

# Collaborative Watershed Management in Alberta

October 1, 2019  
Rosemarie Ferjuc, Mike Murray



Alberta WPACs





What People  
Think We Do



# Who Are We?



Alberta WPACs

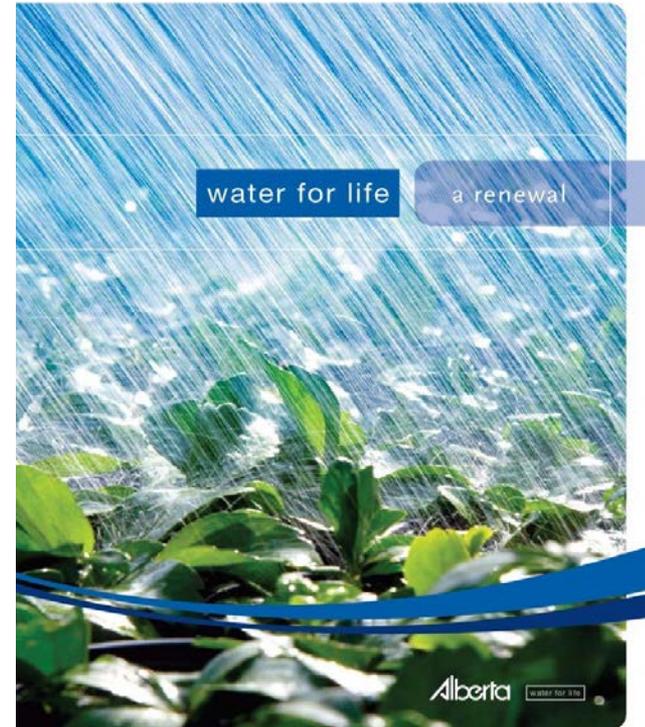
# WPAC Origins



- 11 Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils (WPACs)
- Partner in the delivery of *Alberta's Water for Life Strategy*
- Multi-sector, not for profit, place-based

The *Water for Life Strategy* has 3 main goals:

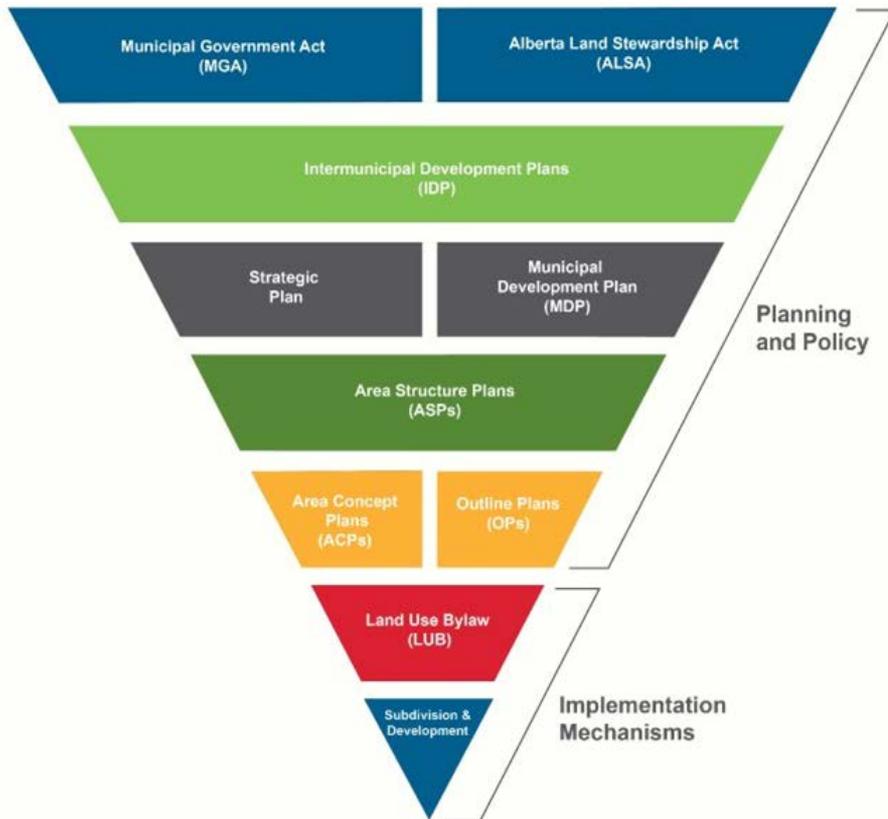
- 1) Safe, secure drinking water supply
- 2) Healthy aquatic ecosystems
- 3) Reliable, quality water supplies for a sustainable economy



# Water Challenges in Alberta



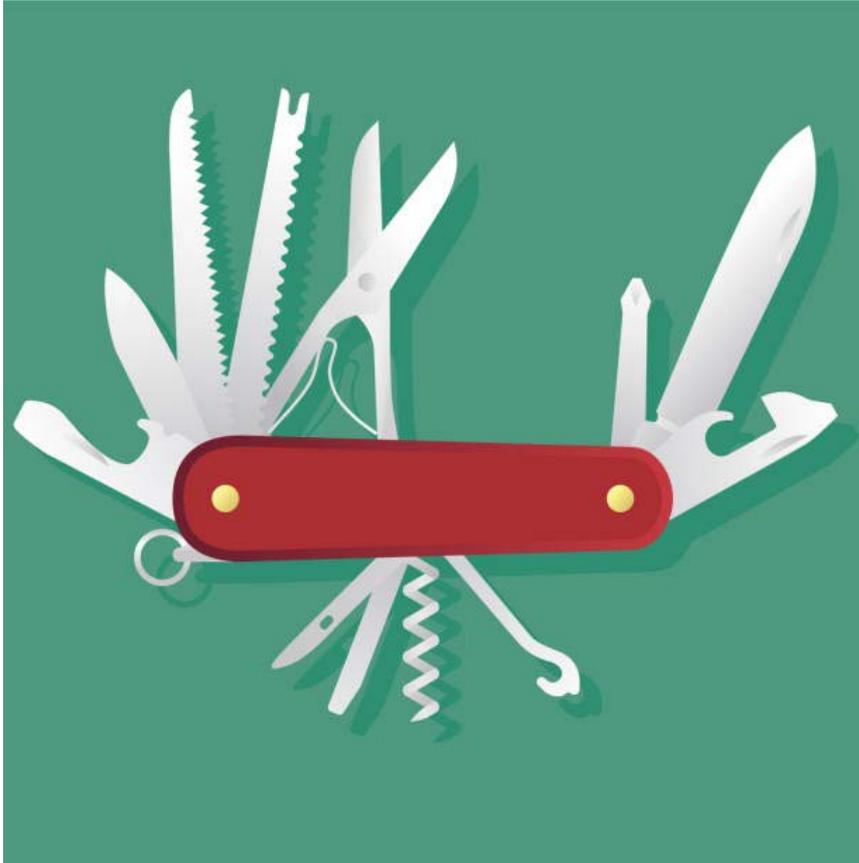
# Water Governance in Alberta



## Principles of the *Water Act*

- The ownership of all water is vested in the Crown
- Provides for flexibility in times of water shortage
- Ability to appeal some decisions to the Environmental Appeals Board
- The ability for public consultation
- Water Management Plans
- Does not support speculation in the resource

# WPACs are multi-functional



## **WPACs have four key responsibilities:**

- 1) To act as convenors and collaborators, bringing stakeholders from across sectors together
- 2) To develop watershed management plans and advise on policy
- 3) To monitor, assess and report on the health of Alberta's watersheds
- 4) To deliver education and literacy programs for different audiences

# WPACs Are Membership Driven



## Participation

- Alberta WPACs continue to represent a well-distributed network of over 3000 highly capable and engaged experts.
- This network is managed by WPAC staffers who efficiently achieve credible results at a volunteer:staff ratio of about 80:1.

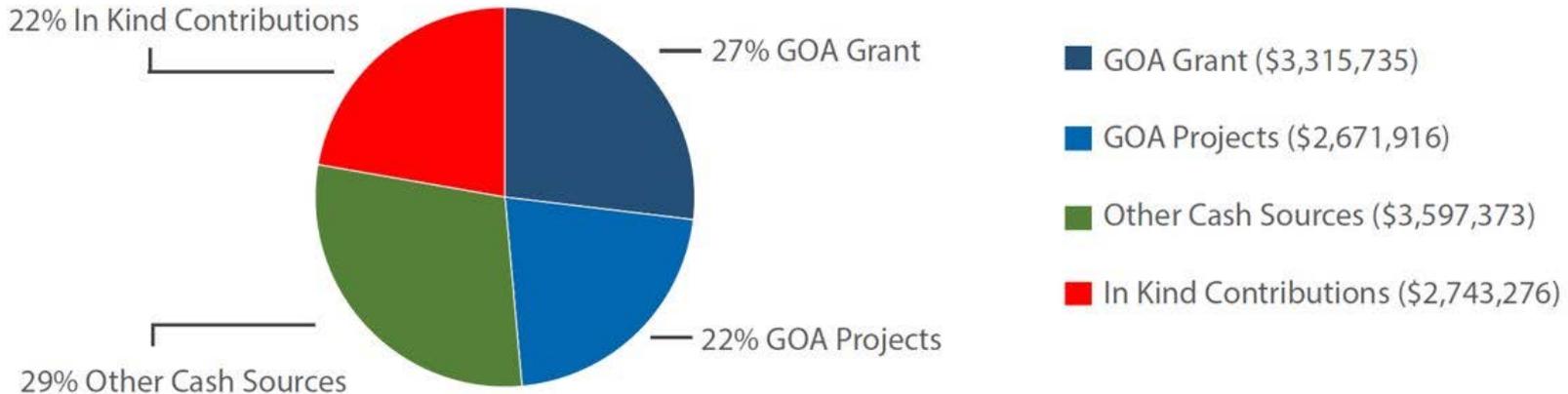


# WPACs Are Multi-Sectoral



## Funding

- 51% of the total investment (other cash & in-kind) is in addition to Government of Alberta funds. Over half of this amount is cash.
- The initial core GOA (grants) investment of \$3.3M foundationally creates the opportunity to generate \$9.6M in resources to support Watershed Management.





## What do we do?

- Main mechanism bringing multi sectoral stakeholders at a watershed level to share resources/expertise/knowledge
- Develop local solutions for better management of the watershed
- Incubator for ideas/strategies to improve watershed management
- Leverage resources to accomplish together more than can be done individually



## How do we do this?

- Work collaboratively with our partners and stakeholders
- Seek consensus on land/water/resource management strategies that support achievement of shared environmental, social, and economic outcomes
- Bias balanced approach - we work to 'fix the problem and not the blame'
- Provide science based decision support tools for decision makers

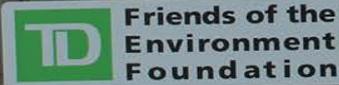
# WPACs are collaborative



## Okotoks Bioretention Research Facility



Environment and  
Climate Change Canada

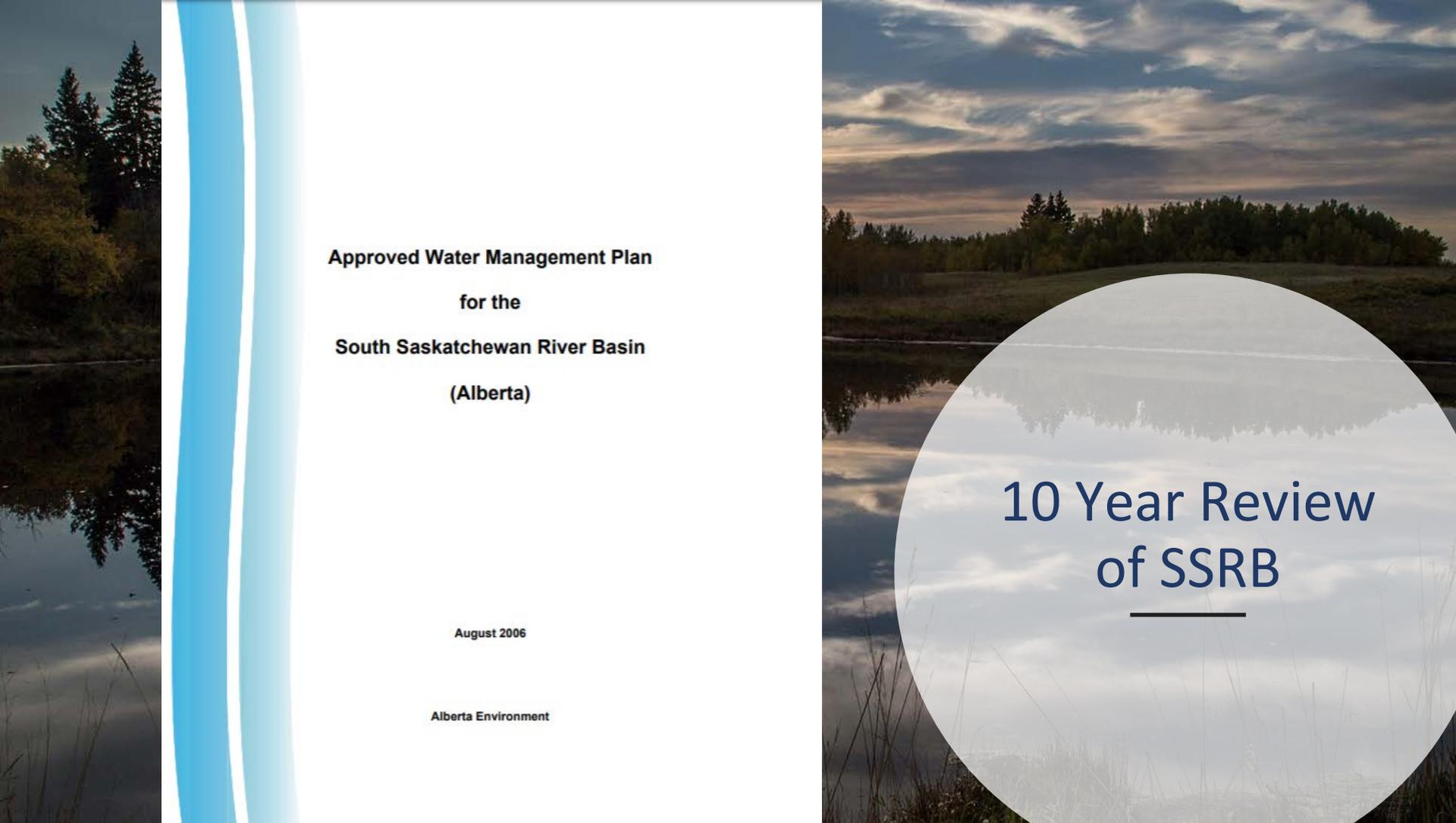


THE CITY OF  
CALGARY



University  
of Victoria





**Approved Water Management Plan  
for the  
South Saskatchewan River Basin  
(Alberta)**

**August 2006**

**Alberta Environment**

**10 Year Review  
of SSRB**

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# WPAC Milestones: SSRB Data



- Surface water allocations (interim/full and temporary): number, volume and purpose
- Recorded flow data
- Groundwater allocations (interim/full and temporary): number, volume and purpose
- WCOs: locations and values
- Transfers: number, volume and volume held back
- Existing reports (e.g., Alberta Water Council reports)

# WPAC Milestones: Spotlight on the SSRB



This project resulted in two important outcomes:



- A comprehensive discussion and a fuller understanding of the successes that have been achieved through the Plan's implementation to date.
- Significant players in Alberta's water management regime came together to build relationships and capacity for future initiatives in the SSRB.



## Several next steps are identified, including:

- Hold a joint AEP - WPAC workshop to prioritize opportunities to improve aquatic and riparian health.
- Revitalize existing advisory groups (e.g., IWCC).
- Continue to involve collaborative groups in watershed planning!
- Convene a workshop with AEP staff in Approvals to work through a case study of a water license transfer from beginning to end



# We are a forum



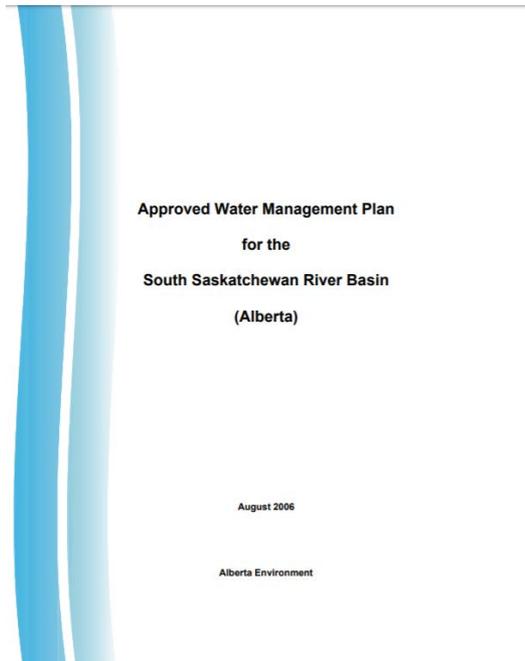
- Quarterly Science and Education Forums
- Annual General Meetings
- Learning journeys (hiking, biking)
- Social lab events
- Bus tours
- Special events
- Committees



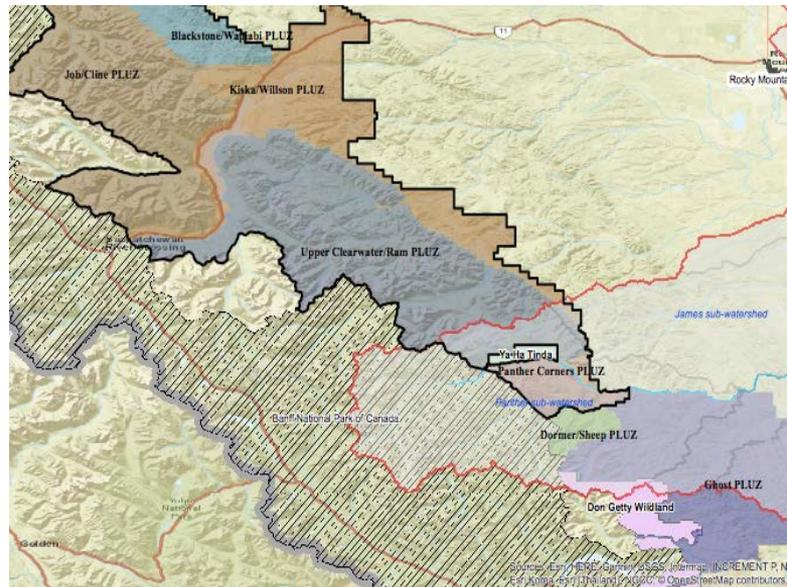
# We are planners and analysts



**Water Quality**



**Water Security**



**Land-Use**

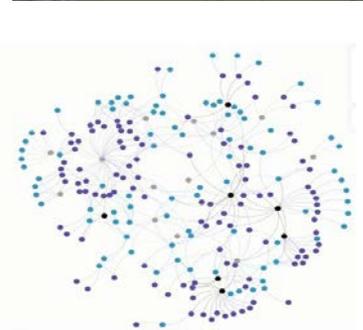
# We are communicators and educators

- Monthly E-Newsletters and social media
- First watershed road signs in Alberta! Six so far in RDR watershed...
- Presentations to various groups (councils, stewardship groups, schools, colleges)
- Targeted education and outreach programs



# We are partners

- Watershed Stewardship Groups
- Government (municipal, provincial and federal)
- Municipalities (e.g., planning tables)
- ENGOs (e.g., ALMS conference and lake testing)
- Industry (e.g., hydraulic fracturing BMPs)
- Academia (e.g., University of Calgary, Olds College; Prairie Water)



# Southern Alberta Water Charter



## SOUTHERN ALBERTA WATER CHARTER

2017

Whereas, the United Nations General Assembly: "Recognizes the right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a human right that is essential for the full enjoyment of life and all human rights." (28 July 2010, Resolution 64/292)

And Whereas, the Government of Canada has stated: "Pollution of the water resources of Canada is a significant and rapidly increasing threat to the health, well-being and prosperity of the people of Canada and to the quality of the Canadian environment at large and as a result it has become a matter of urgent national concern that measures be taken to provide for water quality management in those areas of Canada most critically affected." (Canada Water Act, R.S.C., 1985, c. C-11)

And Whereas, the Province of Alberta has stated: "Water is not only a resource, it is a life source. We all share the responsibility to ensure a healthy, secure and sustainable water supply for our communities, environment and economy - our quality of life depends on it. The Government of Alberta's renewed Water for Life strategy has three main goals: Safe, secure drinking water; Healthy aquatic ecosystems; and Reliable, quality water supplies for a sustainable economy." (Water for Life: Alberta's strategy for sustainability, 2003- Nov 2003)

And Whereas, the Oldman Watershed Council has stated: "Southern Alberta has a water heritage worth protecting. The Oldman Watershed provides: world-class recreational opportunities; rich economic benefits; home to wildlife and many species at risk; a source of spiritual meaning; life and prosperity from the headwaters through to the Hudson Bay. Our goal is to ensure clean, clear drinking water for generations to come." (www.oldmanwatershed.ca, accessed 2016)

Therefore, I, Lorne Hickey, Reeve of the Lethbridge County, on behalf of the Lethbridge County, do commit to the following new project and / or program in 2017, for the betterment of people, animals and ecosystems in the Oldman watershed.

The Lethbridge County proudly declares:

- 1) Active participation in the Southern Alberta Water Charter by: Collaborative OWC videos
- 2) Encouragement of citizens to participate
- 3) Commitment by the Lethbridge County to the better management and health of the Oldman watershed



Oldman  
Watershed  
Council

*Lorne Hickey*  
Lethbridge County

April 7, 2017

*Margaret K.K.*  
Oldman Watershed Council

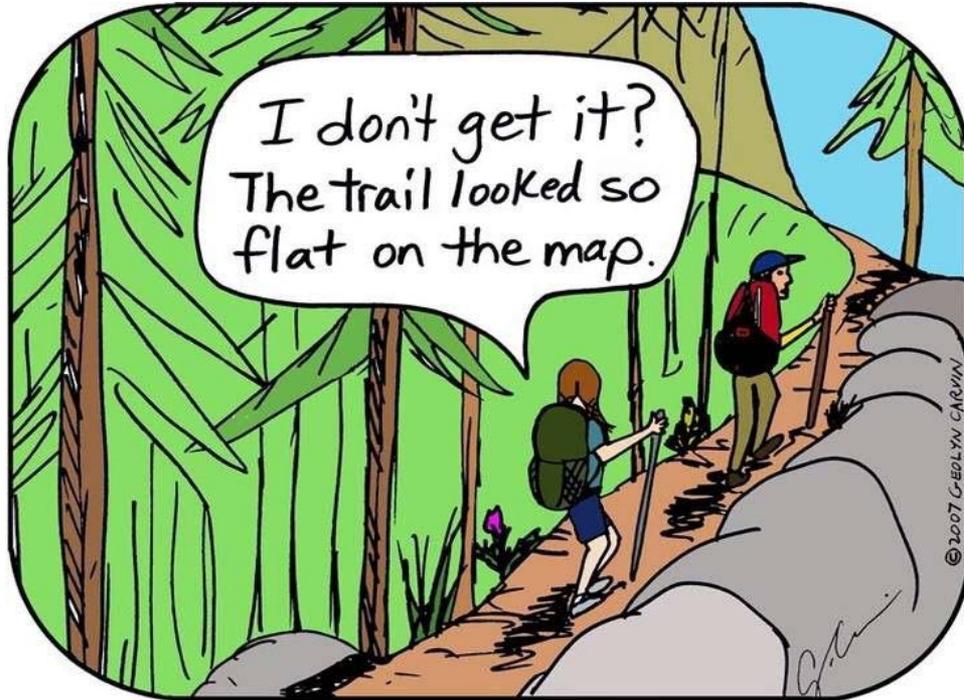
April 7, 2017



# Over Time, Some Things Change



# Future Directions for WPACs



- Theory differs from practice
- True value in collaboration
- Trusted resource for partners and stakeholders
- Long-term watershed perspective
- WPACs are unique

# A New Approach Is Needed...



# Building On Successes



- Increasing Membership
- Increasing Fundraising
- Increasing Participation
- Increasing Profile
- Increasing Credibility
- Increasing Influence



# *Thank you!*

Contact Information:  
[rosemarie.ferjuc@rdrwa.ca](mailto:rosemarie.ferjuc@rdrwa.ca)  
[mmurray@brbc.ab.ca](mailto:mmurray@brbc.ab.ca)



## Outline of Presentation

- Brief Intro- Who We Are (Mike, BRBC) (Rosemarie, RDRWA), representing 11 Alberta WPACS.
- Brief Intro- funny joke, what people think we do, what we actually do.
- What is a WPAC? Map of 11 River Basins
- Context: Why are WPACS unique?, Multi-sector, Place-based (each WPAC addresses the unique needs of its watershed).
- Origin Story: How WPACs came about, formally came into existence through Water for Life, although some WPACs were in existence prior to 2005 pivotal shift in watershed management in AB, emphasizing collaboration, fully voluntary model. WPAC swiss army
- WPAC core activities include: pull wording from [alberta.ca/wpacs](http://alberta.ca/wpacs) and WPAC Letter to Minister Nixon- convenor and collaborator,
- Water Governance in Alberta (what is the main structure), apportionment to SK/ Lake Winnipeg- high level-
- Water Challenges in AB- within SSRB context. Variations between N to S, climate variability- flood and drought (7/10 costliest natural disasters occurred in AB). SSRB closed basin within Bow, Oldman and South East. Red Deer still open to new licenses, want to avoid the fate of our neighbours and overallocation.
- Focus on BRBC, Focus on RDRWA



## Outline of Presentation

- SSRB Review- Tell a story
- BBWWMP Phase 1 and 2
- How a Plan becomes a Plan- when stakeholders take them into their plans.
- Convenor: Bring stakeholders together to bring the process ( 3 slides)
- We are just 2 out of 11. Since WFL, over last 15 years, here are Legacy: Education: can be formal or ad hoc, focus can be public education or key stakeholders or both. Some WPACs work through partners such as WSGs and municipalities, industry, academia. E.g., ERWP-field School program, Municipal Open Houses
- Look at compendiums- use graph of funding and participation, BRWMP leveraging, Okotoks, Red Deer examples (2 Slides)
- WPAC Major WPAC Successes (Collective and Individual Successes)
- Example of State of the Basin, Blueprint, look at compendiums (examples f/Mike and Rosemarie) PBT- social innovations, new approach, AP's, Blueprint, future direction- SoW
- Future directions and challenges for WPACS. for the BRBC, the Red Deer, the Oldman, and the South East.
- How theory differs from practice. People are attached to history, don't really understand how things work in reality. We have learned a lot of things, we need a new approach to communicate to new audiences.
- Voluntary model- we do good work, ways we can improve.
- In an increasingly polarized context, value for multiple sectors, long term trust building,

# BBWMP Phase 1

- 55 BRBC Members were involved
- Ph.D. (6)
- Masters (20)
- Bachelors (17)
- P. Eng. (7)
- P. Biol. (6)
- P. Ag. (3)
- P. Chem. (2)
- R.P.F. (1)
- R.P.P. (1)

Transparency and **OPENESS**

**HONESTY** and integrity

Goals and intentions made public

Inclusive, **COLLABORATIVE**, consensus-based

Build on **TRUST** and good working relationships

Help each other be right

**RESPECT** others' opinions, especially when different

Focus on science, facts and objectivity

Be willing to compromise

Take a sustainable, watershed level and ecosystem approach