

Lakescape

newsletter of the



WABAMUN WATERSHED MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Box 1005, Wabamun, Alberta, T0E 2K0

Web Site: www.wwmc.ca

E-mail: info@wwmc.ca

Meetings: 3rd Wednesday of each month

Fall 2016

AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the Wabamun Watershed Management Council will be held on Wednesday, **October 19, 2016** at 7:00 p.m. at the Alberta Environment and Park office, 250 Diamond Avenue, Spruce Grove. Bob Gibbs of the Pigeon Lake Watershed Association will be our guest speaker. He will tell us about the PLWA's stewardship work and their process for developing the Pigeon Lake Management Plan. As well, there will be an election of WWMC board members for the 2016/17 term. All are welcome. A copy of the 2015 AGM minutes, as well as those for the board meetings, is available for download at the WWMC website (www.wwmc.ca Go to Calendar of Events).

Council Update

Stan Franklin, WWMC Chair

The summer of 2016 has produced a significant "watershed" milestone for Wabamun Lake.

Historically, effective or any management and stewardship of lakes have been problematic since jurisdiction and responsibility is widely dispersed geographically, legislatively and politically. It is obvious that the welfare of the lake and the watershed is a collective responsibility of the Government of Alberta, Municipal Governments in the watershed and stewardship groups (the WWMC, the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance and others).

On June 9, 2016 the WWMC convened a meeting of all Municipal Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) from the Summer Villages (Seba Beach, Betula Beach, Lakeview, Point Alison and Kapasiwin) and the Village of Wabamun and Parkland County. Also in attendance were members of the WWMC Board, as well as representatives of Alberta Environment and Parks and the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance.

It was evident from this meeting that 2016 has produced a crop of like-minded individuals within the watershed decision-making organizations. These individuals have recognized the need for effective management and stewardship of the watershed and that working together is fundamental to achieving that goal.

Two subsequent meetings followed the June 9th CAO meeting. At one of these meetings it was agreed that boat launch capacity on the lake and the risks posed by invasive species (mussels) were the top priorities for the group. The CAO for Parkland County, Mike Heck, undertook to lead a committee to investigate interim measures to alleviate the pressure on existing developed and undeveloped launch sites. The objective is to attempt to have measures in place for 2017. In the longer term the municipalities and AEP will continue to work together to explore the potential for another formal launch site on the south shore. The first meeting of this committee took place September 26th. The villages, WWMC and AEP are represented on the committee.



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With respect to invasive species, the larger group (including AEP and WWMC) will continue to investigate the potential for boat inspection facilities at formal launch sites to supplement the province's existing boat inspection program at border crossings.

From the WWMC Board's perspective, the willingness of the watershed municipalities to work with each other and with our Board, AEP and NSWA is a significant step forward in the process of the development and implementation of effective management and stewardship strategies for this high value watershed.

Underutilized Fish...?

Don Meredith, WWMC Board Member and Lakescape Editor

The WWMC has received many complaints over the last few years about the continuing zero catch-and-keep fishing limits that the province has put in place on Wabamun Lake for many years now. Anglers have been catch-and-releasing an increasing number of fish, including the introduced walleye, and can't understand why some can't be taken home for the frying pan (Alberta Health has long since stated the fish are healthy to eat). More recently we've heard about the poor quality of many fish now being caught, especially pike, and the declining takes in yellow perch and whitefish. To some, this means the increasing walleye population is negatively affecting the other fish in the lake. When contacted, Alberta Environment and Parks did not provide adequate answers as to what is and will happen and with the Wabamun fishery.

Well, as it turns out, anglers at other lakes across Alberta have been making similar observations. Ray Makowecki, the Fishing Chair of Zone 5 (northeast Alberta, including a portion of Edmonton) of the Alberta Fish and Game Association, was being inundated with these complaints. As a fisheries biologist who worked for the former Alberta Fish and Wildlife Division, he was also not satisfied with the lack of information coming from the government. He decided to organize a meeting of anglers and other concerned citizens to discuss the issues. That meeting occurred this last September 7th at the Lac Bellevue Community Hall south of St. Paul.

I attended the meeting and was amazed to find over 300 people there. Attendees included three Wildrose MLAs, including the environment critic, Todd Loewen—who drove six hours from Grande Prairie to be at the meeting, and four mayors and reeves from municipalities across the northeast. Ray Danyluk moderated the meeting. Danyluk is a former Progressive Conservative MLA for Lac La Biche-St. Paul and former cabinet minister in the Ed Stelmach and Alison Redford governments. Alberta Environment and Parks was represented by David Parks, Section Head of Fisheries Management Policy, and Jordan Walker, Resource Manager, Lower Athabasca Region. Neither spoke at the meeting by previous agreement. This was a meeting for the anglers to express their concerns, and Parks and Walker were there to listen.



Ray Makowecki addressing the meeting.

Makowecki started the meeting with a presentation on how fish stocks are assessed in the province and what he perceived might be the problem with current fisheries management policy in Alberta. The meeting was then opened to anyone in the room who wanted to speak about what they were seeing on the lakes they fished and possible solutions. A wide variety of anglers who collectively have fished most lakes in the northeast supported the contention that walleye needed to be harvested in many of those lakes. Many expressed their frustration with the Alberta government's lack of response to their concerns.

Danyluk kept the meeting on track, ensuring each speaker's main points were recorded correctly. After everyone who wanted to speak did so, each MLA gave a brief statement of support for the concerns expressed. Todd Loewen suggested a possible approach to the AEP minister. The mayors and reeves also spoke, emphasizing the importance of viable fisheries to their local economies.

Next Steps

The proceedings of the meeting were recorded and attendees filled out surveys to capture all concerns and potential solutions. Makowecki says the information will be summarized and the best solutions will be advanced to the AEP minister with the aid of local MLAs. He is hoping "the people will be able to catch and keep a walleye in all these lakes by April 1, 2017."

**Report-A-Poacher
Now Available to Report Public Land Abuses**

From the May 19 news release: "Anyone who witnesses serious public lands abuse can now phone the 24-hour Report A Poacher line to notify an officer. The line is being added to heighten enforcement efforts through government's multi-agency approach to address public lands abuses."

1-800-642-3800

Corporate Members

The WWMC thanks the following businesses, governments and organizations for partnering with the WWMC as corporate members and helping the council achieve its goals.



Camp Oselia Society, Falher Drugs, Summer Village of Betula Beach, Summer Village of Point Allison, Wabamun & District Lions Club

If you own or represent a business or organization that is concerned about Wabamun Lake and would be willing to help maintain its health, become a corporate member of the WWMC for just \$100 a year. Corporate members will be acknowledged at WWMC functions, in each newsletter and on the website. For more information contact Neil Fleming by e-mail, nfleming@shaw.ca or telephone, 780-437-3204.

If you are already a corporate member and would like to see your logo here and on the WWMC website, please send a digital copy to Don Meredith at wmc@donmeredith.ca