



Diverse, Responsible & Connected

March 2024

## *Flow of the Peace*



### **VISION**

The Peace is a healthy, sustainable watershed that supports our social, environmental and economic objectives.

### **MISSION**

To promote watershed excellence, the Mighty Peace Watershed Alliance will monitor cumulative effects from land use practices, industry and other activities in the watershed and work to address issues through science, education, communication, policy and by supporting watershed stewardship.

### *From the Executive Director's Desk By Rhonda Clarke-Gauthier*

This fall and winter season has been very busy at the MPWA as we welcomed 2 new staff, Amy Charles (Education & Outreach) and Ashley Garnham (Project Coordinator) and hosted a couple of large scale Watershed events. We also welcomed Adam Norris (Watershed Coordinator) back after taking a 6 month leave to tour parts of the world with his family.

The Board of Directors has been engaged in alliance meetings and strategic planning. As usual as we move towards June, preparation for our AGM is starting, which will include Annual Meeting Business, Guest Speakers and a brief election for new Directors. Nomination forms will go out in April for the seats which will be up for election. We look forward to seeing many of you at this event on June 20th.

We continue to work on a number of initiatives that are in process such as Reducing Invasive plant species in the Lower Peace, with Little Red River Cree Nation, Lower Peace freshwater Contamination Reduction with Mackenzie County and local Producers, Riparian health projects in West County (GP), Grimshaw Gravels Aquifer Source Water Protection work with their municipal partners, and several Education events.

We also planned for and presented 2 significant day long events: Building Resiliency to Multi-year Drought (an AB WPAC initiative with material created by the AB Water Council and AB WPACs) and a Fire & Water Forum. With the high level of concern around water (quality and quantity) in the Peace Watershed due to continued dry conditions and so far no significant snow this winter, there have been considerable discussions regarding water supplies for this year as well as how to prepare for the upcoming fire season and future water needs. Big questions are coming to light and many people are working hard to provide clear information and opportunity to discuss possible options. Both events were very well attended and instigated much discussion.

Our new website is now up and running, check it out at [mightypeacewatershedalliance.org](http://mightypeacewatershedalliance.org) for further information about the projects and events we are involved in. Also, please connect with us if you have questions or require information about the watershed or water.



## *Grimshaw Gravels Aquifer: Where Water Has a Rockin' Good Time!*

Get ready, Grimshaw and neighbouring communities! An upcoming event is just around the corner, and it's going to be one for the books! On **March 15th, at 6:00 pm**, the theatre at **Mile Zero Regional Multiplex** in **Grimshaw** will be the place to be as we explore the fascinating world of the Grimshaw Gravels Aquifer!

The event promises to be informative. You'll get to learn about the aquifer's geological origins and the crucial role it plays in sustaining local water resources. From its formation to the dynamics of groundwater supply, you'll gain valuable insights into this essential natural asset. We are pleased to present Dr. Brian Smerdon, coming from the University of Alberta, will be on hand to impart insights from the recently completed water budget. With his expertise in the field, he'll provide invaluable knowledge that will deepen your understanding of the aquifer's intricacies. You'll also get to explore ongoing efforts and initiatives aimed at safeguarding the Grimshaw Gravels Aquifer—from implementing conservation measures to establishing regulatory frameworks, you'll be introduced to a range of strategies geared toward ensuring the aquifer's longevity and resilience for future generations.

This event is not to be missed! With escalating concerns surrounding water security and sustainability, your participation and involvement are paramount for the aquifer's sustainable management. So please mark your calendars and join us to uncover the secrets of the Grimshaw Gravels Aquifer and contribute to the conversation about securing its future for generations to come. See you there!

## *Trip North to Mackenzie County - Project Tour*

On February 7, 2024, Adam and I departed McLennan on route to the hamlet of La Crête to check on some progress with projects and meet with our partners in the north. The furthest north I had been prior to this trip was as far as Red Earth Creek, so I was excited to see somewhere new. This was also my first time crossing an ice bridge and I was happy to see this semi cross before us, considering we were in my truck haha! It was very interesting to see how they were maintaining this bridge. They drilled a hole in the ice, ran a hose to the water and pumped it up onto the surface of the ice, essentially adding layers of strength to the bridge.

On our way to the Fox Lake Winter Road, where we assessed access for upcoming field work on riparian invasive species, we made a quick pitstop in Fort Vermillion to look at the "Old Bay House" which was originally built in 1906. The history of the fur trade in Fort Vermillion dates back to 1788 and this Hudson Bay Company factor house is the last remaining evidence of this era. In 2005, the Government of Alberta designated this site as a "Provincial Historic Resource."

The Mighty Peace Watershed Alliance has some exciting things planned for Spring and Summer in the La Crête area. We have partnered up with Mackenzie County and Mackenzie Applied Research Association to host a workshop for producers regarding cattle, dugouts, livestock crossings and much more! This is the extension part of our project focused on reducing contaminants in the waters of the Lower



Peace. Stay tuned – more information to come!

- Ashley Garnham, Project Coordinator



## *Empowering Northern Women in Agriculture: Education and Outreach*

On January 19th, the Peace Country Beef and Forage Association (PCBFA) hosted the **Northern Women in Agriculture Conference**. Amy Charles, our Education and Outreach Coordinator, was featured as a speaker and presented on Empowering Women in Watershed Stewardship.

During the Conference, attendees were introduced to the concept of watersheds and how they play a vital role in northern agriculture. The presentation focused on the unique challenges faced in the region and stressed the importance of considering both the big picture and local impacts on watershed health. The session also discussed key conservation techniques, emphasizing sustainable agricultural practices that aid in preserving watersheds. Community collaboration and adaptation strategies to address changing environmental conditions were also highlighted.

The pivotal role of women in managing and conserving watershed resources was underscored, and attendees were encouraged to actively participate in watershed stewardship initiatives. The importance of empowerment and support within the community was emphasized. The presentation aimed to empower women to take an active role in safeguarding our natural resources. The session provided attendees with valuable insights into watershed stewardship by focusing on actionable strategies and community involvement.

Overall, the presentation served as a valuable platform for raising awareness and fostering dialogue on watershed conservation, equipping attendees with the tools and motivation to positively impact their communities and beyond.



## *Building Resiliency to Multi-Year Drought in Alberta Workshop*

A workshop was designed by Alberta Water Council and the AB Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils (WPACs) to address the need for municipalities and residents to build resiliency around issues of multi-year drought. Effective drought management plans are needed to ensure the well-being of municipal citizens and the sustainability of their communities. The purpose of the workshop was to promote collaboration and share knowledge about creating actionable strategies for drought resiliency in Alberta. Collaboration is the foundation of effective drought management, and the workshop enabled municipal representatives to collaborate, share ideas, and learn from each other's experiences. By utilizing the expertise of experts from various fields, such as municipal bodies, watershed organizations, and government agencies, participants can gain valuable insights into best practices and innovative approaches to drought management.

Rhonda Clarke-Gauthier, the Executive Director of the Mighty Peace Watershed Alliance, emphasized the importance of collaboration in tackling drought challenges. Her presentation provided insights into building resilient strategies and inspired participants to work together towards a sustainable future for their communities. She highlighted the complex consequences of drought on water resources, agriculture, infrastructure, and human well-being, instilling a sense of urgency and purpose among participants. Caity Seifert, from the Athabasca Watershed Council (AWC-WPAC), offered valuable insights on the issue of drought in Alberta. She provided a comprehensive overview of the impacts of drought and practical solutions to help communities prepare and mitigate these effects. Her presentation stressed the importance of proactive measures and building resilience to help municipalities cope with the challenges posed by drought. Petra Rowell, the Executive Director of Athabasca Watershed Council (AWC-WPAC), facilitated discussions that enabled stakeholders to examine their roles and responsibilities critically. This examination helps to clarify their mandates, duties, and interdependencies, fostering a sense of shared accountability and ownership. By facilitating these discussions, Petra ensures that participants understand how they can contribute to a coordinated and effective response to drought, laying the groundwork for collaborative action.

Participants were led through sessions to explore key themes in drought management. Each speaker brought their expertise in water resources, data analysis, and urban planning to offer unique insights and practical strategies for navigating the complexities of drought. Tim Romanow, Executive Director of the Milk River Watershed Council (MRWC), presented compelling case studies highlighting best practices and lessons learned from real-world experiences, providing participants with tangible examples to draw inspiration from. Meghan Payne, Executive Director of the Lesser Slave Watershed Council (LSWC), delved into monitoring tools, equipping participants with the analytical tools and techniques required to assess drought conditions and make informed decisions in real time. Ashley Garnham from the Mighty Peace Watershed Alliance (MPWA) addressed planning strategies to look to the future and empower participants to envision a world where drought is not just endured but mitigated through proactive measures and innovative solutions. Together, these sessions encouraged creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration, laying the foundation for developing comprehensive drought management strategies tailored to the unique context of each municipality.

This workshop is meant to be the first step in the process to address the challenges posed by droughts. Everyone is encouraged to stay informed and aware of the ongoing drought-related issues. By keeping up-to-date with the latest developments in drought management, we are hopeful that informed decisions can lead to proactive steps to protect our communities and natural resources. If you have any questions regarding drought, there are several ways to get answers: **You can contact your WPAC, visit the Alberta Drought website, or check out water conservation strategies and apply them at home.** We encourage you to stay engaged with the ongoing community initiatives and government policies related to drought. By continuously learning and collaborating, we can effectively adapt and respond to the ever-changing challenges posed by drought, ensuring our communities' long-term sustainability and resilience.

## Links Of Interest

- Alberta River Basins  
<https://rivers.alberta.ca>
- Alberta Climate Information Service  
<https://acis.alberta.ca>
- Alberta agricultural moisture situation update  
<https://open.alberta.ca/publications-moisture-situation-update>
- Groundwater Observation Well Network  
<https://www.alberta.ca/lookup-groundwater-observation-well-network.aspx>
- Alberta Native Plant Council  
<https://anpc.ab.ca>
- Alberta Water Council  
[www.awchome.ca/projects/resources-support-drought-management-32/](http://www.awchome.ca/projects/resources-support-drought-management-32/)
- Environment and Climate Change Canada seasonal forecasts  
<https://weather.gc.ca/saisons/probe.html>
- Alberta Surface Water Quality Data  
<https://www.alberta.ca/surface-water-quality-data.aspx>
- Alberta Wildfire Webpage  
<https://www.alberta.ca/alberta-wildfire.aspx>
- Environment and Climate Change Canada Water Office page  
[https://wateroffice.ec.gc.ca/index\\_e.html](https://wateroffice.ec.gc.ca/index_e.html)
- Environment and Climate Change Canada Climate Data  
<https://climate.weather.gc.ca/>
- Alberta Climate Records  
<http://albertaclimaterecords.com/>
- Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute  
<http://biodiversityandclimate.abmi.ca/>
- Canada Agriculture Weather and Drought webpage  
<https://agriculture.canada.ca/en/agricultural-production/weather>
- Climate Atlas of Canada  
<https://climateatlas.ca>
- Alberta Drought  
<https://www.alberta.ca/drought>

## MPWA Staff



**Rhonda Clarke—Gauthier, P.Ag.**  
Executive Director



**Amy Charles**  
Education & Outreach Coordinator



**Adam Norris, M.Sc., P.Biol.**  
Watershed Coordinator



**Ashley Garnham**  
Project Coordinator

## Board Members 2023-2024

Government	Industry	Non-Governmental Organizations	Indigenous Communities
Federal-Transboundary Relations -Abdi Siad-Omar Alternate: Long Fu	Agriculture -Jill Henry	Conservation/Environment -David Walty	Métis Nation of Alberta -Vacant
Provincial -Bonnie Segal	Forestry -Justin Hetu Alternate: Daniel Potts	Watershed Stewardship -Cathy Newhook	Metis Settlement General Council -Vacant
Large Urban Municipality -Chris Thiessen	Oil & Gas -Sandra Miller	Research/Education- Vacant	Upper Watershed First Nation -Vacant
Small Urban Municipality -Vern Lymburner	Utilities -Ashley Rowney	Public Member-at-Large (2) -Richard Keillor -Audrey DeWit	Middle Watershed First Nation -Vacant
Rural Municipality Alternate: Danny Roy	Mining -Vacant	Tourism/Fisheries/Recreation -Brian Liverse	Lower Watershed First Nation -Jim Webb (LRRCN) Alternate: Darryel Sowan

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