

## **Medicine River Watershed 3-5-year Strategic Plan 2025-2030**

### **Mission:**

The Medicine River Watershed increases community awareness of the importance of water quality, riparian health and the natural beauty of the Medicine River. We participate in the monitoring of the health of the watershed. We advocate for community, industry and government partnership and involvement for its protection and conservation so there is clean and accessible water for generations to come.

### **VISION**

The Medicine River Watershed and associated aquifers are healthy and able to sustain the fresh water needs of the people, communities and its riparian life forms that rely upon it.

### **3-5 Year strategic Plan**

#### **Functions, Goals, Strategies and Indicators of Success**

The major goals and strategies to achieve those goals are outlined under the society's four main functions of: Monitoring, Advocating, Educating and Funding.

#### **Function #1 Monitoring**

##### **Goal**

Readily accessible data describes water conditions and there is a process to compare these conditions to established water quality guidelines and standards.

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Strategies to achieve the objective</b>
<b>Data.</b>  There is appropriate and sufficient data to inform government regarding the need to change policies and processes related to the granting of water diversion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify specific data/information that would best inform government of health and status of watershed (partner with RDWSA to do this)</li><li>• Establish parameters to be used to measure the health of the watershed</li><li>• Monitor wetlands to gauge soil moisture conditions</li></ul>

licenses for the Medicine and Blindman Rivers	
<p><b>Monitoring.</b></p> <p>There is a reliable process to support the ongoing monitoring, collection and reporting of data related to water quality in the Medicine and Blindman watersheds.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Water well monitoring</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Identify and map number of individual water wells in area (acquire map from province)</li> <li>○ Solicit/seek residents who would be willing to participate and conduct monitoring of their wells.</li> <li>○ acquire well gauging/monitoring systems- ( \$1000 for measuring tape tool vs \$5000 for laser/sonic tool) – request municipalities to provide for their citizens to use</li> <li>○ Report on water well data- changes in depth by region</li> <li>○ Track/report proportion of wells that have dried up or have had to be dug deeper.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>River/stream monitoring.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Identify locations for river/stream monitoring</li> <li>○ Seek funding to purchase upstream and downstream gauging systems- approx. \$18,000 each...determine locations and numbers</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Process for Monitoring.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Determine accountability for river, well and groundwater monitoring</li> <li>○ Partner with communities and/or individuals to establish process to conduct monitoring and reporting</li> <li>○ Establish a timely process for water monitoring and reporting of both the Medicine and Blindman Rivers using measurements from Creekwatch, CABIN, Flow, depth, phosphorous levels etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Compliance with Legislation</b></p> <p>Diversion licenses, extraction processes and volumes are compliant with legislation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify specific functions and measurements related to compliance with water diversion legislation that need to be monitored.</li> <li>• Recommend process for monitoring compliance</li> </ul>

## Function #2: Advocacy

### Goal

Government policy and processes support conservation of fresh water access and availability. There is a 10 year plan in place for the phasing out of freshwater use for fracking.

( Province to make changes to freshwater use policy, AER to provide more oversight, Oil companies to seek alternatives to fresh water for fracking) .

Objectives	Strategies to address objective
<b>Policies and Legislation</b>  <b>Current policies</b> reflect today's reality of drought and oil industry fracking requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Engage MLAs and Municipalities supported by the Paskapoo formation and its aquifers</li><li>• Request assigned delegates from each municipality to participate in special or designated council meetings to develop policy recommendations and solutions</li><li>• Joint resolutions to AM and RMA</li><li>• Request oil industry partners to describe/ outline fracking requirements, identify alternatives to the use of fresh water for fracking purposes and outline the pros and cons of each alternative.</li><li>• Develop consistent policy recommendations for all stakeholders to present to the province in a cohesive, unified message.</li><li>• Recommend- Stop all direct withdrawal by wells or deep pits for fracking.</li><li>• Request province to direct oil companies to explore alternatives for fracking methods with a 10 year phaseout of no freshwater use for fracking by 2035</li></ul>
<b>Water Diversion Application approval process</b>  Extraction applications are vetted through a decision-making process that includes a review of the <b>impact of the diversion on the watershed and the needs of the people who</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Outline key considerations for a decision-making framework with regard to approval for water diversion applications. Submit draft to AE and AER for consideration</li><li>• Advocate for change to AER application approval process</li><li>• Identify impact of diversion on the watershed- and develop video, documentary, stats on water wells, agriculture, lumber industry.</li><li>• Recommend a sole licenser- e.g. Only AEP</li></ul>

<b>reside there as well as other industry who require the same water</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite Oil Companies and AER to our AGM</li> </ul>
<b>Expand and build existing wet lands further</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiate and build partnership with Alternate Land Use Services (ALUS)</li> <li>• Initiate and build partnership with the Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Projects (WRRP)</li> <li>• Partner with environmental groups such as Ducks unlimited or Delta Waterfowl to build beaver dam analogues at strategic points along both rivers and/or tributaries or discuss how we might work together.</li> <li>• Partner with Freshwater Conservation Canada (formerly Trout Unlimited)</li> </ul>

### Function #3 : Education

**Goal:** Community awareness and shared ownership for the health of the river and our water resources is commonplace. *Need to educate province, AER and Industry about the uniqueness of the MRW*

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Strategies to achieve objective</b>
<b>Public awareness</b> <p>The general public is informed about the importance of a healthy watershed, the risk factors that are affecting it and each individual's role in ensuring that healthy water is available for future generations.</p>	<p><b>Social Media Presence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A website that is informative and current with active links to other community and watershed sites and resources. (watersheds.ca)</li> <li>• Develop Videos/you tube to post on web/Facebook,</li> <li>• Facebook page that announces events, provides timely information on issues etc.</li> </ul> <p><b>Community Education/Awareness Initiatives</b></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Formal presentations</b> to communities within the Medicine River Watershed geography reporting on available data, issues arising (eg. AGM and community specific presentations)</li><li>• <b>Participation in Community Events.</b> Have representation at community block parties (Eckville, Leslieville, etc.) with banners, brochures, interactive displays, aquifer demos etc.. Set up activities and booths (water bingo or activity packs for kids) at community events/block parties-</li><li>• <b>Quarterly Newspaper articles</b> –submit relevant articles about a community's area water celebrations or concerns to various local newspapers in a rotating fashion- ie. Western Star this month, Sylvan Lake next etc.</li><li>• Reviving and publishing knowledge of the history of the Medicine River</li><li>• Submit pictures from various water issues concerns to website/Facebook page for awareness or questions; like- where is this happening this week? (eg. dried out streams, rivers, fracking near a location, dried out dugout etc.).</li></ul> <p><b>Youth Education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Expand presentations to additional schools beyond Eckville during Earth and World Water days</li><li>• Develop quizzes and poster contests for kids</li><li>• Consider storytelling options in local libraries</li><li>• Work with 4 H groups and other groups such as Guides, Scouts, Beavers etc. to incorporate watershed awareness into curricula</li><li>• Youth poster contests/challenges to be displayed at malls, community events, - created on coroplast boards with wire stands</li><li>• Create water related discovery packs for loan to schools<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Offer storytelling (books, puppets) at libraries and summer camps or have a summer book library program</li></ul></li></ul> <p><b>Partner with other Organizations concerned or impacted by water.</b></p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect with Ducks Unlimited, and Bucks for Wildlife, Freshwater Conservation Canada, Cows and Fish etc. to identify concerns they are facing with hunting and how we can work together to increase communication and public awareness</li> <li>• Advocate for/invite Indigenous presence/representation for healing the waters, hikes and events, ceremonies for water awareness, keepers of the water etc.</li> </ul> <p><b>Water in the Arts- to promote community awareness and recognition of the river</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plein Air event continuation</li> <li>• Placement of plein air paintings and photos in local art galleries and local businesses.</li> <li>• Songwriting contest with any local song writer or group</li> </ul>
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#### Function #4: Funding

**Goal- there is sufficient funds to support the monitoring, advocating and education functions of the society.**

Objective	Strategies to achieve objective
<p>There is consistent annualized funding to support the ongoing work of society which includes: monitoring, advocating and public education.</p> <p>Specific funding is required for</p> <p><b>Monitoring:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnership with RDWSA for both water sampling and analysis</li> <li>• Creekwatch Kits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a fund-raising committee</li> </ul> <p><i>Question: Is there a permit fee for companies to pump water from the river or other fresh water sources? Could we levy a fee or have a % of fees allocated to watershed work?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• List all current funding streams</li> <li>• Develop a detailed budget that outlines cost of current functions, as well as potential new projects</li> <li>• Identify all/any potential funding or resource support options</li> <li>• Submit grant proposals and funding or resource support requests to all four counties and</li> </ul>

<p><b>Advocating and Public Education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 3-4 Community Presentations and /Engagement activities annually</li><li>• Plein Air Painting Event</li><li>• Promotions/advertising</li><li>• Printing- brochures, educational materials</li></ul> <p><b>Additional anticipated Future costs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• New monitoring technology</li><li>• Report writing</li><li>• Video development</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Request funding for watershed monitoring from municipalities (Request increased support from RDRWA to share costs for testing.</li><li>• Solicit private entrepreneurs for funding</li><li>• Solicit industry<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• AltaLink</li><li>• Gas Co-Ops</li><li>• Local oil companies</li><li>• BTG Energy</li><li>• Paramount Energy</li><li>• Alberta Cattle Commission</li><li>• EPCOR</li><li>• Bank sponsorships?</li><li>• FCC</li><li>• AFSC</li></ul></li></ul> <p>Seek Government support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Alberta Energy Regulator</li><li>• Environment Ministry</li><li>• Natural Resources</li><li>• Grants- such as WRRP projects</li></ul> <p>Re-introduce a trade show</p> <p>Partner with Ducks Unlimited</p> <p>Recognize current and ongoing sponsorships- send annual letters requesting renewal of support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gilby Ag Society</li><li>• TC</li><li>• Spartan</li></ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Keyera</li></ul>
The leadership of the projects undertaken by the society is sustainable.	Partner with counties of Lacombe, Ponoka, Clearwater and Ponoka as well as the municipalities that rely upon the Medicine and blindman rivers for their water to request shared funding for a dedicated watershed lead manager...funding could come from grant applications and/or request by all counties to the Alberta Environment Ministry- or could be "in-kind support" for various project leadership.