



Lakescape

Newsletter of the Wabamun Watershed Management Council

No. 40 | Winter 2026



Welcome 2026!

The sun is sparkling off the snow, a new year fresh with possibility and adventure. It's a time to look ahead with new ideas and solutions to challenges that we face at Wabamun Lake, while also taking a moment to appreciate our many strengths: a wonderful community, caring water stewards, provincial supports, and a beautiful lake that sustains us and gives us joy.

This issue of *Lakescape* begins with a look at two key issues concerning our watershed, and an invitation for you to attend WWMC's presentation to Parkland County Council about these concerns and voice your support. Please read about these issues on the following page, and know that your involvement is of crucial importance.

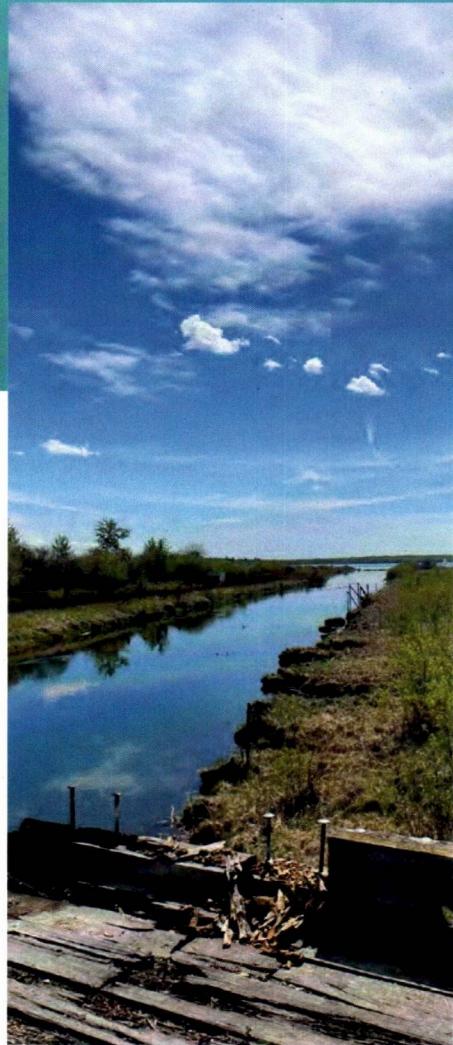


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WABAMUN WATERSHED MANAGEMENT COUNCIL



View looking outward to the lake from the old outflow channel proposed to be the waterway to the inland marina.

Please Attend and Show Your Support

Parkland County Governance and Priorities Committee Meeting

 **Tuesday, February 3, 2026**

 **10:30 a.m.**

 **Parkland County Centre,
53109A Hwy. 779**

WWMC to Present to Parkland County on Key Watershed Issues

By Erica Sivell, WWMC Executive Director and Denny Thomas, WWMC Director

On February 3, WWMC will present at the Governance and Priorities Committee meeting to Parkland County Mayor and Council on our perspectives on two of the most significant and long-term watershed concerns facing Wabamun Lake:

- The proposed Wabamun Waterfront Development Project A marina and swim pond.
- The updated Highvale Mine reclamation plan.

These issues have lasting implications for lake health, water quality, critical habitat, and watershed resilience. Our presentation will reflect WWMC's mandate to provide science-based, collaborative, and long-term stewardship guidance on matters affecting the watershed.

Project A: WWMC Recommends Termination

WWMC supports responsible, low-impact development around Wabamun Lake and Parkland County's efforts to bring financial vitality back to the community. We have recently learned that Project A has been paused by the Mayor and Members of Council, as they have decided it will not provide economic value for Wabamun. Project A being paused means it may be revisited in the future. Based on the information available, we will recommend that Project A should be terminated.

From the perspective of watershed health, Project A involves high environmental risk, primarily due to the need for extensive dredging in the highly sensitive outlet canal area and into the lake itself. Dredging would disturb critical fish habitat, aquatic vegetation, wetlands, and shoreline stability. Of particular concern is the potential release of toxic contaminants currently buried in the sediments. These toxic substances include heavy metals and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), which would degrade



View of the terminus of the outflow canal looking inland through the critical wetlands of the area.



View looking inland of the proposed excavation site for the inland marina.

water quality, increase turbidity, and trigger broader ecological impacts. The release of such “deleterious substances” may also give rise to breaches of the federal *Fisheries Act*.

These concerns are well documented, not speculative. Independent scientific research and prior assessments — including work by Schindler, Hatfield, and earlier Golder studies — have consistently cautioned against excavation in this location due to known sediment contamination and ecological sensitivity.

In addition, WWMC has identified significant information gaps, including the absence of clear dredge mapping and volumes, incomplete vegetation removal plans, and key scientific studies, such as Schindler’s, which were not included in submissions to the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO). Also, affected stakeholders and rightsholders were not meaningfully consulted.

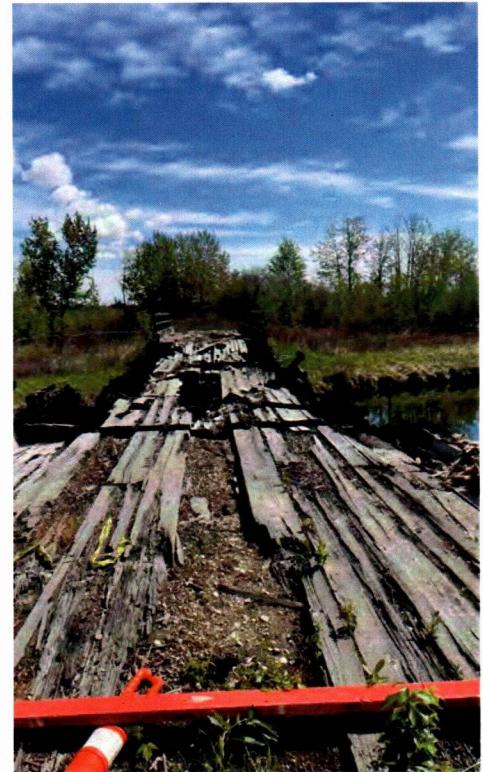
Given these combined risks, WWMC is recommending that Project A be terminated, that any remaining

federal funding be redirected toward site cleanup (such as the refuse and contaminants on the Wabamun Building Products Site; see page 5 for an announcement on that project), and that a restrictive covenant be placed on County-owned parcels to prevent future disturbance of contaminated sediments and to protect fish habitat and biodiversity over the long term.

Highvale Mine Reclamation: The Need for Public Review

WWMC will also speak to the importance of achieving the highest possible standard for the reclamation of the Highvale Mine.

The mine footprint represents approximately 30% of the Wabamun Lake watershed, making the design of the reclamation plan — particularly the configuration and long-term performance of end-pit lakes — critical to future water quality, lake water levels, and ecosystem health. These are long-term, irreversible decisions that will shape the watershed forever.



The burned-out bridge crossing the outflow channel, which will need to be removed.

WWMC’s position is that reclamation decisions must be informed by rigorous science, local and Indigenous knowledge, and a transparent public review process led by the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER). A high-quality, openly reviewed reclamation plan is essential to restoring the pre-existing hydrological regime, reducing future risk, and building lasting public confidence in the outcome.

Speak Out for Wabamun Lake

WWMC strongly believes that informed, respectful public engagement is essential to sound decision-making. We encourage our members and watershed stakeholders to stay informed and, where possible, to participate.

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting. If you support WWMC’s positions on these important watershed issues, we welcome and encourage you to join us on **Tuesday, February 3, 10:30 a.m. at Parkland County Centre** (53109A Hwy. 779) as we speak for our cherished lake and watershed. 



Sheila Smith



Sheila Smith



Ingrid Butler-Seiben

CHAIR REPORT: *Greetings From the Heart of Winter!*

By Sue Styles, WWMC Chair

At the beginning of this new year, the WWMC wishes our *Lakescape* readers all the very best in 2026.

Even when Wabamun Lake is frozen over, your WWMC remains active! Here are some updates on current priorities and initiatives:

- As discussed in the preceding article, **WWMC is presenting to Parkland County Council** on two key issues of concern: the Project A marina and swim pond and the Highvale Mine reclamation. Our recommendation is to terminate the marina project due to environmental risks, information gaps, and insufficient stakeholder consultation. The Highvale Mine Reclamation Plan is currently under review by the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER), and we wish to galvanize with urgency all stakeholders to request an AER public review of the plan. A public AER review is critical to best ensure the future health of Wabamun Lake and for watershed stakeholders to have public confidence in the reclamation plan. If you are able, we encourage you to attend the public Governance and Priorities Committee meeting, **Tuesday, February 3, 10:30 a.m. at Parkland County Centre (53109A Hwy. 779).**
- Thank you to all who responded to our year-end **fundraising campaign** with your generous donations in support of the WWMC's watershed stewardship work. Thanks to your generosity, at this midpoint of the WWMC fiscal year, we have achieved 50% of our \$25,000 fundraising goal. (See article on page 9.) **Donations** are welcome year-round as we work towards fulfilling our annual target.
- Thank you to everyone who completed the **Lakescape readership survey**. Your responses are being analyzed

and will be used to guide the content and appearance of future editions of *Lakescape*.

- WWMC is once again sponsoring the Alberta Conservation Association's annual **Kids Can Catch** event on Saturday, February 14. Anglers of all ages are invited to bundle up and try ice fishing. See page 5 for details.

We know your interest in lake and watershed health remains fired up, even through the coldest months. If you're still looking for a New Year's resolution, how about taking one small action for lake health? You could attend a public meeting, advocate independently, donate to our organization, start exploring native plants, talk to a neighbour about lake health, or reach out to us with a question. We love hearing from our members, partners, and the public about actions they have taken and ideas for improving lake health. Send us your stories at info@wwmc.ca. And stay connected with us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

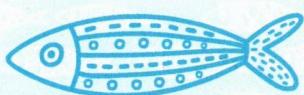
Stay safe and enjoy this winter season! 

Partners in Watershed Health

WWMC is fortunate to work with great partners and supporters.

The [North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance \(NSWA\)](#) offers many useful resources, including this handy, two-page guide to [Lake-friendly Yards and Lawns](#).

The [Alberta Native Plant Council](#) is a comprehensive wealth of information and guidance on native plant species. With spring arriving before you know it, look to them for information on naturalizing your yard, attracting pollinators, and even repairing shoreline ecosystems.



KIDS CAN CATCH 2026

By Neil Fleming, WWMC Director

This Valentine's Day, fall in love with ice fishing!

Join WWMC on **Saturday, February 14** at the Wabamun main pier from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. for the Alberta Conservation Association's free **Kids Can Catch** event.

This free Family Day weekend event offers a fun opportunity to introduce youngsters to the great Canadian pastime of ice fishing. Everything young anglers need is provided: loaner fishing rods, pre-drilled holes, even hamburgers or hotdogs for lunch. No fishing licence is required, and participants of all ages are welcome.

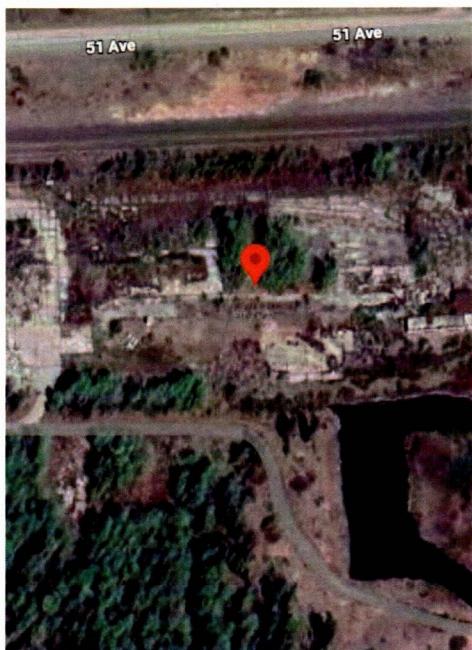
Events like Kids Can Catch support youth engagement, community connection to the lake, and long-term conservation awareness, aligning with WWMC's mandate to promote informed and responsible watershed stewardship.



Sue Styles

Advance registration is not required, though it is recommended; past events have attracted over 500 participants, so registering early secures your

family's spot. Register and get more event details at ab-conservation.com/events/kids-can-catch/wabamun.



Parkland County Announces Wabamun Building Product Site Reclamation

By Erica Sivell, WWMC Executive Director

Parkland County has launched a reclamation project at the former Wabamun Building Product Site (BPS), located south of 51 Avenue and east of Prospect Drive. The initiative will address historical industrial contamination by removing impacted soils, demolishing unsafe structures, and restoring the site's safety and condition. Work is scheduled

to begin January 26, 2026 with completion anticipated by March 2026, and there are no expected impacts on residents or traffic closures as part of this effort.

The WWMC was pleased to see this development announced, recognizing the importance of proactive land stewardship in the community. For details and updates, visit yourparkland.ca/bps.

WANTED: Participants for Bulrush Restoration

By Sue Styles, WWMC Chair



The WWMC is looking at expanding the Wabamun Lake bulrush restoration project in summer 2026, pending grant funding. We are seeking lakeshore property owners interested in bulrush restoration adjacent to their property.

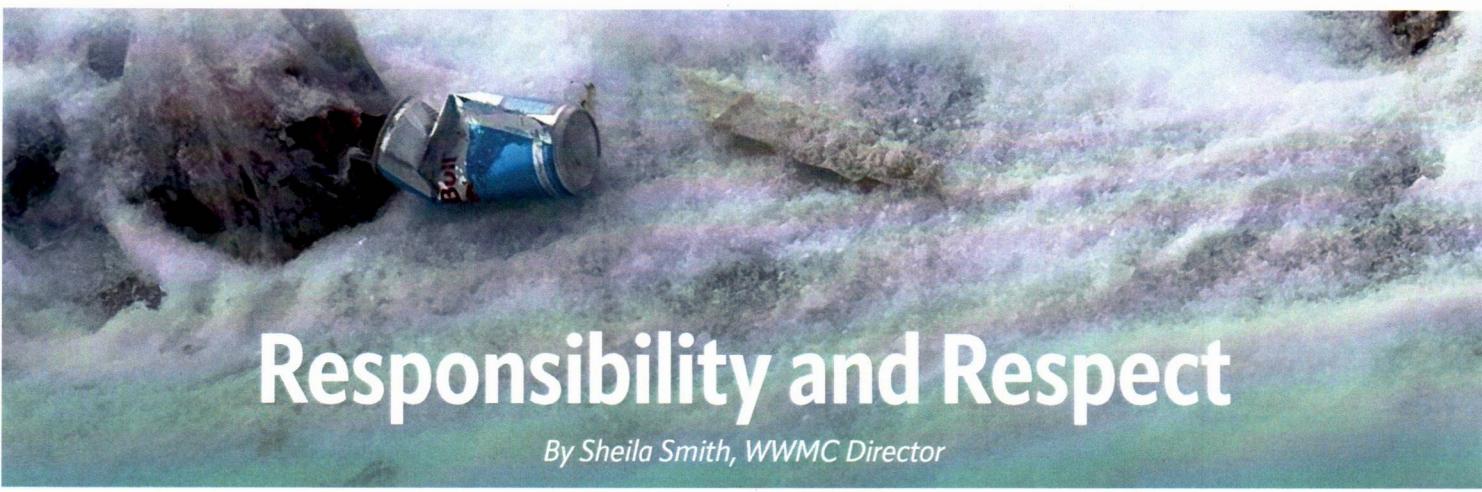
For an overview of the project and to get an idea of what you can expect from participating, have a look at the “Bulrush Restoration Project: Year 1 Monitoring” article in the [Fall 2024 edition of Lakescape](#) (page 7) or check out Michael Short’s excellent five-minute [“Let’s Go Outdoors: Bullrush Restoration in Wabamun Lake”](#) video.

Please email info@wwmc.ca to express interest or if you have any questions about the project.



Neil Fleming





Responsibility and Respect

By Sheila Smith, WWMC Director

We all share the responsibility for keeping our lake and shorelines healthy. We have had a few members reach out to express some concerns in a few areas. We wanted to share these concerns with you and provide some reminders to everyone about ways you can help keep our lake clean and clear.

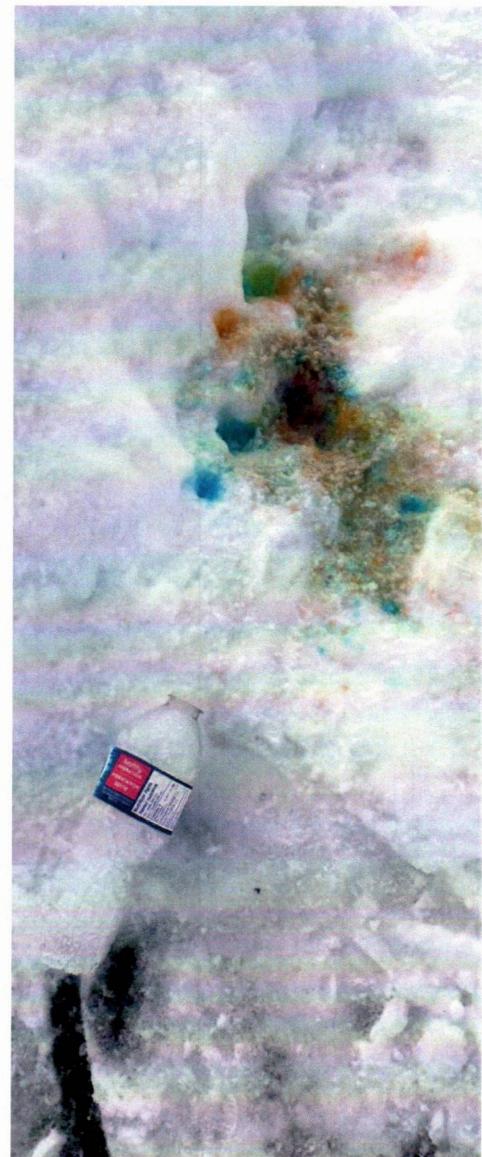
Garbage on the Lake

Some garbage has been spotted left behind in areas where people are ice fishing. After a great day on the lake (or even a not-so-great day if you didn't have any bites), please remember

to clean up and remove garbage. This includes animal waste — if your pet is out on the ice with you, please clean up after them.

If you have a campfire on the ice surface, please remove all traces of it

when you're done, including burned wood, and certainly don't attempt to dispose of garbage by burning it. This often leaves behind debris and chemicals in the ash that end up in the





lake when the ice melts. Consider using a raised campfire container rather than lighting it right on the ice surface. Your fire will be easier to start and easier to clean up.

The “Pack It In, Pack It Out” principle applies to the lake just as much as it does to the back country. We don’t want anything to affect our beautiful lake in a negative way.

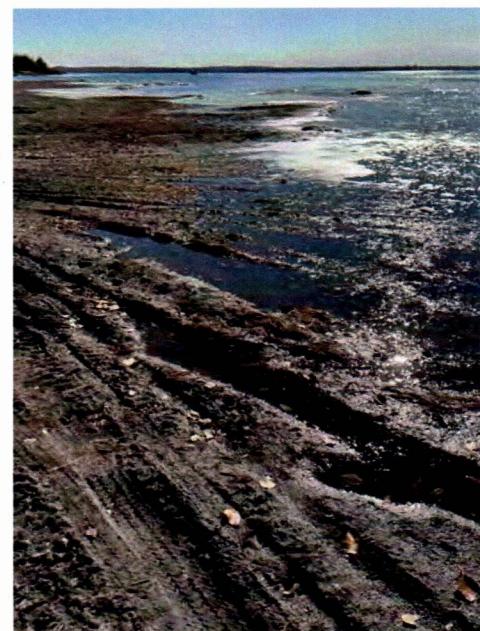
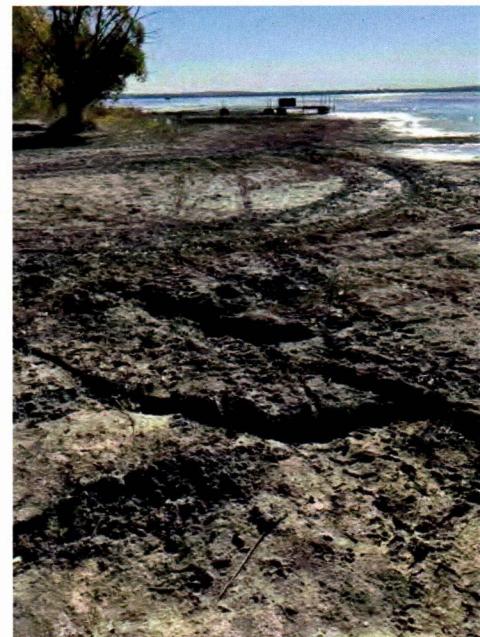
ATVs on the Shoreline

With the receding shoreline, there’s a misconception that this area is now open for ATV traffic. This is not the case. The high-water mark is always the reference point. Driving in any body of water, or on the shoreline, is illegal. Not only is it against the law, but driving in natural bodies of water

— not only lakeshores, but also rivers and streams — is damaging to the aquatic ecosystem and harmful to fish and other aquatic species.

Common sense and respect for other lake users go a long way in guiding how we use our lake and shorelines responsibly. Thank you for doing your part!

If you have concerns about activity on or around Lake Wabamun, on the Home page of wwmc.ca, you’ll find contact numbers to call depending on whether the concern is an environmental emergency, suspected abuse of public land, or an issue on private land. 



From Care to Action, From Action to Impact

By Erica Sivell, WWMC Executive Director

As we move through the first half of our 2025–2026 operating year, we want to take a moment to share an update on WWMC's fundraising progress — and to say a heartfelt thank you to our incredible watershed community!

Thanks to the generosity of our members, residents, and supporters, \$12,567 has already been raised toward our 2025–2026 fundraising goal of \$25,000. That means we are 50% of the way to our annual target, just halfway through the fiscal year.

This strong start reflects a community that cares deeply about the long-term health of Wabamun Lake and its watershed. Every donation, large or small, signals a shared commitment to protecting this place we all value.

Why Your Support Matters

Donations to the WWMC directly support the work we do on behalf of the lake and its watershed, including:

- **Watershed science and monitoring** that helps us understand lake health, water quality trends, and emerging risks.
- **Restoration and stewardship projects**, such as shoreline naturalization, bulrush restoration, and invasive species monitoring.
- **Education and community literacy**, including Watershed 101 programs, public talks, youth engagement, and citizen science initiatives.
- **Collaborative leadership and advocacy**, ensuring watershed considerations are brought forward in planning, development, and decision-making processes.

As a small, community-based organization, WWMC leverages donations to unlock grant funding, strengthen partnerships, and respond quickly to issues that affect the lake. Your support allows us to remain an independent, trusted voice focused on long-term watershed health.

Looking Ahead

With the second half of our operating year ahead, we are excited about what's to come: expanded programming, ongoing stewardship projects, and deeper engagement across the watershed community. Continued fundraising momentum will help ensure we can deliver on these priorities and remain resilient as new challenges and opportunities arise.

If you have already donated this year, thank you. Your support truly makes a difference. If you are considering a donation, we invite you to join us in stewarding Wabamun Lake for today and for future generations. Your

contribution at wwmc.ca/donate is deeply appreciated.

Together, we are turning care into action — and action into lasting impact. ■



Angie Specht



John Lucas

WABAMUN Q&A

By Neil Fleming, WWMC Director

WWMC board members are often asked questions about lake health, wildlife, and other lake-related topics. We'll feature your questions and the answers here in Lakescape. If there's something you want to know, please email your question to info@wwmc.ca.

Measuring Lake Level in Winter

Q. How are lake level measurements calculated when the lake is frozen?

A. I admit it, this question came from me (Neil) after seeing on the [Alberta Rivers App](#) that the lake level had risen about 8 cm from December 1, 2025 to January 2, 2026. I directed my question to the National Hydrological Service of Canada, which monitors lake levels, and they provided the following information:

Wabamun lake level is measured near the Sundance Power Station using two types of pressure sensors, a direct pressure sensor and an Accubar sensor. Basically, these sensors rely on the principle that pressure in water is directly proportional to the height (depth) of the water above it.

An Accubar pressure sensing element determines water depth by measuring the hydrostatic pressure at a fixed, submerged point. Because water has a known weight, the pressure exerted on the sensor is directly proportional to the depth of the water above it. The sensor sits in, or is connected to, a submerged orifice pipe at the bottom of the lake. The weight of the water column above

this point creates pressure, which increases as the lake level rises and decreases as it drops. The sensor converts this pressure reading into a precise water level using a standard formula for conversion.

The design of the Accubar system allows for tracking of rapid changes in water levels in harsh environments, making it suitable for application at Wabamun. In winter, the combined pressure from snow, ice, and water are also accounted for, and by working in conjunction with a pressure transducer, atmospheric pressure changes are also taken into consideration. Water levels can be confirmed by drilling through the ice and measuring water level against a known benchmark. Additionally, windy conditions can cause variations in the readings due to undulations in the ice cover affecting the pressure readings, as was evidenced at the time of writing, January 15, 2026, a particularly blustery day.

The good news is the lake level is up from last fall, and with any luck it will continue to climb if we get some more precipitation before spring. ■

