the work that the RDRWA accomplished in 2020/21. We made a beautiful short film called *Source Waters*, hosted successful virtual events, led two technical mapping projects, issued policy recommendations, and more. But I'm even more thankful for our staff, members, volunteers, funders, and partner organizations that contributed in ways big and small. Your support is integral to the RDRWA's success and to the health of the Red Deer River watershed.

This annual report highlights the RDRWA's achievements over the past year in support of a healthy, dynamic, and sustainable watershed. Despite the twists and turns of 2020, as a Watershed Planning and Advisory Council, we continued to work with partners from multiple sectors on important projects. I came on board as the new Executive Director in September after several years as the RDRWA's Planning Manager. We overhauled our communications (check out our new website and e-newsletter) and significantly expanded the RDRWA's reach. We downsized our office space and strengthened our fiscal position.

We did all of this while knee-deep in the muck of a global pandemic and we couldn't have done it without you. Thank-you for believing in the vision and mission of the Red Deer River Watershed Alliance. Together we can - and we will - support our communities and steward this watershed for years to come. I am already counting down the days to when we will gather again soon, by the water.

Sincerely,

JOSÉE MÉTHOT
Executive Director

ABOUT THE RDRWA

The Red Deer River Watershed Alliance (RDRWA) was created in 2005 as a non-profit society. We serve as the designated Watershed Planning and Advisory Council for the Red Deer River watershed, under the Government of Alberta's Water for Life Strategy.

We act as a collaborative forum for stakeholders from across sectors to work together in support of healthy waters, landscapes, and communities. We all have a role to play in watershed management, and the RDRWA helps community members and key sectors find meaningful opportunities to make a difference.



Our Vision

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

Our Mission

The Red Deer River Watershed Alliance is an inclusive, collaborative partnership that promotes a healthy watershed to ensure a legacy of ecological integrity and economic sustainability.

Our Goals

- Provide a forum for information exchange and dialogue
- Raise awareness on watershed issues
- Promote the use of best practices and integrated management of land and water resources

MEET OUR STAFF

We have a dedicated team of three full-time staff who work closely with a network of partners, committees and volunteers to amplify our reach.



Josée Méthot
Executive Director
E: josee.methot (at) rdrwa.ca



Rosemarie Ferjuc
Watershed Engagement and Communications Manager
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Kelly Dodds
Executive Assistant
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Farewell

A special thank-you to Jeff Hanger, who moved on from the RDRWA in May 2020, after serving as Executive Director for the past 6 years. Jeff's many contributions included advancing key initiatives such as "Blueprint: An Integrated Watershed Management Plan for the Red Deer River", Project Blue Thumb and much more. Thank-you Jeff and best wishes from all of us at the Alliance!

MEET THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The RDRWA's Board of Directors is a multi-sector Board with representatives from across sectors.

Environment / Stewardship

- Tjarda Barratt – Alberta Wilderness Association
- Helge Nome – Alberta Freshwater Alliance Society
- Alia Snively – Nature Conservancy of Canada

Agriculture / Business / Industry

- JoAnne Volk – Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers
- Kent Dyck – NOVA Chemicals

Municipal Government

- Dianne Wyntjes – City of Red Deer
- Lee Fryberger – Special Areas Board
- Christine Moore – Red Deer County
- Cheri Funke – Town of Sundre

Provincial / Federal / Academic

- Dan Karran – Olds College
- Robert (Bob) Mills – Individual
- Mike Iwanyshyn – Natural Resources Conservation Board

First Nations / Aboriginal

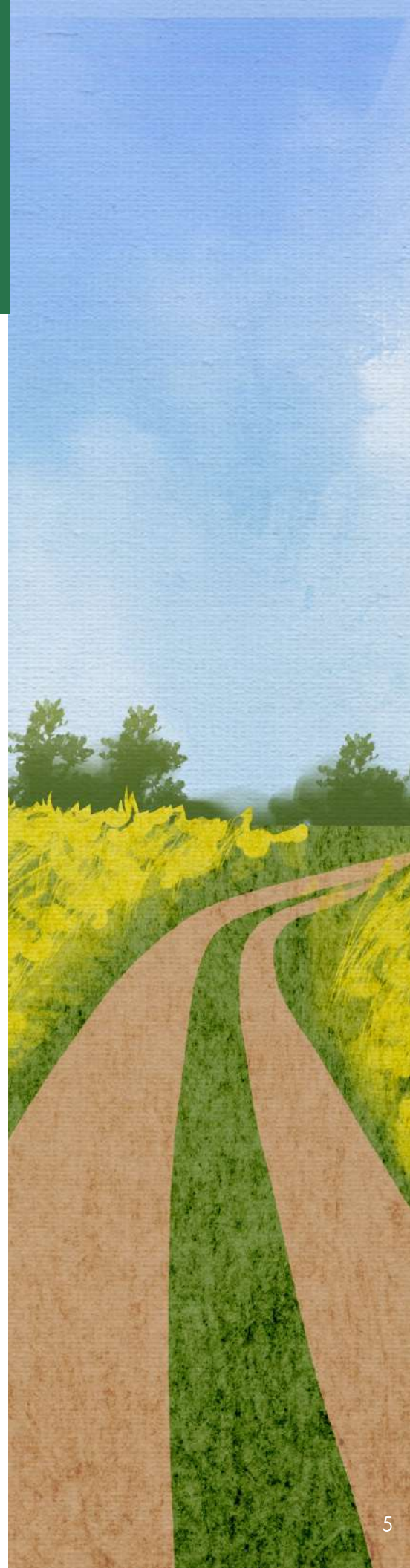
- Ashley Patterson

Member at Large

- Adam Minke – Individual
- Murray Welch – Individual

Ex-Officio Members

- Amanda Halawell – Alberta Environment and Parks
- Brandon Leask – Alberta Agriculture and Forestry



2020-2021 ACTIVITIES

The RDRWA's work in 2020 - 2021 was guided by the vision, mission, and goals of the organization, alongside the Three-Year Strategic Plan (2018 - 2021) and the 2020/21 Work Plan.

The RDRWA has made significant progress towards advancing collaborative watershed management efforts in central Alberta in 2020-2021.

As a Watershed Planning and Advisory Council (WPAC), we work across multiple sectors, alongside an active Board of Directors and long-term, dedicated staff, who work to advance multi-year programs and strong partnerships that continue to grow our reach and impact.



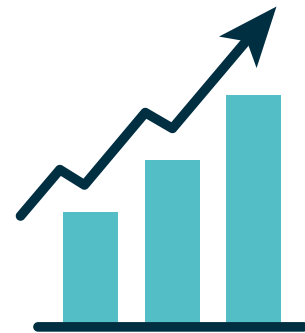
The RDRWA made important strides forward across many areas of programming in 2020-21, despite grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic and an organizational transition.

YEAR-END HIGHLIGHTS

- Increased fiscal sustainability by diversifying revenue and reducing expenditures.
- Harnessed over \$100,000 of in-kind support from partners and volunteers.
- Modernized RDRWA communications (website, e-news, social media).
- Increased e-newsletter subscribers (+ 163 people) and social media followers (+ 36%)
- Changed leadership and invested in Board development and internal operations.
- Completed four professional videos on watershed topics.
- Advanced mapping of riparian areas and hydrologically significant areas.
- Strengthened relationships with multiple partners, with a focus on municipalities.
- Developed a new Three Year Strategic Plan (2021-2024).



**INCREASED
FISCAL
SUSTAINABILITY**



36%













**INCREASE IN
SOCIAL MEDIA**



**\$100,000
OF IN-KIND AND
VOLUNTEER
SUPPORT**

Measuring Progress

The RDRWA led multiple successful programs in 2020/21 in support of a healthy, dynamic, and sustainable watershed, working alongside partners from across sectors.

ONGOING	STATUS	MAJOR PROJECTS	STATUS
Host Core Events		Stories of the Watershed	
RDRWA Committees		RDRWA Website	
Monthly E-Newsletter and Social Media		Medicine-Blindman Riparian Project	
School Programming		Supporting Municipalities and Stewardship Groups	
GIS Development		Moving Office Space	
Engaging with Indigenous Communities			
Remaining Engaged with Agricultural and Water Security Conversations			



Executed In Progress On Hold Rejected

An artistic illustration of a natural landscape. In the background, there are several green trees under a soft, hazy sky. A blue river flows through the middle ground. In the foreground, there are green grasses and two bright orange corn cobs. The right side of the page has a dark blue header and a light green curved background for the meeting announcement.

WE ARE A CONVENOR AND COLLABORATOR

The RDRWA operates as a multi-sector organization and regularly brings stakeholders together to hear the latest updates on science, policy, and stewardship. Our events also support an ongoing dialogue about watershed issues and opportunities in the Red Deer River watershed. While the RDRWA switched core events to a digital format in 2020/21 due to Covid-19, we ended up attracting a larger audience to core events.

Our Board of Directors also brings together various sectors to support the governance of the RDRWA, and to discuss watershed management priorities and programs.

Annual General Meeting July 10, 2020

This digital event themed “What Lies Beneath: Exploring groundwater and natural assets in the Red Deer River watershed.” featured presentations from Roy Brooke of the Municipal Natural Asset Initiative, who highlighted the benefits that municipal natural assets (e.g., wetlands, forests and creeks) can contribute to local governments’ provision of municipal core services

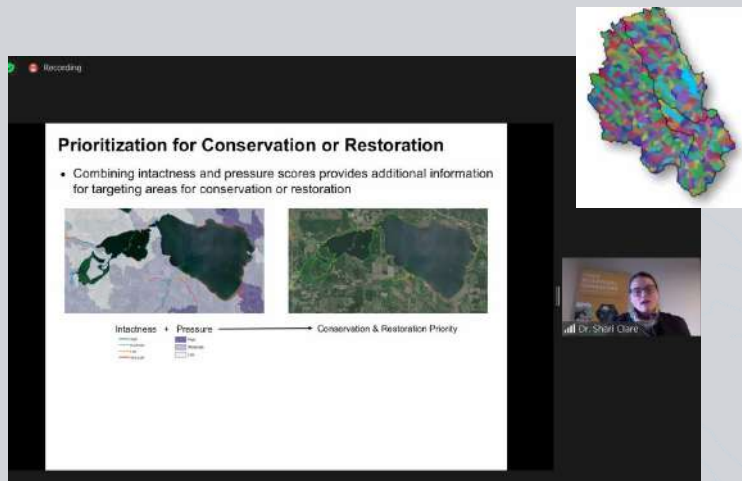
Kevin Gardiner, Central Regional Manager from the Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) spoke about the stewardship and conservation efforts to protect the ecologically unique watercourses and world-class trout fisheries of the North Raven River and Clear Creek over the past decade.

Fall Forum

November 24, 2020

For once, the weather was "virtually" perfect for the Red Deer River Watershed Alliance's 2020 Fall Forum and Webinar, held digitally via Zoom on Tuesday, November 24th.

This event featured a keynote presentation by Dr. Shari Clare (Fiera Biological Consulting) on a new RDRWA-led mapping project **Targeting the Conservation and Restoration of the Medicine-Blindman Rivers Watershed**. There was excellent virtual attendance, with close to 70 people participating from across Alberta and elsewhere in Canada.



Committees

The RDRWA ran five committees: Executive; Governance; Outreach, Board Recruitment, and Watershed Health, Issues, and Project (WHIP) committees.

Notably, the Outreach and WHIP Committees tackled a broad range of subjects in 2020/21, working with partners from many organizations to learn about issues and advance solutions. Examples of topics addressed include aquatic invasive species, temporary surface pipelines, water conservation, Indigenous engagement, mining, water allocation, and more.

Board of Directors

2020/21 saw strong representation and participation across sectors on the Board of Directors, with 17 Directors. Board members participated actively in committees and special projects, and led the development of the 2021 - 2024 RDRWA Strategic Plan. The Board also oversaw improvements in Board orientation, recruitment protocols, and staff created a new online Board portal to streamline access to organizational documents.



EDUCATION AND LITERACY

As a WPAC we work to raise awareness about water, watersheds, and the roles that various sectors play in watershed management. 2020/21 was an important year for the RDRWA's communication and education efforts, as we successfully modernized multiple areas of our programming to support water literacy efforts in central Alberta. The Stories of the Watershed project was a major project throughout 2020-21 and is profiled over the next few pages.

Stories of the Watershed

The central goal of our Stories of the Watershed project was to increase water literacy through digital storytelling and science communications.

This project transformed the RDRWA's communications capacity and increased community awareness about key watershed topics. Materials developed through this project will contribute to long-term watershed management and support cross-sector efforts to raise water literacy levels.

Community Engagement

The RDRWA works to engage a diverse range of groups and organizations across local communities. This year we presented to the Olds College Land and Water program, the Red Deer River Municipal Users Group, the Medicine River Stewardship Society, Mountain View County's Aspen Ranch event, Rockyford Village, and Red Deer Public Schools.

E-newsletter

We produced 11 e-newsletters and modernized our E-newsletter template, reaching 267 monthly subscribers (a 16% increase in one year with ongoing increases).





FILMING SOURCE WATERS

A highlight of our work this year was filming *Source Waters: The Rivers That Shape Us*.

Where does our water come from? How much do we have? How do we communicate about land and water issues more effectively?

When the RDRWA started planning to film our short documentary ***Source Waters*** in 2020, we expected there would be a learning curve and some challenges along the way. But we had no idea that we would have to adapt to filming a documentary in the midst of the global Coronavirus pandemic! Armed with a COVID-19 filming plan, our weight in hand sanitizer, and a healthy dose of flexibility and good humour, we set out with our intrepid director, Eric Gonzalez, and film crew to visit gems across the watershed.

Filmed in late 2020, ***Source Waters: The Rivers That Shape Us*** provides essential context for those wanting to learn more about the landscapes, communities, and waters of the Red Deer River watershed.

The Red Deer River watershed's status as a water-constrained basin, coupled with increasing growth in various sectors and changing land-use patterns, requires a thoughtful and coordinated approach to watershed management.

Many municipalities in the Red Deer River watershed have experienced flood and drought events in recent years, and some areas in the basin are considered at high risk for future flood and drought events. To move the dial on protecting local communities in the face of these challenges, the RDRWA recognized we needed to do a better job of reaching municipal decision-makers and community members. Filming ***Source Waters*** allowed us to connect with partners across sectors, who provided valuable guidance and insights along the way.



To do justice to the story of the Red Deer River watershed, we knew we had to start at the source. Water in the Red Deer River watershed originates in the Skoki Valley of Banff National Park, before travelling downstream through communities including Sunde, Red Deer, and Drumheller. The RDRWA and our film crew travelled to the remote headwaters of the Red Deer River in Banff National Park in late August, traversing rugged terrain on horseback to reach Red Deer Lakes and faraway Oyster Lake. After riding, hiking, and scrambling with cameras, “dead cats” (a high-definition microphone), and other assorted equipment, we finally crested the summit of Oyster Peak and reached the tranquil turquoise waters of its namesake lake.

For RDRWA staff Josée Méthot and Rosemarie Ferjuc, it was a true “watershed moment”, watching some of the crystal clear source waters of the Red Deer River emerge from the rock. It was amazing to think about the connectivity of our water cycle; about how drops of water spilling from a wall of rock can eventually wind across Alberta and Saskatchewan, hydrating the prairies en route to Hudson Bay.

The RDRWA hopes that ***Source Waters: The Rivers That Shape Us*** will inspire new conversations about water for many years to come! Read the full story on the trip [here](#).



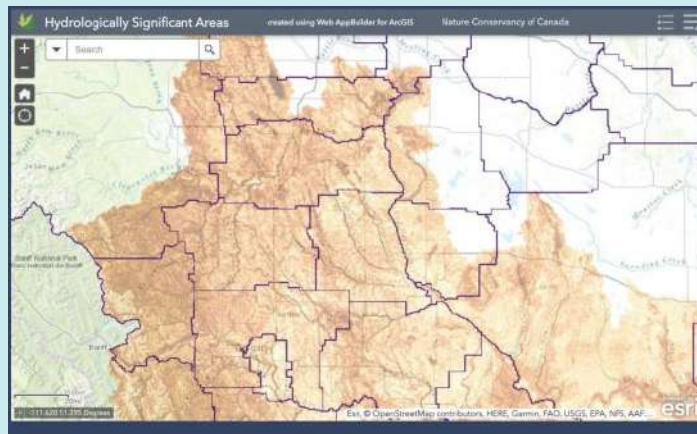
POLICY AND PLANNING

As a science-based organization, we understand that research, planning, and engagement are a foundational part of effective watershed management. The RDRWA focused on two major projects related to planning in 2020/21. These projects, profiled below, are part of a longer-term strategy to inform planning and stewardship efforts by multiple partners.

Hydrologically Significant Areas Project

The RDRWA partnered with the Nature Conservancy of Canada on a project to map hydrologically significant areas at a basin-scale, and to improve user access to information via an interactive online portal.

This project used spatial data to identify areas in the watershed that, if conserved, could provide greater benefit to water quality, flood mitigation, and drought resiliency. It brought key information into an interactive and accessible [online portal](#) that can support many aspects of watershed management (planning, education, stewardship).



Riparian Conservation and Restoration

This year, the RDRWA undertook a project to map riparian condition and work with municipal stakeholders to identify important conservation and restoration priorities in the Medicine-Blindman sub-watersheds.

The Red Deer River Watershed Alliance partnered with Fiera Biological Consulting to assess riparian intactness (condition) along 1782 kilometres of shoreline in the Medicine-Blindman Rivers watershed using a GIS-based approach in 2020. This study area was selected because it includes important source water protection zones for the City of Red Deer, and because the area has been identified as a high priority for flood and drought mitigation.

The results of this study as summarized in the [project report](#) provide essential information to municipalities and other partners to help spatially target conservation and restoration efforts. The Red Deer River Watershed Alliance is continuing to work with these partners to identify potential on-the-ground projects and to raise awareness about riparian areas and other natural assets.

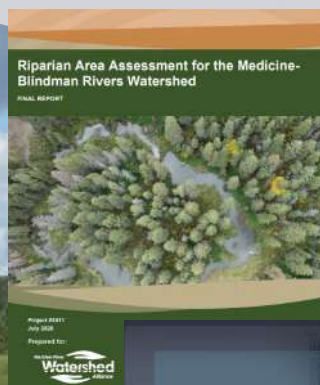


Watershed Issues

The RDRWA strives to act as a resource for community members to learn about and engage with key watershed topics.

This year we addressed many watershed topics, including:

- Hydraulic fracturing: We released a fact sheet and management recommendations about hydraulic fracturing in April 2020 ([here](#)), following months of analysis and engagement with multiple sectors.
- Metallurgical coal: We developed a [blog](#) and maps to inform members as they participate in conversations about potential changes to the Coal Policy.



"As the RDRWA celebrates 15 years as one of Alberta's 11 Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils, there is much to recognize for reporting on watershed health, planning, education and stewardship of the watershed. As we look to the future, we must continue to focus and attend to measures to ensure safe, secure drinking water, reliable water quality and healthy aquatic ecosystems of the Watershed."

- Councillor Dianne Wyntjes, City of Red Deer

Celebrating 15 YEARS OF THE RDRWA



"The RDRWA has become a respected, innovative leader among the Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils in Alberta.

The watershed is in good hands with the RDRWA as they lead collaborative partnerships, policy recommendations and proactive projects developed through community engagement and forward thinking people. Here's to ongoing success for the RDRWA for the next 15 years and beyond!"

- Phil Boehme, City of Red Deer

"Water is and will be the most important resource in our future.

It has been a pleasure to work with a dedicated staff and board on such a major issue. "

- Robert Mills, Board Member

15 Years of Watershed Management



2005



The RDRWA is formed by a multi-sector group interested in the management and stewardship of the Red Deer River watershed.

2005



The RDRWA is designated by the Government of Alberta as the Watershed Planning & Advisory Council (WPAC) for the basin, in alignment with the *Water for Life* Strategy.

2009



The *State of the Watershed* report is released, including a comprehensive assessment of watershed health in 15 sub-watersheds. The *Watershed Atlas* provides detailed maps.

2010...



Outreach and Education programs reach thousands of central Albertans each year, with presentations to different sectors and schools, watershed models, pond dipping, field trips, and more.

2012-2014



The RDRWA completes four comprehensive technical reports addressing: Water Quality; Water Quantity; Riparian Areas, Wetlands, and Land-use; and, Biodiversity.

2016



Blueprint: An Integrated Watershed Management Plan (Phase One: Water Quality) is released, following years of stakeholder engagement and technical analysis.

2017...



The RDRWA begins to share policy statements, & coordinates the 10-year review of the South Saskatchewan River Basin Water Management Plan.

2020-2021



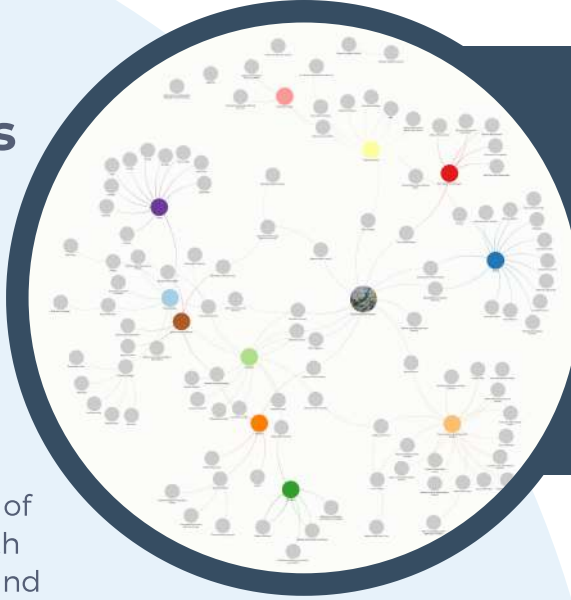
The RDRWA releases the short film *Source Waters: The Rivers that Shape Us* and modernizes communications. A new website, educational videos, mapping portals, and monthly e-newsletter involve many sectors in watershed management.

Water Connects Us All

The RDRWA works with many partners in support of the goals of the provincial Water for Life Strategy. We also support the strategic priorities of the Government of Alberta, and work closely with fellow Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils and the Alberta Water Council. This year, we also focused on improving programming for municipalities, recognizing their role as major land-use decision-makers and community leaders.

Strengthening municipal collaboration

Our Stories of the Watershed Project, riparian management projects, and hydrologically significant areas project in 2020/21 have all been designed, in part, to support improved collaboration with municipalities. The RDRWA can now roll out key resources to municipal partners and strengthen our effectiveness working with municipalities in the region.



WORKING WITH OUR PARTNERS

Other highlights in 2020/21:

- **Supporting Government of Alberta priorities:** The RDRWA is increasingly being included in key Government of Alberta engagement and communications initiatives, and we welcome the opportunity to support these efforts. In 2020/21, we shared information to our members related to multiple Government initiatives (e.g., flood engagement, recreation engagement, temporary surface pipelines, coal, mining strategy, aquatic invasive species, water conservation, etc.), and participated in various engagement events and surveys.
- **Supporting the Alberta Water Council:** RDRWA representatives participated in the project team for the Alberta Water Futures project in 2020/21, as well as the Drought Simulation team.

Thank You!

We are grateful for the ongoing support from our municipal partners across the Red Deer River watershed.

As key partners in watershed management, many of our municipal partners choose to support the work of the RDRWA through annual funding of 50 cents per capita. Thank you!



WHAT'S NEXT FOR US IN 2022

Working With Our Partners

The RDRWA's work in 2021/22 will be guided by the *Three-Year Strategic Plan (2021-2024)*, which was approved by the Board of Directors in January 2021 and which establishes operational, programmatic, and financial goals for the RDRWA. Highlights from the *2021/22 Work Plan* include:

Communications and Engagement

- Continue core events, communications activities, and multi-sector committees.
- Strengthen municipal partnerships through engagement with Councils and staff.
- Host an event showcasing flood and drought resilience strategies in Winter 2021.
- Develop new videos on topics including native trout and riparian management.



Special Projects

- Continue the riparian mapping and engagement project in the Medicine and Blindman sub-watersheds, and provide partners with tools for riparian stewardship.
- Lay the groundwork for an Integrated Watershed Management Plan (Phase 2).
- Explore partnerships to strengthen school outreach via virtual programs.

Operational

- Implement technology and knowledge management systems to streamline operations.
- Develop strategies for organizational fundraising and capacity.

**WE LOOK FORWARD TO
SEEING OUR PARTNERS IN
PERSON AGAIN IN 2021-22!**

Get Involved!

Become a member of the RDRWA

Membership is free! We offer both individual and organizational memberships.

Sign up at www.rdrwa.ca

Learn more about watersheds

Visit our new Resources page at www.rdrwa.ca to discover RDRWA or partner resources.

Use your voice to advance conversations about water and land use in central Alberta. Participate in RDRWA events, or stay up to date on engagement opportunities.

Build community

Check out our [online community calendar](#) on our website to view upcoming workshops, education, and environmental stewardship programs on offer from RDRWA and our partners.



Watershed Resources



Spotlight Video Series

- The RDRWA released three short videos on watershed issues: gravel-bed rivers, climate change, and municipal planning. View the videos on our [You Tube Channel](#).

E-Newsletter: The Source

- We revamped our monthly E-newsletter "The Source". Each month, we bring the latest watershed news, jobs, and updates from partners to you. Stay connected and sign up at www.rdrwa.ca



FUNDERS

RDRWA SUPPORTERS

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

Government of Alberta
City of Red Deer
Rocky View County
Alberta Real Estate Foundation
Alberta Ecotrust Foundation
Alberta Water Council
Border Paving
Clearwater County
County of Newell
Dow Canada
Lacombe County
Municipal District of Big Horn
Mountain View County
NOVA Chemicals
Red Deer County
Special Areas Board
Starland County
Summer Village of Burnstick Lake
Summer Villages (Jarvis Bay,
Sunbreaker Cove, Half Moon Bay,
Birchcliff, Norglenwold)
Summer Village of Parkland Beach
Summer Village of Rochon Sands
Town of Bentley
Town of Blackfalds
Town of Oyen
Town of Stettler
Town of Sundre
Village of Halkirk
Village of Delia
Wheatland County

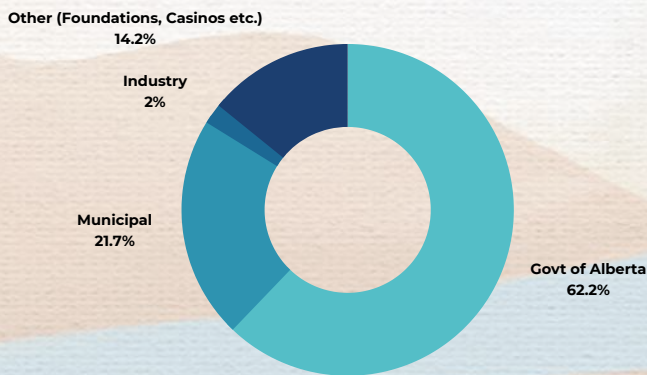


2020 - 2021

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

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 2020-2021 FUNDING BY %



Statement of Operations and Changes in Net Assets
Year Ended March 31, 2021 (unaudited)

REVENUE

Government of Alberta	310,869
Municipal	99,943
Other contributions and income	83,616
Total (\$)	494,428

EXPENSES

Board and Governance	4,475
Human Resources and Administration	234,912
Office Space and Operations	74,778
Programs and Outreach	127,049
Total (\$)	441,314
Operational Surplus	53,114

OTHER INCOME

Government Assistance	4,424
Interest Income	1,291
Total (\$)	5,715
Excess of Revenue Over Expenses	58,829

Statement of Financial Position

	March 31, 2020 (unaudited)	March 31, 2021 (unaudited)
Assets	693,722	648,155
Liabilities	245,697	140,346
Net Assets	448,025	507,809
Total (\$)	693,722	648,155

**Thank you for your continued
support of the work of the RDRWA!**



US CONTACT
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