



# Mighty Peace Watershed Alliance



Diverse, Responsible & Connected

September 2025

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

As we approach the end of August and the summer season, we reflect on the hot dry weather we have received in most of the Peace and the challenges that the drought presents— reduced field crops, low feed stocks (pasture, hay and grains), ongoing fires and the destruction that brings to industry, livelihoods, and communities, biodiversity loss, and the concern around providing water reserves as we move through the year. We continue to bring forward information regarding protection of wetlands, and other water sources, as well as further conversations about preparing for multi year drought resiliency. If you would like to explore these areas, please connect with us to see what resources we may be able to help with.

We had a very good AGM in June. Welcome to the new slate of Board Directors.. Thank you to all of our partners and supporters for your previous and continued support.

As an organization we are continuing to work towards gathering required information to update the State of the Watershed for the Peace and Slave Basins..

Enjoy the rest of Summer and Have a safe fall!

## *Education and Outreach*

Since April, the MPWA has seen over 550 students across 11 different schools in 6 different municipalities! We've visited classrooms, done field trips to the Boreal Wetland Centre, and gotten our hands dirty doing our X-stream science program or working on the Floating Treatment Wetland project. We also had a booth at Walk through the Forest (GP), where 871 grade 6 students learned about forestry, wetlands and the environment over the course of 3 days.

We've also been out and about at several community events including helping out with the Sexsmith 4-H club, Heritage days in Grande Prairie, Pioneer Days at Lac Cardinal Pioneer Museum and Peace Country Beef and Forage's field day near Fairview.

MPWA is open to classroom bookings for the 2025-26 school year! A classroom presentation or field trip is a great way to get hands-on with water and our environment.



### **MPWA VISION**

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

### **MPWA 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.

## Drought

There's no debating that this has been a dry summer in Northern Alberta. While our neighbours in southern Alberta have gotten some much needed rain, the clouds have seemed to pass over us without letting go of a drop. Drought can have devastating consequences on industry, communities and people. Every county and municipality with a heavy agriculture presence in the Peace watershed has declared a State of Agricultural Disaster for the 2025 growing season. Between April 1 and August 20, 2025 precipitation levels in the Peace watershed were overall only between 30-90% of average rain levels, (Figure 1), with some areas experiencing extremely low levels of precipitation considered to only occurs once in every 25-50 years (figure 2). However, there are ways for farmers and landowners to reduce the impact of drought on their land.

### Shelterbelts

Shelterbelts are strips of trees on the perimeter of a field. Shelterbelt programs were first introduced in the 1930s to combat the dustbowl that was swirling through North America. While the original intent was to reduce soil erosion, shelterbelts have proven to have numerous other advantages as well. Either natural or planted trees both have similar impacts. Shelterbelts can be strategically placed to control snow drifts, as the snow will collect at the tree line as opposed to a road or building. This snow accumulation also helps retain moisture in agricultural fields as the snow melts, and melts more slowly in the shade, allowing for the water to seep deeper in the soil. With the wind being forced to to up and over the shelter, it slows the wind. This decreases the soil erosion and can also reduce evaporation of moisture during drought.

Livestock can also benefit from shelterbelts. Shelterbelts can provide a haven from the wind chill in the winter and shade from the heat in summer. They can also increase the biodiversity on your land and create connections of habitats for wildlife and native species, including pollinators and birds that provide natural pest control.

### Wetlands

Many wetlands have been historically removed to increase the workable land on farms. Ditches have been added to remove water as quickly as possible to be able to start planting sooner. However, 70% of wetlands in southern Canada have been removed, filled, or diverted. This removal has increased the risk of floods and droughts while removing aquatic habitat for many birds, plants and animals. Wetlands hold water during drought and filter out contaminants like fertilizer and pesticides. They make the land more resilient and able to bounce back from weather extremes like floods and drought faster. With climate change, the weather will become less predictable with floods and drought happening more frequently, and wetlands are here to help navigate the extremes.

Agricultural moisture situation update maps can be found on the Government of Alberta's website at [alberta.ca](https://alberta.ca)

#### Sources:

"Shelterbelts" *Alberta Environmental Farm Plan*, 31 May 2017, [albertaefp.com/shelterbelts/](https://albertaefp.com/shelterbelts/)  
 "Shelterbelts" *Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture*, [https://nsfa-fane.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Shelterbelt\\_Factsheet\\_23.pdf](https://nsfa-fane.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Shelterbelt_Factsheet_23.pdf)  
 Rempel, Janell, et al. "Costs and Benefits of Shelterbelts: A Review of Producers' Perception and Min Map Analysis for Saskatchewan, Canada." *Canadian Journal of Soil Science*, vol. 97, no. 3, Mar. 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1139/cjss-2016-0100>.  
 Benalcazar, Paul, et al. *THE CONTRIBUTION OF WETLANDS towards a SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE in CANADA the Contribution of Wetlands towards a Sustainable Agriculture in Canada*. 2019, [capi-icpa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/2019-10-09-CAPI-Wetlands-CAPI-Doctoral-Fellows-2017-19-group-paper\\_WEB.pdf](https://capi-icpa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/2019-10-09-CAPI-Wetlands-CAPI-Doctoral-Fellows-2017-19-group-paper_WEB.pdf).

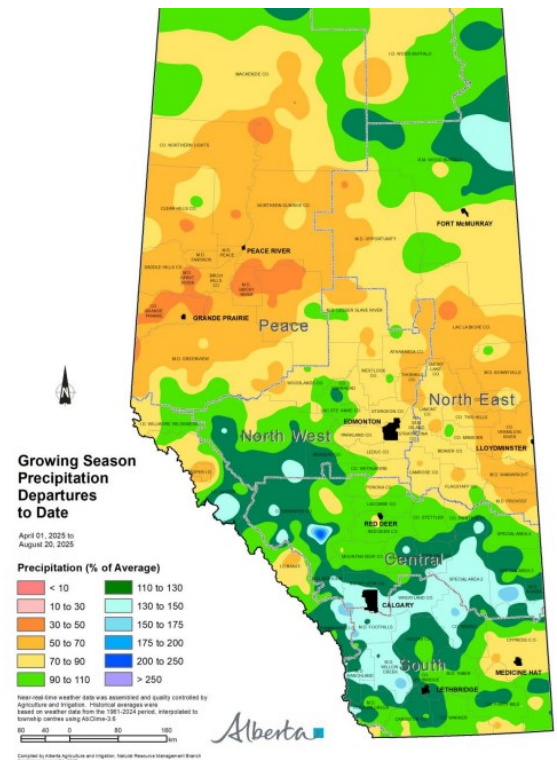


Figure 1: Growing season precipitation departures to date April 1-August 20, 2025

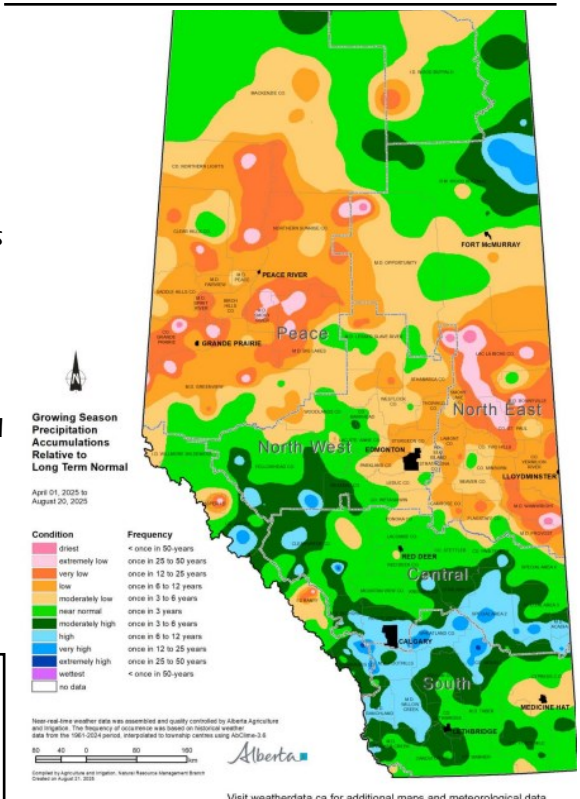


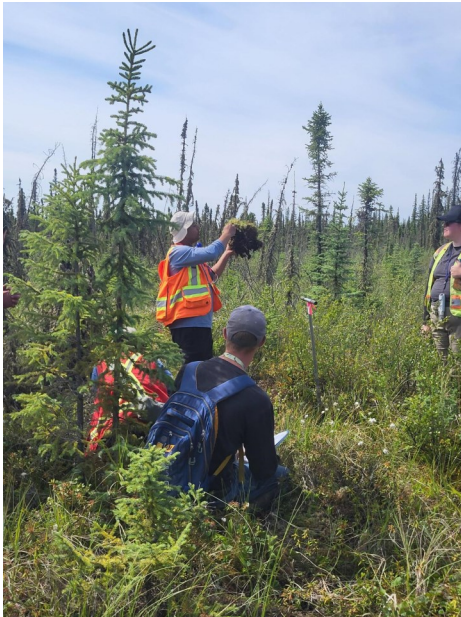
Figure 2: Growing season precipitation accumulations relative to long term normal April 1—August 20, 2025



## *In the field...*

### **CABIN training**

In June, two of our staff headed off to Hinton to be trained in the Canadian Aquatic Biomonitoring Network (CABIN) protocols. CABIN is managed by Environment and Climate Change Canada and is a collaborative network with a standardized protocol for the biomonitoring of freshwater ecosystems. Staff spent two days in some stunning scenery learning how to properly take samples, survey the site and checkout the cool critters that were collected. MPWA is planning to use these new skills in future projects.



### **Ducks Unlimited Event**

MPWA hosted "Wetlands in Alberta's Peace region" July 15 and 16 with Ducks Unlimited Canada in Grimshaw. Participants from industry, non-profit, and municipalities spent two days learning about wetland types, trekking through various bogs, fens, marshes and swamps and identifying wetlands.

We were excited to provide this workshop free of charge to participants, thanks to the Alberta Government's Watershed Restoration and Resiliency Program.

**Monitoring**—at sites in the Grimshaw Gravels Aquifer (wells, lake level logger), Volunteers assisting AHS with cyanobacteria monitoring at the Lac Cardinal Beach area, Floating Treatment Wetland at Stormwater Pond (Grande Prairie), and groundwater monitoring at the Boreal Wetland Centre (Evergreen Park).

## *AGM recap*

MPWA's Annual General Meeting took place June 19, 2025 in Grimshaw. There were updates from Board Committees and staff including Finances, Technical projects, and the Education and Outreach events from the last year. Our guest speaker Bob Chrenek, the Agricultural Service Board Chair from the County of Grande Prairie, gave an eye opening presentation about the struggles of drought on agriculture and the impact that water, or lack thereof, can have on a producer. The day also included time to discuss the work that is happening regarding the State of The Watershed and the gathering of information needed to produce an update to the 2015 report. Anyone who has information to add to this piece of work are asked to contact the office. This is also the time when the election for Directors to the Board occurs. Each year about half of the Directors seats are up for election. There are 21 seats on the Board that represent a variety of sectors and organizations. There are still some seats that did not have nominees, if you know of someone who would be interested in contributing to the organization by becoming a Director, please have them contact Rhonda at the office. Seats remaining open at this time include: Metis Nation of Alberta, Metis Settlements General Council, Upper Peace First Nation, Middle Peace First Nation, Mining.

Our Annual Report and Financial Summary are now available on our website or contact the Office for copies.

## *Site C Dam– Update*

Site C dam along the Peace River is now fully in commission with the final and sixth generating unit now in operation. The dam now has the capacity to generate over 1 100 megawatts of electricity and reliably power 500,000 homes annually. More information can be found on the BC Hydro website at [sitecproject.com](http://sitecproject.com).

## Upcoming events

## MPWA Board Members for 2025-2026

DUCKS UNLIMITED CANADA PRESENTS THE SECOND ANNUAL

# WETLAND INNOVATION WORKSHOP

Innovation in a Changing World

You're Invited to the second annual Wetland Innovation Workshop! This year's theme - Innovation in a Changing World will explore the world of boreal wetland conservation and the experts who are transforming how we think about water, wetlands and the world around us in the face of our changing climate.

Join us for a full day of presentations and networking where you will explore innovative ideas, bold solutions and cutting-edge research all in the heart of the Boreal Wetland Centre!

SEPT 24 | 8:30 AM TO 4:00 PM | BOREAL WETLAND CENTRE  
EVERGREEN PARK  
GRANDE PRAIRIE ALBERTA



Scan the QR Code for more information and purchase a ticket!



SECTOR	REPRESENTATIVE
Public Member at Large	Hannah Anderson
Public Member at Large	Audrey DeWit
Conservation/Environment Director	Dave Walty
Research Education	Bin Xu
Watershed Stewardship	Cathy Newhook
Recreation/Tourism/Fisheries	Brian Lieverse
Agriculture	Kate Winterford
Forestry	Wayne Thorp
Utilities	Ashley Rowney
Oil & Gas	Vacant
Mining	Vacant
Métis Nation of Alberta	Vacant
Metis Settlements General Council	Vacant
Upper Watershed First Nation	Vacant
Lower Watershed First Nation	Jim Webb
Middle Watershed First Nation	Vacant
Rural Municipalities	Corinna Williams
Small Urban Municipalities	Elaine Manzer
Federal Transboundary Relations	Abdi Siad-Omar
Large Urban Municipality	Chris Thiessen
Provincial Government	Bonnie Segal

## WHAT IS A RIPARIAN AREA?



Join us for an information packed session on vegetation zones next to flowing and standing water bodies and their importance.

**Event Details:**  
Date: **September 29, 2025**  
Time: **1:00pm - 4:00pm**  
Location: **David Thompson Hall**



**Special Speaker:**  
Kerri O'Shaughnessy, P.Ag.  
Riparian Specialist - With Cows & Fish



**What you'll learn:**

- An introduction to riparian areas, their value, importance, form and function.
- How riparian areas can help during drought.
- Riparian enhancement and restoration strategies like soil erosion, bioengineering, etc.

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## MPWA Staff



**Rhonda Clarke-Gauthier**  
Executive Director



**Adam Norris**  
Project Coordinator



**Adanna Hustler**  
Education & Outreach  
Coordinator

**Watershed stewardship workshop:**  
January 24, 2026 in Grande Prairie