



Sylvan Lake Watershed Stewardship Society

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

Annual General Meeting July 23, 2005

President's Report

It is with pride in our achievements during the past year that I present the 2004/2005 President's Report for the Sylvan Lake Watershed Stewardship Society (SLWSS). However continued concern about the future health of Sylvan Lake will keep us all grounded as we celebrate some modest successes.

Recognition

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

Barry Hilman

Doug Norris

David Larsen (founding Director)

Lorna White

Steven Johnson (founding Director)

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

The Year Past

Again, the past year was characterized by numerous and significant threats to the long-term health of the lake and its aquatic ecosystems.

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. The Directors responded to the following key challenges.

Caring about Sylvan Lake

- **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. The Society made oral and written submissions to all 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 over 400 lakeshore lots in various planning stages.

On March 22, 2005, Lacombe County Counsellors voted unanimously to grant five rezoning approvals which will allow the development of 238 houses in five separate subdivisions at the North West end of Sylvan Lake. The new zoning allows lakeside residential development. The approved third readings followed more than two years of public hearings and the completion of a Cumulative Effects Assessment (CEA) which was commissioned by all eight municipalities around the lake plus three other Provincial and Federal Government authorities. Altogether there were 11 Public Hearings (one required two sittings due to the large public turnout). A sixth proposed residential development requiring rezoning was not approved on March 22.

Lacombe County also held a Public Hearing during this period to consider new sewage requirements (pump-out tanks) in the "lakeshore residential" land- use classification which they adopted – a win for the lake.

The largest of the projects is on the most environmentally sensitive land. The Westend Landing proposal calls for 83 lots on 135 acres containing a fen. (Wetland complex).

Before the third readings were considered on March 22, I, as SLWSS President, by E-mail urged Lacombe County Council to **"allow the subject applications to expire on March 31"** and let the developers start over once the final CEA report had been reviewed and the West Sylvan Lake Area Structure Plan adopted. **"Then with more time to review the implications for the long-term health of the lake of any lakeside proposal, the County could entertain new and hopefully more responsible rezoning applications."**

If not planned carefully the ramifications will be severe for the lake. We have consistently advocated for responsible development with

adherence to certain environmentally and lake friendly planning concepts.

We have a number of observations about the Lacombe County rezoning process which are contained in the Society's June/July 2005 Newsletter.

- **Cumulative Effects Assessment (CEA)- Now referred to as: Sylvan Lake Water Quality Assessment & Watershed Management Considerations**

In 2003, in response to the community's concerns regarding the proposed residential developments, the eight Municipalities located around the lake plus three other Provincial and Federal Government Ministries 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 municipalities about how each may control develop in the future to minimize negative impacts on the lake.

The AXYS Environmental Consulting Ltd. report was filed in March 2005 and is available for viewing on the Lacombe County web site. As you may be aware, due to financial constraints in developing the report, it was decided that water quality was the environmental variable (or VEC, valued ecosystem component) of most importance for ensuring the long term ecological & recreational value of the lake. The report therefore focused on water quality, and is now titled *"Sylvan Lake Water Quality Assessment & Watershed Management Considerations"*.

The CEA Steering Committee, appointed by the Sylvan Lake Management Plan Committee, was given the responsibility to oversee the study of the environmental assessment of the water quality of Sylvan Lake. The Steering Committee was approved by the Councils of the eight municipalities surrounding Sylvan Lake. The representatives on the Steering Committee include the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Sylvan Lake Management Plan Committee, administrative staff from the eight municipalities, representatives from Alberta Environment, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development and Fisheries & Oceans Canada, plus a member of the public at large, SLWSS Director Barry Virtue.

The Steering Committee is now reviewing the report's recommendations and will develop a plan for implementation, in terms of priorities, responsibilities and associated costs.

- **Watershed Management Plan**

Director Kim Schmitt has continued to explore how a Water Management Plan as contemplated in *The Water Act* may be developed for Sylvan Lake. Considering various aspects of *The Water Act*, the local political makeup, the Provincial commitment to the 'Water for Life' policy and the potential threats to the Lake, it would make sense to develop a Watershed approach to planning and to develop a Management and Development Plan which would apply to both the Lake and its watershed. 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. Kim has kept 'messaging' the project by meeting with various stakeholders throughout the past year.

- **Sylvan Lake Shoreline Awareness Program**

The SLWSS has undertaken a project for the 2004/2005 year referred to as the 'Sylvan Lake Shoreline Awareness Program'. With generous support and funding from the Alberta Real Estate Foundation and with the cooperation of the Alberta Living by Water Project and the Federation of Alberta Naturalists, the Society has arranged for the delivery of over 1000 copies of the book "*On the Living Edge-Your Guide for Waterfront Living*" to residents living on or near the Sylvan Lake shoreline. The Alberta edition of this 148 page book contains information specifically for lake-front properties in Alberta. It should contribute significantly to shoreline awareness and therefore help protect maintain and improve Sylvan Lake's shoreline health and therefore, over the long term, enhance the water quality of the lake.

The book was delivered door- to-door by SLWSS volunteers in early July. Copies have also been delivered to all 36 Councillors from municipalities surrounding Sylvan Lake, administrators and area MPs and M.L.A.s.

In my view this is the Society's most significant program in terms of the long term sustainability of the lake and raising the visibility of the Society. All of the SLWSS volunteers who helped to make it happen deserve a big "Thank You".

- **Community-Based Stewardship**

The Government of Alberta recently developed a new water management approach which is contained in a document named "*Water for Life: Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability*".

In this document, in reference to watershed stewardship groups, it states that:

"The groups and individuals have been proactive and continue to develop on-the-ground solutions to ensure the protection of their specific watersheds".

"Therefore, these groups will continue to play a vital role in water management in the province. Community-based Watershed Stewardship Groups (WSG) will be encouraged to participate at the Watershed Planning and Advisory Council level, for guidance, technical advice and mentoring." Our Watershed planning and Advisory Council will be the RDRWA.

As a result of this recognition and encouragement found in the new Provincial water policy, our Society decided this past year to develop our watershed stewardship group (WSG) into a more community-based initiative. We started by amending our Constitution at last year's AGM.

This year we have started the process of improving communications with the community. Hopefully, we will build trust and respect with the various community stakeholders and eventually be able to refer to them as 'partners' and 'alliances'.

During the year Director Barry Virtue and I, have met with the President or Directors or the Councillors of the following groups:

The Councils of Norglenwold; Half Moon Bay; Jarvis Bay and Sun Breaker Cove. (The Mayor of Birchcliff is a Director of the Society).

The Sylvan Lake Management Plan Committee

Sylvan Lake Chamber of Commerce
Heart of Town Association

Sylvan Lake Rotary Club
Lions Club

- **West Sylvan Lake Area Structure Plan**

Lacombe and Red Deer Counties are proceeding with the development of the West Sylvan Lake Area Structure Plan (WSL ASP). The design proposal states that "A vision for the west end of Sylvan Lake will be an essential part of creating an environment to not just effectively deal with individual development applications on an ongoing basis but to forge the best possible future scenario based on the cumulative ongoing efforts for this special residential area."

The SLWSS was invited to the first two meetings with other community stakeholders jointly organized by the two Counties.

We are convinced that the solutions to maintaining the Sylvan Lake "values", we all hold so dearly, require a solid strategic and community-based approach. Fundamental to that approach is a focus on building a strong community voice focused on maintaining the public good that the lake provides. (Sylvan Lake's "Natural Capital.")

A very strong community based effort organized and focused on providing constructive input into the future development and management of the Sylvan Lake Watershed is required. To achieve this will require continued leadership and passion, more focused planning, more money, more capacity, new initiatives and positive relationships.

The Sylvan Lake Watershed Stewardship Society is positioned as a key catalyst for the future.

- **Development Activities at Sylvan Creek Outlet**

The SLWSS expressed its concern with respect to the activities at the Sylvan Creek outlet.

The lake outlet at Sylvan Creek was once surrounded by extensive wet lands. No doubt you will also know that when Sylvan Creek has been flowing with a significant quantity of water, the adjacent shorelines and the creek itself were prime fish habitat.

Over the past few years this has all changed dramatically. The wet lands have been subjected to tons of fill, the lake level has dropped and the water has ceased to flow in the creek. Trucks were driving over the creek bed at will.

The Stewardship Society Directors understand that the land at the creek outlet is privately owned, which presents challenges to all governments in protecting wetlands, water resources, habitat and wildlife.

However, it does appear that one or more levels of government are responsible for monitoring and enforcing their Acts and Bylaws relative to this kind of degradation. Fundamental to the Water Act and the Fisheries Act is the recognition that the protection of the aquatic environment is essential to sustainable water management and fish habitat.

The Society, in separate letters sent on November 26, 2004, urged all relevant governments, Federal, Provincial and Municipal, even at that late date, to take whatever action is practical to protect the environmental elements including fish habitat at the creek outlet.

On December 2, 2004-only 6 days later- there was a meeting of 11 people on the site with representatives from all three levels of government, the owner, the municipal planner, the SLWSS and a consultant for the owner. As a result of that meeting a number of decisions were agreed to which mostly involved the owner and the municipality (SV of Jarvis Bay).

The Society expects that if and when the area is subject to rezoning, the Summer Village of Jarvis Bay would ensure the lowest density zoning and the most stringent development agreement would be put in place to attempt to minimize risk and to save and restore some of the ecosystem and riparian habitat along the creek and lakeshore.

The residents around Sylvan Lake expect a great deal from their Federal, Provincial and Municipal Governments with respect to protecting the lake. With such a valuable resource in our community, we are very supportive of the responsibilities and efforts of all government agencies regarding the protection of the aquatic environment and riparian ecosystems

- **Marina Expansion and Breakwater**

The SLWSS encouraged a number of the Society's members to respond to the PUBLIC NOTICE in the Sylvan Lake News dated April 28, 2004 regarding an application filed under the WATER ACT. The application was for an approval to construct a breakwater in Sylvan Lake to allow for the Marina to expand into the lake. Eighteen of

our members responded in writing to the Provincial authorities. If there is an appeal, we are now guaranteed status at the appeal.

Generally concerns revolve around the following issues:

- Environmental due diligence
- Sylvan Lake Management Plan: Update 2000
- Cumulative Effects Study (CEA)
- Fish habitat
- Aquatic wildlife
- Recreation and Boating Carrying Capacity of Sylvan Lake

As recommended in the *Sylvan Lake Public Access Study*, **it is important for the community to implement a lake capacity/recreation management program before any further boat launches/marinas/expansions are considered.** Should this expansion be allowed, the number of boats using the lake will increase and will, therefore, impact on the carrying capacity. The boating carrying capacity is important for the following reasons:

- Safety:
- Environmental
- Enforcement

We are of the view that the current boat accesses to the lake, which perhaps are inconvenient, are probably sufficient considering safety, the lake-environment and limits to the carrying capacity of the lake. The current boat launch facilities are, in effect, a self-regulating mechanism and the Society is, therefore, opposed to any further expansion of the Sylvan Lake Marina especially if it involves works into the lake.

The marina expansion also has the potential to threaten the long term viability of the lake. If this expansion negatively impacts fish habitat, aquatic wildlife and results in significantly more boats on the lake, the governments should not approve it. The environmental health of the lake is too important to allow potentially environmentally damaging developments to occur. The Society will therefore continue to press for due diligence with respect to any marina expansion.

- **Conferences Related to Environmental Stewardship**

During the year Directors attended at least three conferences relating to the environment and/or stewardship.

ALMS Fall Workshop

Held in Okotoks in the Fall of 2004 and featured "Smart Growth". - Kent Lyle

Volunteers in Motion 3

Held at Crestomere in March of 2005 and sponsored by the Alberta Stewardship Network and focused on "Building Communities through Innovative Environmental Stewardship". Attended by Steven Johnson, David Larsen, and Kent Lyle.

Community Watershed-Monitoring Training Session.

Held in Telfordville in June, 2005 and hosted by Alberta Environment the purpose was to build capacity and provide opportunity for interested watershed stewardship groups to conduct water quality monitoring of streams and water inflows into their respective watersheds.

Attended by Mike and Kent Williamson and Kent Lyle

- **Support for Students Conducting Sylvan Lake Studies**

The Stewardship Society is supporting **Jennette Baker's** second **study of groundwater around Sylvan Lake** and is in the process of assisting with sourcing some funding for her Masters thesis.

As part of her Master's thesis Jennette Baker, an MSc student in the Department of Geology and Geophysics at the University of Calgary, is undertaking to determine how much ground water is flushing through Sylvan Lake and where it is coming from. A better understanding of the ground water system in the Sylvan Lake area will help all stakeholders to develop responsible water practices and policies and the eight Sylvan Lake municipalities to develop responsible land-use bylaws.

.The Society has a copy of her first Study "Sylvan Lake-Groundwater Interaction" (2003). It is available for your review. Jennette found evidence to suggest there is significant groundwater through-flow in Sylvan Lake. There is evidence groundwater discharges into Sylvan Lake from the northwest and the Lake recharges groundwater on the east and southeast sides. These findings suggest that any developments at the northwest end of the Lake could be very important to the long-term health of the Lake if they are not planned and developed responsibly.

As well, the society is supporting **Carla Stevens**, a Graduate Student at U of C in Environmental Science with a Masters Thesis on **Sylvan Lake Water Quality Recommendations** based on community-based research.

- **Red Deer River Watershed Alliance**

On behalf of the members of SLWSS I was asked to assist with the formation of the Red Deer River Watershed Alliance. I was appointed to the Nominating Committee charged with the task of Nominating the founding Board of Directors which were elected at the Formation Meeting held in Trochu on June 15, 2005. The SLWSS is a founding member of the RDRWA.

The RDRWA will apply for status as a Watershed Planning and Advisory Council with Alberta Environment under the Water for Life program for the Red Deer River watershed.

- **Sylvan Lake Healthy Lake Day**

The Society with the Alberta Conservation Association is co-sponsoring the 2005 Sylvan Lake Healthy Lake Day. It comprises of two events.

Event 'One' is a speaking engagement by two of the authors of the Cumulative Effects Assessment Report now known as the *Sylvan Lake Water Quality Assessment & Watershed Management Considerations*.

This report was completed by AXYS Environmental Consulting Ltd. The report's recommendations are now being reviewed by representatives of the municipalities and the Federal and Provincial Governments. A plan will be developed for the report's implementation in terms of priorities, responsibilities and associated costs.

The Society has arranged for two of the consultants, Dave Brescia and Elaine Irving, to speak about their Report, Sylvan Lake's water quality and watershed management considerations at the Lions Hall in Sylvan Lake on Saturday August 20 at 10 AM as part of Sylvan Lake Healthy Lake Day.

At **event 'Two'** local conservation and environmental specialists will set up interactive displays, games and brochures to promote healthy watersheds with an emphasis on Sylvan Lake. Confirmed exhibitors to date include: Alberta Conservation Association, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Alberta Environment, Red

Deer County, Cows and Fish, Living by Water and the Sylvan Lake Watershed Stewardship Society.

This free event takes place Saturday August 20, 2005 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Picnic Shelters #2 and #3 at Centennial Park on Lakeshore Drive in Sylvan Lake.

Event 'Two' is co-sponsored by the Sylvan Lake Watershed Stewardship Society and the Alberta Conservation Association.

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

1. Constitution and Bylaws

The Constitution needed some small amendments even though it was updated last year. 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. The key amendment this year is to allow the President to appoint with support of the Directors, up to two Directors if, as and when needed.

The Directors also approved a number of policies to help guide future Boards with the administration of the affairs of the society.

2. Memberships

Memberships continue to be a challenge. We started our elective year with 85 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 180 members, a reasonable immediate target for the Sylvan Lake community should approximate 300 members. This will continue to be our goal. We have come a long way in two years as, when I started my first term as President, we had only 48 members. (On March 17, 2005, just before the end of the Membership year on March 31, we had 218 members, the most ever.)

3. Funding

As challenges to the lake environment increase so do the challenges to our Society increase in numbers, scope and

complexity. We have learned that we cannot perform at an effective level without adequate funding. We cannot rely only on membership dues. We must find new avenues of revenue to be able to react to all challenges. Director Steven Johnson addressed this problem this year and we have learned that it, in itself, is a big challenge. It requires time, energy, diligence, and professionalism. Obtaining a Federal Government charity status, if possible, would be a big help. Funding for our group is out there but we have to find it and justify our needs with professionally prepared requests.

In the meantime we rely on membership dues to finance operations. A comparison of our available cash at the last three Annual General Meetings is useful and does indicate some progress:

September 12, 2003	\$1045.
July 10, 2004	\$2409.
July 23, 2005	\$7122

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 to our members and the community. In that regard we achieved the following:

- **Website:** The Society's Directors committed on October 7, 2004, to investigate the feasibility and costs of setting up a Society website. This concept was investigated by an ad hoc committee which assisted me with evaluating this opportunity. We found that a website will greatly assist the Society with communicating with our members and supporters and with the Sylvan Lake community, politicians and stakeholders. It will also help the Society to make progress with its goal of shared community-based stewardship.

Although it is partly still under construction, I am very pleased to report that the SLWSS website is now live on the World Wide Web and our web address is:

www.slwss.org

- **Newsletters:** We sent out two Newsletters to our members and appropriate stakeholders during the year-one in January 2005 and one for June/July 2005.

- **Media.** We cooperated with the media at every appropriate opportunity. We give them copies of our briefs and accommodate reasonable interview requests. The Sylvan Lake News has been very supportive and recently ran coverage of the Society's Sylvan Lake Shoreline Awareness Program.

5. Alberta Stewardship Network

During the year the Alberta Stewardship Network (ASN) was formed. This network of Alberta Stewards should prove to be another effective tool for the SLWSS with its environmental activities regarding the Sylvan Lake Watershed.

The overall purpose of the ASN is in part to "share information to eliminate duplication of efforts and increase the effectiveness and efficiency of environmental stewardship activities in Alberta". A web site is also up and running.

As President of SLWSS, I attended two planning workshops intended to help with the formation process.

ASA should be another valuable resource for SLWSS in the future.

The Year Ahead

Next year promises to be full of challenge, more change, and even more success. We will continue to make a difference by being diligent, effective and positive. We need to be more proactive, more energetic and remain focused on certain key objectives. Commitment plus a positive attitude will equal success. Some of the issues and goals ahead of us are:

Stewardship issues/goals

Most Important:

- Building alliances with all eight municipalities, the Sylvan Lake Management Plan Committee, Alberta Environment, Alberta Sustainable Resources, Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Red Deer River Watershed Alliance.
- Building community partnerships/alliances with various local stakeholders
- Initiating a Lake Watershed Management Plan
- Promoting the development of a Lake Recreational Capacity Plan

- Monitoring of and input to the West Sylvan Lake Area Structure Plan

On-going challenges:

- Developing a water quality monitoring program for the Lake's inflow streams.
- Monitoring residential lakeside developments
- Monitoring of and input to the Town of Sylvan Lake's revision of its Municipal Development Plan and the cottage district Area Redevelopment Plan.
- Continue to message for pump-out facilities for boats with on-board 'heads'
- Noise pollution- implement the SLWSS Noise Pollution Committee

Administrative Issues

Most Important:

- Increase our membership base- more involvement, more commitment, more eyes, more energy, more expertise and more funds. Also a bigger pool from which to select Directors.
- Resources-more funding for Society operations- continue our efforts of obtaining a Federal Charity Registration and apply for funding from various appropriate sources.
- Attracting committed, capable, available and effective members to the Board of Directors

On-going challenges:

- Continue to improve communications with-our own members, media, public, local elected Counselors (36 around the lake), CAOs, Provincial authorities and other stakeholders.
- More effective use of computers, E-mail and especially our new web site at www.slwss.org
- Attracting younger people to our membership and the Board.
- Not allowing complacency to creep into our momentum.

Conclusion

In conclusion I would like to sincerely thank all of our Directors who served to the very end of our 2004/2005-year. Together we shared significant achievements which emanated from nine Directors meetings. You are great to work with and I look forward to our next year as all, but one, are back again.

Barry Hilman-Constitution and Policies (Farming
Community)
Steven Johnson-Fund Raising (S. V. Mayor)
David Larsen- (Summer Camps- liaison)
Barbara Lane- Director of Communications
Doug Norris-Treasurer (Lions Club)
Kim Schmitt-Watershed Management Plan (Ducks
Unlimited)
Barry Virtue Community-Based Stewardship
(CEA Steering Committee)
Lorna White-Lake Watch and Healthy Lake Day
Kent Williamson-Memberships and Web site
Mike Williamson-VP & Developments (Friends of
Sylvan Lake)
(Ron Barry resigned during the year)

Kent Lyle, President, was the Director of our Sylvan Lake Shoreline Awareness Program (On the Living Edge).

I also would like to acknowledge the contribution of Mike Williamson our VP for the past two years, who decided not to run again in order to pursue the goals of the "Friends of Sylvan Lake". Mike made a significant contribution to our discussions and is, indeed, a friend of Sylvan Lake.

I welcome both of our new Directors, Lenore Berkeley from Jarvis Bay and Harvey Brink from Lacombe County. They will bring our Directors up to twelve for the 2005/2006 year. Harvey doubles our representation from the Agricultural sector.

I feel that, as I complete my second term as the SLWSS President, our Society is in good shape administratively and financially and is well positioned to rise to the continuing challenge of protecting our treasured Sylvan Lake.

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; 2004/2005
Sixth Annual General Meeting July 23, 2005