



Sylvan Lake Watershed Stewardship Society

P.O. Box 9012 Sylvan Lake, Alberta T4S 1S6

Annual General Meeting July 10, 2004

President's Report

It is with pride in our achievements during the past year yet with continued concern about the future health of Sylvan Lake that I present the 2003/2004 President's Report for the Sylvan Lake Watershed Stewardship Society.

Recognition

First I would like to recognize the efforts of two Past Presidents.

Janet Remillard was the Founding President forming the Society in November 1999 and first elected in January 2000. Janet was on a mission and guided the Society through an extraordinarily active initial year. She was again elected as President for the 2002/2003 year.

Ran White served as President in the 2000/2001 year and again for the 2001/2002 year. During Janet's second term, when she went on an extended trip, Ran also stepped up and volunteered as acting President during her absence.

The entire Sylvan Lake Community along with the members of the Sylvan Lake Watershed Stewardship Society owes both of these capable and motivated people a big "Thank You".

There are a number of long-term Directors who should also be recognized for hours of service in lake-protection. The following current Directors have been members either from the beginning or close to it.

Barry Hilman
Doug Norris
Lorna White

Janet Remillard (founding Director)
David Larsen (founding Director)
Steven Johnson (founding Director)

And finally to Society members and Norglenwold residents **Darrel and Janice Northcott**, who contributed their staff expertise (Doug Free) at no cost to the Society to help us develop our first logo

The Year Past

The past year was characterized by numerous and significant threats to the long-term health of the lake and its aquatic ecosystems. There has been none other like it in Sylvan's history. A healthy aquatic environment will continue to be a social and

political responsibility. In addition the Stewardship Society had some administrative and growth issues to attend to. Briefly, the Directors responded to the following key challenges.

- **Proposed Developments**

Since early 2003 there have been announcements or Public Hearings for eight residential developments on or near Sylvan Lake's lakeshore, six located in Lacombe County. On behalf of the Society and as the Society's President, I have made oral and written submissions at seven Public Hearings held by Lacombe County in respect to these proposals. A large proposal in Red Deer County has not yet gone to a Public Hearing. In total there are close to 500 lakeshore lots in various planning stages. According to the July 7, 2004 edition of the Sylvan Lake News, Red Deer County Councillor Stan Bell has recently stated there could be approximately 1478 residential lots on land in the North West portion of Sylvan Lake.

If not planned carefully the ramifications will be severe for the lake. We have consistently advocated for responsible development with adherence to certain environmentally friendly planning concepts.

Director Mike Williamson has been very involved in monitoring these proposals for our Board and helping with our submissions.

- **Lacombe County's sewage disposal amendment to the County's LUB.**

Lacombe County, after over a year of pressure from the Society and others, agreed on June 29, 2004 to a proposed amendment to the County's Land-use Bylaw. The amendment requires all new subdivisions, in its '*Lakeshore Residential District*', to install communal sewage pump-out systems that can eventually be tied to a regional line. It also requires new residences built in existing subdivisions in the same zoning districts to install pump-out systems. This was very good news for the lake. The society made a presentation supported by a written submission to the Public Hearing on June 23 in favour of the amendment.

- **Cumulative Effects Assessment (CEA)**

In 2003, in response to the community's concerns regarding the proposed residential developments, the eight Municipalities located around the lake agreed to conduct a CEA which was intended to not only provide a science-based assessment of the current state of the lake but to also give some guidelines to the eight communities about how each may develop in the future to minimize negative impacts on the lake. When the terms of reference were being developed last year, the Society was asked to be at the table. Then throughout the past year we have continually plugged for the CEA at every opportunity.

As well, one of the Society's members who was nominated as a new Director of the Society, Barry Virtue, holds the 'public at large' seat on the on-going CEA Steering Committee. Although the CEA study was to commence on April 1, 2004 the contract has not yet been finalized. On Thursday July 8, 2004, at a Steering Committee meeting, encouraging progress was made which is leading to another meeting on July 22, 2004. It is critical for the long-term sustainability of Sylvan Lake that the CEA study proceeds and that all eight municipalities surrounding the Lake continue to support the CEA both financially and politically.

- **Sylvan Lake Public Access Study**

The society has monitored this study very closely since its inception. As a result of a public meeting held on May 10, 2003 to discuss the ideas presented in the 'Third Draft' of the *Sylvan Lake Public Access Study*, the Consultant submitted an updated report in July 2003 titled "*Public Input Considerations and Recommendations*" in which he made seven 'key changes' to the 'Third Draft' as a result of the public input. Two of the changes were because of environmental considerations. However, when this updated report was submitted to the eight municipalities by the Sylvan Lake Management Plan Committee only two of them –Norglenwold and Birchcliff- 'received' the last Consultant's updated report. The other six municipalities did not 'receive' the updated report with the seven 'key changes' and therefore, in effect, ignored the report, the seven key changes and the public input.

To 'receive' the last Consultant's update does not mean that it is approved by Council but only acknowledges its existence and that Council received it for information.

The six Municipalities, which only officially 'received' the *Third Draft* of the Sylvan Lake Public Access Study, clearly ignored the public input that was actively sought by the Consultant and the Municipalities. To seek and then ignore the public input is not consistent with our expectations of participatory democracy. On such sensitive matters public discourse is extremely important for a number of reasons and should not be ignored.

The Society wrote a firm and clear request to each of the six Councils regarding this failure asking them to at least 'receive' the updated and last report. Not one of them reacted favourably and only one wrote a letter of acknowledgement and therefore they further ignored the public and compounded the problem. Ignoring the input of the public does not bode well for the Lake in the long run as self interest groups and organizations will negatively impact the lake environment without the checks and balances that the public will provide if they are given a real chance for involvement in the process.

As stated earlier, a healthy aquatic environment will be a social and political responsibility. With the treatment of the last report of the *Access Study* the social half of the equation got trumped by the political half.

- **Watershed Management and Development Plan**

Director Kim Schmitt and Kent Lyle met with two representatives of Alberta Environment to explore how a Water Management Plan as contemplated in *The Water Act* may be developed for Sylvan Lake. After a discussion of various aspects of *The Water Act*, the local political makeup and the potential threats to the Lake it was decided that with Sylvan Lake it would make more sense to develop a Watershed Management and Development Plan which would apply to both the Lake and its watershed. The question is should the Stewardship Society drive the process or only try to initiate it? AENV is interested in helping but such a project would be immense and costly as it would not only deal with land-use

issues but lake management issues as well. All stakeholders would have to participate to succeed including the Province and the Federal Government.

- **Living by Water Project**

The Stewardship Society is the local sponsor this summer of the Sylvan Lake Living by Water Project. Past President Ran White and current Director Lorna White are the local coordinators of this project. The aim of the project is to work with lake-lot owners to identify positive changes that can be made to home and property to protect, maintain and improve shoreline health. Through home visits, waterfront owners will be provided with information and resources on issues such as erosion control, septic system maintenance, vegetative buffer zones and water conservation. A group of volunteers, all members of the Stewardship Society, will be on call to assist Chris Yaremko on visitations.

- **Conferences Related to Environmental Stewardship**

During the year various Directors attended a number of stewardship/planning conferences including:

- Alberta Lake Management Society Annual Conference-Lorna White
- Land-use Planning and Smart Growth- Kim Schmitt, Russ Hall
- Volunteers in Motion-Connecting Alberta's Environmental Stewards- Kent Lyle
- Smart Growth - Kim Schmitt, Kent Lyle

- **Governance, Membership, Funding and Administrative Issues**

- 1. Constitution**

The Directors recognized that, as it was almost five years since the Society's first Constitution was adopted (November 20, 1999), the Constitution needed revamping and updating. Barry Hilman with help from Doug Norris and Kent Lyle worked on various required amendments. We feel the document as recommended by the Directors for approval at today's AGM will better serve the Stewardship Society in the immediate future. It is also more in alignment with the Province's new initiative entitled 'Water for Life'.

- 2. Memberships**

Memberships continue to be a challenge. We started our elective year with 48 paid up members. Under the Chairmanship of Kent Williamson, we have tried a number of tactics to increase our numbers. Although we now have about 85 members, the Directors recently concluded that a reasonable immediate target for the Sylvan Lake community should approximate 200 members. This will continue to be our goal.

- 3. Funding**

As challenges to the lake environment increase so do the challenges to our society in numbers, scope and complexity increase. We have learned that we cannot perform at an effective level without more funds. We cannot only rely on membership dues. We must find new avenues of revenue to be able to react to all challenges. Our Director Russ Hall

addressed this problem this year and we have learned that it, in itself, is a big challenge. It requires energy, diligence, and professionalism. We found that we had to get our affairs in order, such as updating our Constitution and obtaining a Federal Government charity status if possible. Funding for our group is out there but we have to go find it and justify our needs with professionally prepared requests.

4. Communications

As we grow and as the challenges become more complex, we felt that we had to become more effective at advancing the Stewardship Society and communicating our concerns about the lake. We adopted the following improvements in this regard:

- Adopted a unified identity program. This first involved the development of a logo for the Society. An effort will be made to try to present the same look for most of our written activities keeping in mind that we are a volunteer society without office support or administrative staff.
- Agreed to send out informative newsletters more often to our members and appropriate stakeholders. These will be on a standard newsletter masthead consistent with our identity program and will commence soon after this meeting.
- Cooperate with the media at every appropriate opportunity. We already give them copies of our briefs and accommodate reasonable interview requests.

5. Meeting Agendas and Minutes.

As we grew our agendas became more crowded and complex. It was a necessity to professionalize our meeting agendas and the resultant minutes to leave a reliable record of the Society's business. It is also necessary when dealing with the type of public issues we face and the type of funding we hope to obtain.

The Year Ahead

Next year promises to be full of challenge, change, and success. It will come with some disappointments sprinkled in. We will continue to make a difference by being diligent, effective and positive. We need to be even more proactive, more energetic and more in control of certain variables. Commitment plus a positive attitude will equal success. Some of the issues and goals ahead of us are:

- **Stewardship issues/goals**
 - Residential lakeside developments
 - Completion of the CEA
 - Development of a Lake Recreational Capacity Plan
 - Building alliances with all eight municipalities, the Sylvan Lake Management Plan Committee, Alberta Environment and Fisheries and Oceans Canada.
 - Building Community Partnerships with various local stakeholders

- Further consideration of initiating a Lake Watershed Management Plan
- Pump-out facilities for boats with on-board 'heads'
- Noise pollution
- Distribution of the Alberta edition of "*On the Living Edge-Your Guide for Waterfront Living*" to all Sylvan Lake waterfront homeowners.
- **Administrative Issues**
- Increase our membership base- more involvement, more commitment, more eyes, more energy, more expertise and more money
- Resources-more funding for Society operations- obtaining a Federal Charity Registration, applications for funding, fund raising activities
- Better Communications with-Society members, media, public, local elected Counselors (36 around the lake), CAOs, stakeholders
- More effective use of computers, E-mail and perhaps a web site.

Conclusion

In conclusion I would like to sincerely thank all of our Directors who served to the very end of our 2003/2004-year. Many drove from Calgary to Sylvan Lake for each of nine Director's meetings in all weather conditions. They are great to work with and I look forward to our next year as most are back again.

Ron Barry-Education (Fish and Game)
 Barry Hilman-Constitution (Farming community)
 Steven Johnson-Lake levels (Summer Villages)
 David Larsen- (summer camps liaison)
 Doug Norris-Treasurer (Lions Club)
 Janet Remillard-Past President (Alberta Lake Management Society)
 Kim Schmitt-Lake Management Plan (Ducks Unlimited)
 Lorna White-Secretary
 Kent Williamson-Memberships
 Mike Williamson-VP & Developments (Friends of Sylvan Lake)

The President assumed the duties of 'Communications' and 'Lake Pollution' (June Donaldson and Russ Hall resigned during the year).

Thank you for attending this Annual General Meeting and supporting the Sylvan Lake Watershed Stewardship Society.

Respectfully submitted,

Kent Lyle
 President, Sylvan Lake Watershed Stewardship Society, 2003/2004
 Fifth Annual General Meeting July 10, 2004