

Topic: Wabamun Sub-Watershed Land Use Plan and Action Plan

Introduction:

This report provides background information on the completion of the Wabamun Sub-Watershed Land Use Plan and Action Plan.

Facts (Background Information):

In March 2014, Parkland County received an Alberta Community Partnership (ACP) Grant to complete the Wabamun Sub-Watershed Land Use Plan. The County partnered with local summer villages, the Village of Wabamun, the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance, and the Wabamun Watershed Management Council to complete the project. Project phases included:

PHASE 1
TECHNICAL REPORT

PHASE 2
SUB-WATERSHED
LAND USE PLAN

PHASE 3
ACTION PLAN

PHASE 4
LAKE TOOLKIT
(part of Phase 3
Action Plan)

WE ARE HERE

REGIONAL IMPORTANCE

Administration is forwarding the final Sub-Watershed Land Use Plan and Action Plan for Council consideration.

Lake Wabamun benefits recreational users, residents and the First Nations living along its shores through its environmental, economic and recreational attributes. The sub-watershed, however, has had extensive development in the last 150 years, and is one of the most heavily used recreational lakes in Alberta. The Sub-Watershed Land Use Plan was initiated to ensure land use pressures due to recreational, economic and residential uses are managed so that the health of the sub-watershed is maintained into the future.

The Sub-Watershed Plan supports responsible land uses practices and will be used by the County and other local governments to guide future planning and decision-making as it relates to the health of the Wabamun Lake watershed. The Plan also forms the “land use component” of an **Integrated Watershed Management Plan** being prepared by the Province of Alberta and its partners for Wabamun Lake.

The Wabamun Action Plan provides a summary of the key “action projects” to implement recommendations from the Sub-Watershed Land Use Plan. The Action Plan uses an “**integrated approach**” where key projects are co-managed by County departments and other government agencies.

PROJECT PHASES

Phase 1 – Technical Report - Phase 1 was presented to Committee of the Whole on December 1, 2015. Phase 1 informed the recommendations presented in the Sub-Watershed Land Use Plan.

Phase 2 – Sub-Watershed Land Use Plan - the Sub-Watershed Land Use Plan proposes to achieve several outcomes in the watershed. These include:

- protecting the sub-watershed environment
- supporting economic (development) opportunities in the sub-watershed
- reducing the impacts of development
- coordinating governance in the sub-watershed
- supporting watershed stewardship programs and actions

Plan recommendations have been developed with the project steering committee, stakeholders, and County departments.

Phase 3 –Action Plan

A preliminary Phase 3 Action Plan was presented to Council in mid-October 2016. The Action Plan has now been finalized.

The Action Plan identifies implementation projects for the Sub-Watershed and details potential financial and resource considerations and project timelines. **The Draft Action Plan does not commit the County to fund or resource any project for the Wabamun Lake Sub-Watershed Land Use Plan –it solely estimates the required resources** to implement future projects. Projects in the Action Plan will be prioritized by the County in the future with individual funding requests provided formally to Council through the budget process.

Phase 4 Toolkit - the Lake Toolkit has been identified as a separate project in the Action Plan and will be finalized in early 2017. The Toolkit provides a template to assist in the preparation of future lake land use plans. Once complete, the toolkit will be provided to lake management groups in the County. Council, if so desired, can be forwarded a copy of the Lake Toolkit in 2017.

Communications Strategy – as part of implementation, Administration will develop a communications strategy for the future Wabamun Lake Land Use Plan and specific projects or studies. The Communications Strategy will help to inform residents and stakeholders on how projects contribute to the overall health of the lake and the sub-watershed.

Council will be forwarded a copy of the Communications Strategy and documentation in Q1 2017.

PUBLIC AND COUNTY STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Extensive public and stakeholder engagement occurred as part of this project. Communication occurred with First Nations, and extensive collaboration ensued with residents, lake users, the Government of Alberta and County departments.

Steering Committee - the Project Steering Committee consisted of representatives from:

- Planning & Development
- Alberta Environment and Parks
- North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance
- Wabamun Watershed Management Council

Public engagement - three public meetings were held on phases 1-3 of the project. Engagements occurred in November 2014, September 2016, and August and September 2016.

Stakeholder engagement - The County hosted 2 stakeholder meetings to share findings from the Sub-Watershed Land Use Plan in November 2014 and August 2016 and to seek feedback. Project stakeholders included the Village of Wabamun, summer villages, the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance, the Wabamun Watershed Management Council, Alberta Lake Management Association, Alberta Environment and Parks, local lake management groups and TransAlta.

First Nations and Metis communication

Planning and Development staff also met with two First Nations in developing the draft Plan. First Nations discussions included:

- three meetings with Paul First Nations representatives
- two meetings with Alexis First Nations representatives
- One conversation with the Local Gunn Metis representative

Notifications to attend each public meeting were sent to the Alexis, Alexander, Paul, and Enoch First Nations as well as the Gunn Metis Local.

Analysis:

The Wabamun Sub-Watershed Land Use Plan and Action Plan are key components of supporting the health of Wabamun Lake. The Sub-Watershed Land Use Plan reflects over 2 years of coordinated partnerships between the County, local watershed municipalities, the Government of Alberta and regional and local stewardship groups to identify the issues facing the sub-watershed, as well as actions to address these issues.

The Action Plan identifies studies as well as “on-the-ground” projects to implement the Sub-Watershed Plan. County staff worked closely with the steering committee and stakeholders to review the Sub-Watershed Plan findings and identify the most important recommendations that, if acted upon, support a healthy sub-watershed area. The Action Plan also uses an “integrated approach” where multiple projects are “co-managed” by County Departments or organizations.

An integrated approach to implementation **benefits the Wabamun sub-watershed** by leveraging the skill sets of departments/ organizations on common projects aimed at supporting the watershed.

The Province of Alberta recognizes the importance of the Wabamun Sub-Watershed Land Use Plan and the partnerships created through the plan process. The Province will be preparing an Integrated Lake Management Plan for Lake Wabamun and will use the Wabamun Plan as the “land use component” of their Management Plan.

Conclusion/Summary:

Administration supports the Wabamun Lake Sub-Watershed Land Use Plan and Action Plan as presented. The Sub-Watershed Plan and Action Plan supports a coordinated and integrated approach to land use planning and practices for the sub-watershed area. Integration between lake stakeholders will help ensure continued coordinated to support a healthy sub-watershed area.

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