

Is Your Watershed in Trouble?!

Flooding, declining water quality, soil erosion, loss of wildlife habitat, stream-bank erosion, nutrient loading, wetland drainage, lack of drought protection and increasing water demand. These are all common concerns for many watersheds in Municipal Manitoba. Your watershed is no different. Spring and summer flooding of farm land and private property have increased in frequency and cost of damages. Development and intense use of areas near watercourses contribute to water contamination and reduce the stability of sensitive river banks. Uncontrolled drainage of fields and wetlands can increase runoff intensity and reduce base flows of streams in dryer months. These things all occur in your watershed but to what extent? How concerned should we be? What can we do about it?



The Watershed Approach - A Local Solution

The issues identified above are not unrelated problems. They cannot be fixed in isolation. They are symptoms of a larger concern and must be treated as a system. That system is the watershed! Watersheds are defined as areas of land that captures precipitation (i.e. rain, snow melt) and funnels it to a river, lake or stream. It is a community where people, business, agriculture, government, institutions, plants, and animals are interconnected by the common water resource. The community influences the watershed and the watershed influences the community.

“ A watershed plan helps define what is important to the community”

A healthy watershed requires a community supported plan to protect this complex resource for current and future watershed residents. A watershed plan is a document prepared by the watershed community that describes the actions needed over time to achieve a sustainable, healthy watershed. The Assiniboine Watersheds Management Plan is simply an organized way of looking at big picture issues and setting long and short term priorities for improving the Shell, Birdtail-Assiniboine, Arrow-Oak, and Little Saskatchewan Watersheds. Which watershed do you live in? We invite you to get to know your watershed!



HEALTHY COMMUNITIES START WITH HEALTHY WATERSHEDS!

How does the Planning Process Work?

Watershed plans for the Shell, Birdtail-Assiniboine, Arrow-Oak, and Little Saskatchewan River Watersheds are being led by the Upper Assiniboine River, Little Saskatchewan River, and Lake of the Prairies Conservation Districts. Under the recently enabled Water Protection Act, these three Conservation Districts have been established as the Water Planning Authorities (WPA's) for these four watersheds in the larger Assiniboine River Basin. This means that these Conservation Districts have been assigned the responsibility of preparing and implementing a watershed plan

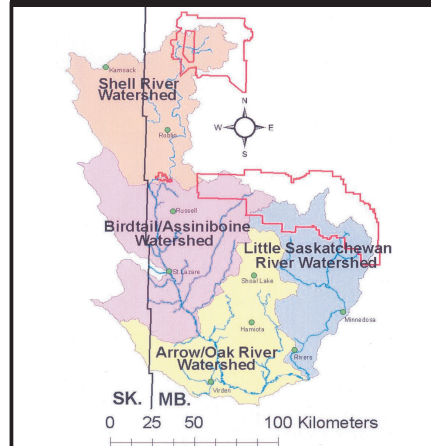
“The watershed plan will be prepared based on local opinions, community needs and up to date scientific information collected in the watershed.”

This process will be community driven and requires the support, opinions and knowledge of the residents within the watershed and technical information from the Provincial and Federal Governments. Resident members and government representatives will form a Watershed Planning Advisory Team (WPAT) that will debate the issues and provide expertise to the WPA for consideration in the final plan. Information about the state of the watershed will be collected and presented to all members of the WPAT and WPA. The issues will be identified and reasonable solutions will be recommended. Community consultations will also take place at various times during the planning process in several communities throughout the watersheds. At these meetings information will be provided to the public about the progress of the plan and the state of the watershed. The public is encouraged to provide feedback for consideration in the final plans.

Once all information has been received, community comments evaluated, and the final plans prepared, the recommendations of the plans will be implemented by agencies as indicated in the plan. The plan will be completed within a two year time frame and ready to be implemented in early 2008. A full scale review of the progress of the plan will also be completed in 2013 to identify successes, failures and to introduce refinements to ensure the plan is up to date with the needs of the watersheds.



THE FOUR ASSINIBOINE BASIN WATERSHEDS



These plans will provide a venue where all watershed residents, local municipalities and government agencies can openly discuss watershed concerns and work together to develop long term solutions!

Other Benefits from the Planning Process!

State of the Watershed Report

This document will pull information from several sources to quantify the current state of the Assiniboine Watersheds. The information contained in the report will be extensively used to evaluate the action items of the final watershed plan.

Source Water Protection Plan

This plan will be prepared for drinking water sources in the watershed. Using available information this plan will identify, assess and mitigate threats to domestic drinking water supplies.

Watershed Report Cards

These snapshot reports will be widely distributed throughout the watershed and will contain provincial indicators for the health of the watersheds and to present and evaluate the success and shortcomings of the watershed plan.

Public Awareness

This is probably the single most important outcome of the entire process. A heightened public awareness about the health issues and potential solutions to concerns within the Assiniboine Watersheds.



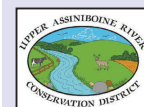
EAEP- Putting the Plans to Work!

The watershed planning process also compliments the Environmental Agri-Equivalent Planning. These group plans prepared by producers look at specific agri-environmental issues and are well suited to address cumulative land use impacts in the watershed. Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives and PFRA provide support for these group plans aimed at offering appropriate Beneficial Management Practices (BMP's) to address priority issues and mitigate environmental risk.

Please stay tuned for details on public open houses this fall and winter. Please join us...we value your input!

The watershed plans set a way to measure future progress on meeting resource goals and objectives. The plans will help groups like the local Conservation Districts set priorities in their programming.

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