

Topic: Watershed Stewardship in Parkland County

Introduction:

This report provides background information on watershed planning in Alberta and local watershed stewardship groups.

Facts (Background Information):

Watershed planning in Alberta is guided by the Provincial Water for Life Policy which describes a “partnership strategy” and dictates the creation of watershed groups at three levels: the Provincial Water Advisory Council, Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils (WPACs) for large subwatersheds, and Watershed Stewardship Groups for local efforts. The North Saskatchewan River Watershed Alliance (NSWA) is the WPAC most active in Parkland County. As well, there are five lake stewardship groups active in the County including: the Wabamun Watershed Management Council (WWMC), the Lake Isle and Lac Ste. Anne Stewardship Society (LILSA), the Hubbles Lake Stewardship Society, the Mayatan Lake Management Association, and the Jackfish Lake Management Association. Currently Parkland County involvement in watershed stewardship includes Council representation on the NSWA Board (when voted in by membership), Council and administrative representation on NSWA municipal watershed alliance groups (including the Sturgeon River Watershed Alliance) and special projects, and membership in the WWMC (Council representative on their board as well as administrative representation on the Watershed Management Plan Implementation Steering Committee).

Analysis:

LILSA has requested that Parkland County become a member of their Society and nominate a representative to join the Board. This would require attendance to on average 11 meetings per year (virtual and in-person on the last Thursday of every month) and contributing a \$1000 annual membership fee. Currently Parkland County is only a member of one of the 5 local lake stewardship groups (the WWMC). These stewardship groups, that mostly rely on the volunteer efforts of local champions, are critical in the protection and improvement of lake health for the broader community and often rely on small contributions from larger organizations such as Parkland County and stewardship grants to function.

LILSA has also established a subcommittee of membership to oversee the creation of a lake management plan for the two lakes with the intent to address both water quality and water quantity issues facing the waterbodies. They have also requested Parkland County’s participation in this subcommittee which would require a Council or administrative representative to attend an additional monthly meeting. LILSA’s desire is that the lake management plan will create a reasonable action plan to address ongoing water quality and water quantity issues that residents of the watershed continue to voice including poor water quality, invasive species infestations, and major variations in lake water levels.

Lake Isle and Lac Ste. Anne form a major part of the upper reaches of the Sturgeon River. Currently the NSWA administers an inter-municipal watershed alliance (the SRWA) to provide management and oversight of the entire river basin which is a sub watershed of the North Saskatchewan River. The SRWA oversees projects that contribute to the health of the watershed, and the development of a lake management action plan fits well into their objectives. The SRWA will be meeting the week of January 16th and will discuss the possibility of developing a lake action plan as a project overseen by the alliance in order to achieve efficiencies in watershed planning and allow for the NSWA to provide administrative support to the project.

Therefore, administration recommends that:

1. Parkland County becomes a member of LILSA and contributes the annual \$1000 membership fee to support the group's work.
2. Parkland County's representatives advocate to the Sturgeon River Watershed Alliance to develop a lake management action plan for Lake Isle and Lac. Ste. Anne as part of their ongoing deliverables.
3. Parkland County does not appoint a representative to the LILSA Water Quality and Water Quantity Project committee as requested, but that Council may choose to appoint a representative to the LILSA Board.

Alternatives:

1. Appoint an administrative representative to the Water Quality and Water Quantity Project committee.
2. Register Parkland County as a member of LILSA but do not send a representative to sit on the board.

Conclusion/Summary:

In conclusion, Administration supports becoming a member of the Lake Isle and Lac Ste. Anne Stewardship Society (LILSA) and providing an annual monetary contribution. However, due to capacity constraints, administration recommends that the goals of the Water Quality and Water Quantity project be achieved through development of a lake management action plan by the already existing Sturgeon River Watershed Alliance.

AUTHOR: Krista Quesnel

Department: Agriculture & Environment Services

Date written: January 5th, 2025