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No. 32

Winter 2024

Winter in the Watershed

Sue Styles, WWMC Chair

Greetings to all! —Health and happiness to you and yours in the 2024 New Year.



Winter, with very cold temperatures and snow, arrived in earnest in the Wabamun watershed in January. The much-needed snow/precipitation is welcome amidst increasing concerns about drought conditions throughout Alberta. Over the winter holiday season, prior to the snow cover, the ice on Wabamun Lake was perfect for ice skating and many residents/cottagers/visitors (including myself) enjoyed miles and miles of skating on the lake...stunningly beautiful skating conditions. The header photo of this newsletter gives a glimpse of these conditions (photo by Stan Franklin). I hope you also had a chance to enjoy the beauty of the frozen lake and watershed this winter—walking, bird watching, ice fishing, ice boating—and now the snow recreation activities can begin. Being connected to and engaged in fun activities and lake stewardship is for all seasons. Be sure the ice is safe ([Alberta Conservation Association - Ice Thickness Chart](#)) and all debris in your activity area is cleaned up when you leave (garbage, animal droppings, fireworks remnants, fuel/oil & gas, etc.).

This winter newsletter begins with a reflection on the past year—see WWMC [2022-2023 Annual Report](#). The annual report was presented at the Wabamun Watershed Management Council (WWMC) Annual General Meeting (AGM) on October 18th, 2023. Please submit any questions about the Annual Report to info@wwmc.ca.

Election of the WWMC Board of Directors occurred at the AGM, the 2023-2024 WWMC Board of Directors and Representatives are as follows:

2023-2024 WWMC Board of Directors

- Sue Styles—Board Chair
- Stan Franklin—Secretary
- Neil Fleming—Past Chair
- Dave Ball—Treasurer
- Don Meredith—Communications Chair
- Michelle Foster
- Denny Thomas
- Randy Heil
- (1 Director vacancy)

Representatives:

- Arin McFarlane-Dyer—Alberta Environment and Protected Areas
- Rob Wiedeman—Parkland County Councillor (Div. 5)

Many, many thanks to each Director and Representative for continuing to serve on the board and unselfishly giving of your time, knowledge and energy.

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The focus of the 2023-2024 Board of Directors will be continued implementation of the [Wabamun Watershed Management Plan](#) (WWMP) and further building organizational capacity, including but not limited to a board recruitment strategy, to be positioned as strong as possible to advance the goals of the WWMP and the mission of WWMC for future generations.

WWMC mission:

The Wabamun Lake Watershed is a healthy ecosystem with a community that shares its collective responsibility to be the best stewards of that environment

Some WWMC winter activities in the watershed—

- The 2023-2024 [Winter LakeKeepers](#) season is now underway! Winter LakeKeepers is an important citizen science winter water sampling program delivered by the Alberta Lake Management Society (ALMS) and executed by local volunteers. Winter water sampling “addresses a gap in knowledge of year-round processes that affect eutrophication of Alberta Lakes” (Winter LakeKeepers 2019), in other words, we need water sampling data from both winter and summer seasons to better understand our lakes. We plan to do four winter water sampling events—once in each of December, January, February and March. Please join us if interested in learning more about water sampling at Wabamun Lake. Contact us at info@wwmc.ca
- Alberta Conservation Association ‘[Kids Can Catch’ Event](#) at Wabamun Lake—Saturday February 17/2024 @10:00-3:00 p.m. WWMC Booth will be there...come and chat with us about the lake and lake stewardship.



Sue Styles and Randy Heil testing water in December, photo by Stan Franklin

Let’s strive to be good lake stewards of our watershed this winter and always!

Connect with the WWMC –

Email us at info@wwmc.ca

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WWMC Board Recruitment

The WWMC is seeking to fill its Board of Directors’ vacancy.

A WWMC Board of Directors role is about ‘Keeping Wabamun Lake clean and clear’. It is about continuing to ensure that Wabamun Lake and its watershed has a voice. The WWMC Board of Directors is comprised of a diverse group of watershed stakeholders with various skillsets working positively together to advance the WWMC mission and vision. If you are interested or know someone who would be a good fit on the WWMC Board of Directors, contact us for further information and to discuss nomination: info@wwmc.ca

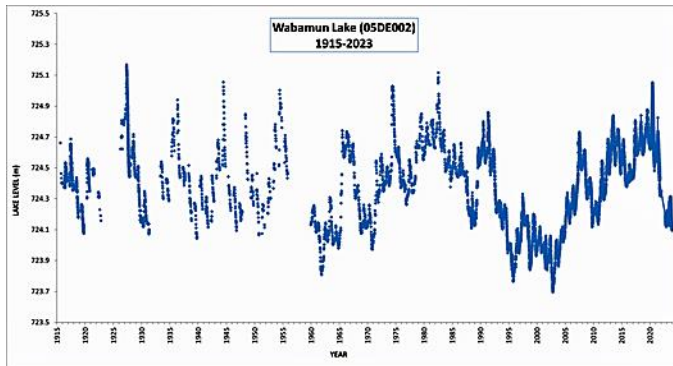
Lake Level and Drought

by Neil Fleming

Below average snowpack and precipitation over the last year have resulted in less runoff to rivers, lakes and reservoirs. While the bit of snow we have had lately is welcome relief, it will likely have little effect on lake level unless we get substantially more precipitation before spring. The continued drought-like conditions are a concern across the province prompting the Alberta government to produce a dedicated [drought link](#) on their website. This website is updated regularly, and highlights the level of concern, particularly for the southern areas of the province. Alberta is currently in water shortage management stage 4 (out of 5), with multiple water management areas impacted by water shortage. You can learn more about how we all can conserve water by visiting the page.

Having no inflow from outside their watershed, Alberta prairie lakes are dependent almost entirely on precipitation and evaporation to control lake levels. An updated graph of **historical lake levels** for Wabamun is provided on our

[Lake Level page](#) and clearly shows the cyclical nature of water levels. Our website page gives a comprehensive overview of the factors contributing to lake level and contains the [WWMC position paper](#) with respect to operation of TransAlta’s Wabamun lake water treatment plant. Interested readers are encouraged to visit the [Alberta Rivers](#) web page to monitor and view the current lake in real time. It is also available in app format for download to your cell phone.



Graph of historic lake levels, 1915-2023. Click on image to go to the [Lake Level page](#) and the larger scale graph.

What this all means is that lake levels will likely continue to be low again this summer. The level at freeze up was about 724.14 m above sea level or about 40cm (16 inches) below the level of the weir and will likely increase little in spring. The lack of outflow from the lake results in increased concentration of nutrients contributing to increased vegetative growth, so even more reason to do what we can to decrease our nutrient load on the lake.

How much of this can be related to climate change and how much is normal cyclical variation will remain to be seen. The bottom line for me, is that some things are simply beyond our control.

The Steering Committee of the Wabamun Watershed Management Plan

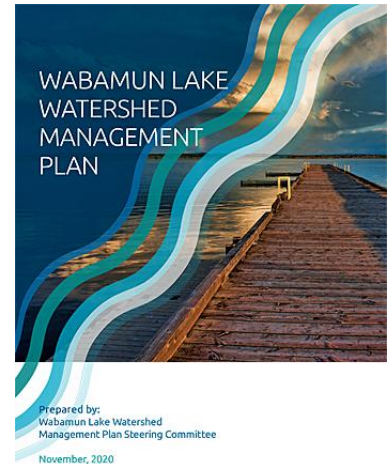
To ensure the Wabamun Watershed Management Plan (WWMP) will be implemented and not put on a shelf and forgotten about, a Wabamun Watershed Management Plan Implementation Steering Committee (ISC) was formed to guide plan implementation. Its formation is the result of much effort by a lot of people over time.

As a volunteer Watershed Stewardship Group, the WWMC’s primary role has been one of education to help all lake stakeholders (from anglers, boaters and cottage owners to governments) make informed decisions on how best to manage the lake and its watershed. Our primary platform for doing this has centered around the development of the [Wabamun Watershed Management Plan](#) (WWMP).

The process started with the release of our [State of the Watershed](#) report in 2013, which was a snapshot of the condition of the lake at that time. Because of laps in

some of the data and work involved in writing the plan, the WWMP was not released until 2020. The plan is an overarching document that was signed on to by all major watershed stakeholders. It sets out 4 major goals: Good Water Quality, Healthy Aquatic Ecosystems and Biodiversity, Wise Land Use and Engaged Stewardship. It outlines the strategies, time frames and measures used to achieve these goals. However, a plan is meaningless without a process to implement it, which brings us to where we are today.

In 2023 the Wabamun Watershed Management Plan Implementation Steering Committee (ISC) Terms of Reference were finalized under the guidance of the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance (NSWA). The committee is composed of representatives from Alberta Environment and Protected Areas, Parkland County, all 5 of the Summer Villages, TransAlta, the Alberta Lake Management Society, NSWA, and the WWMC. Input will also be welcomed from Indigenous Communities, Alberta Health, Department of Fisheries and Oceans and other relevant agencies. The steering committee will meet 4 times per year to develop and implement strategies in keeping



with the 4 major goals of the WWMP. The meetings are to be co-chaired by a representative from each of the stakeholders on a revolving basis, allowing that sector to highlight issues of particular importance to them.

The WWMC is optimistic that, having all the major players at the table, we are poised to make some impactful decisions to ensure the long-term health of Lake Wabamun. We are particularly grateful to the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance for taking the lead role in implementing the WWMP and ensuring that meaningful action results. Should you have concerns that you feel need to be addressed, you can contact us at info@wwmc.ca so that we can forward your concerns to the appropriate stakeholder.

Our Partners

The WWMC thanks the following governments and organizations for their support of specific WWMC projects:



Donors

The WWMC gratefully thanks the following people who have donated to the WWMC to continue our work protecting the health of Wabamun Lake: Kelly & Mary Aldridge, Margaret Bakker, Todd Baldwin, Lyn ter Borg, Conrad Clement, Rob Cowley, Sandy Drummond, Carol & Keith Epton, Susan Evans, Neil Fleming, Colleen & David Judge, Kobylko Family, Maurice Lemieux, Kathy MacDonald, Averie & Carman McNary, Don and Betty Meredith, Peter and Jordyce van Muyden, Julia & Tony Nelson, Barb Parker, Cliff Richard, Robarts Family, Bill & Kate Russell, Ian Simpson, Denny Thomas, Denise & Bernie Wade, Sheila Wynn, Dwayne Zon. Edmonton Community Foundation: *Stan & Janet Franklin Fund, McIvor Kent Endowment Fund.*

Remember: Donors to the WWMC receive a tax receipt. Go to our [Donate page](#) for more information.

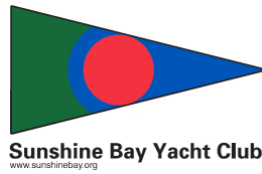
Corporate Members

The WWMC thanks the following businesses, governments and organizations for joining the WWMC as corporate members and helping the council achieve its goals. Go to [Get Involved](#) for more information about Corporate Membership.

Gold Members



Silver Members



Bronze Members

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