



Sylvan Lake Watershed Stewardship Society

Caring for Sylvan Lake

January / February 2006

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LOTS of LOTS

Steven Johnson

Three of the five controversial developments on the northwest shores of Sylvan Lake have been given subdivision approval by Lacombe County.

DeGroat's 54 residential lots and Delta Land Company's 12 lots of phase one received the go ahead in October. Frank Layton's 16 lots of phase one got the green light in November. Twenty-eight conditions were attached to the approvals (29 for Delta), ranging from road agreements to mail box location.

The Summer Villages of Birchcliff and Sunbreaker Cove sent a letter to the County reminding them of the Summer Villages' expectations that the

items of agreement reached in mediation would be implemented. Earlier in the year the two Summer Villages had appealed the rezoning of these lands to the Municipal Government Board on environmental concerns.

One of the last two developments (Marjorie Boehm's Westview Sylvan Lake Land Development – 62 lots) will be on the County agenda January 2006. Also seeking approval on the January agenda is Westend Landing's 83 lots, a three-phase subdivision.

The environmental concerns associated with the Westend Landing development are paramount and the SLWSS has written a letter to Alberta Environment reminding them of their obligations in reviewing their residential subdivisions on the shores of our lake.

LAND PLANNING INITIATIVES SURROUNDING SYLVAN LAKE

Kent Lyle

Municipalities around Sylvan Lake are reviewing or developing a number of land planning documents which will guide land development in the future and, in some cases, could have a significant impact on the long term health of the lake. The Society tries to monitor and offer input into these plans. These statutory plans have legal

standing and authority and are not just management advisory plans. However, often the Society can only participate in the planning process at the discretion of each municipality. Individual residents have more status. The Society also participates with volunteers who may not have any background in land planning but they bring to the process a genuine desire to protect the lake over the long term and its recreational, social and economic sustainability.

At the present time the following studies and plan development or updates are underway:

- West Sylvan Lake Area Structure Plan (WSL ASP) - is being developed jointly by Lacombe and Red Deer Counties.
- Municipal Development Plan (MDP) – Red Deer County - involves a review and update of the MDP and the draft plan is reportedly “basically done”.
- Land Use Bylaw (LUB) – Red Deer County – the review of the County’s LUB is also reportedly “close to being done”.
- Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP) – Town of Sylvan Lake - a new plan for the downtown and waterfront area including the old cottage area. A draft of the plan was expected to be ready for Council in December.
- Municipal Development Plan (MDP) – Town of Sylvan Lake - is updating its MDP and a draft should be ready soon.

The Society has advocated, among other issues, that all of the watershed management recommendations contained in the AXYS study, *Sylvan Lake Water Quality Assessment and Watershed Management Considerations Report* (formerly the CEA Assessment) be included, or at least recognized, in the planning processes. The next important round for these planning exercises will be public meetings, which will provide the Society further opportunities to offer input.

WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN

Barry Virtue

The Alberta Government’s document *“Water for Life: Alberta Strategy for Sustainability”* suggests a number of key directions required to implement this strategy. Some of these key directions are particularly relevant to Sylvan Lake.

1. Adopt a watershed approach to management and decision making.
2. Encourage and support the establishment of watershed advisory councils to involve

3. Encourage and support municipal governments to take a leadership role in protecting their watersheds.

As a stakeholder in the Sylvan Lake watershed (and the larger Red Deer River watershed), the Sylvan Lake Watershed Stewardship Society (SLWSS) intends to encourage, support, contribute and participate in the development of a watershed management plan to help achieve the goals in *“Water for Life”*

DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

Barry Virtue

The future potential developments that may impact the environment of Sylvan Lake include:

- developments adjacent to Sylvan Creek outlet (Jarvis Bay),
- MEDICAN lakeshore developments (near the marina), and
- expansion of the marina and increased boat launches.

According to the report in the S.V. of Jarvis Bay December newsletter, the "Sylvan Creek Development is slowly moving forward in the planning stage. More fill will be allowed and silt fences will be placed on the edge of the creek."

It is the Society's understanding that no formal application for any of the above developments has been made, however, we will be monitoring these areas closely. In the meantime, the Society's position on these issues is as follows:

- For developments adjacent to creeks and wetlands, the Society expects municipalities to apply the recommendations made in the AXYS Report, "**Water Quality Assessment and Watershed Management Considerations**".
- For the developments adjacent to the lakeshore, such as Medican, the Society expects the Town of Sylvan Lake to follow the recommendations of the AXYS Report.
- With regard to marina expansion and increase boat launch capacity, the Society acknowledges that these may well be justified. However, the Society believes that an environmental assessment is required for any marina expansion that has the potential to impact fish habitat and natural shoreline features. In addition, prior to developing any new boat launch sites, the Society believes a recreational capacity study should be completed to determine the number and type of watercraft the lake may sustain and remain environmentally healthy. The Department of the Environment and the municipal authorities have been made aware of these positions.

COMMUNITY WATERSHED MONITORING PROGRAM

Kent Williamson

The Society has submitted an application to Alberta Environment to participate in a Watershed Monitoring Program. This pilot program, in partnership with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, will provide two successful applicants with training and financial subsidies. The application was prepared for submission by a committee of the SLWSS Directors who worked diligently to provide cost estimates and a plan for implementation of the monitoring program.

Sampling will occur beginning with the month of April and will run through October each year. The results of the tested samples will be compiled during November and reported upon in December. This pilot program will run for a period of two years during which the sponsors will evaluate its effectiveness in meeting program goals.

Some of the major objectives of the monitoring program include:

- To provide baseline nutrient and inflow information
- To provide data to assist in the development of a nutrient management strategy for Sylvan Lake
- To assist in responsible watershed planning and development that protects water quality, and
- To support problem investigation.

The Directors are excited about the opportunity this program offers the

Society by conducting ongoing, long-term scientific data collection and monitoring of the lake. We are in receipt of letters of support for our application from the manager of the Red Deer River Watershed Alliance Mr. Bill Shaw, and the project manager for the CEA Steering Committee, Mr. Alan Williams. We anticipate a successful bid and will be seeking volunteers in the new year to assist with the sampling collection.

The preliminary cost estimates for the monitoring program, consisting mostly of equipment purchases, fees for lab work and sample transportation are in the order of approximately \$13,200/year. The subsidy offered by the pilot program is \$4,500/year. The difference, a sum of \$8,700/year will be carried by the Society by way of donations, corporate sponsors, and anticipated contributions from various municipal, provincial and federal government partners.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE WATER QUALITY STEERING COMMITTEE

Barry Virtue

The eight municipalities surrounding Sylvan Lake are represented on the Steering Committee, as well as, representation from Alberta Environment, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, Federal Dept. of Fisheries & Oceans and from the public. The committee is chaired by the Chairperson, Sylvan Lake Management Plan Committee and supported by the Vice Chair of the same committee.

Following the completion of the AXYS study, *"Sylvan Lake Water Quality and Watershed Management Considerations"*, the steering committee met to determine how best to implement the

recommendations of the study and which jurisdiction should be responsible for the particular recommendation.

Work is continuing, with a new Chairperson, Stan Bell from Red Deer County. It is hoped that a plan will be completed in early 2006 for presentation to the three levels of government for approval and implementation.

SHORELINE AWARENESS PROGRAM

Kent Lyle

The Sylvan Lake Shoreline Awareness Program coordinated by the Sylvan Lake Watershed Stewardship Society at the beginning of the summer of 2005 has been completed with great success.

Volunteers delivered door to door, about 1000 copies of *"On the Living Edge: Your Guide for Waterfront Living"* to all shoreline residents around Sylvan Lake including those that live near the shoreline. The residents live in eight different municipalities, all with some jurisdiction on Sylvan Lake. The delivery was almost 100% completed by July 5 - right on schedule.

The Shoreline Awareness Program has been recognized in a number of ways:

- in the Sylvan Lake News on June 29, 2005,
- in the June/July SLWSS newsletter,
- in the President's Annual Report delivered at the Society's Annual General Meeting in July, and
- on the SLWSS a web site,

www.slwss.org

As planned, there were about 100 books remaining after the door-to-door

delivery. About 40 of these were sent to local municipal councilors and staff, two local M.L.A.s and the local MP. Most of the remaining books have been delivered to the local office of the five summer villages located on the lake to be distributed in the future to anyone who purchases lakefront property in one of the villages.

The feedback has been excellent and many feel it is the most productive project the Society has undertaken to date. We believe that the shoreline awareness program has a positive benefit to the lake and its aquatic ecosystem. We also feel that it will increase the capacity for residents to be custodians of their lakeshore and in so doing, share the responsibility of caring for the lake and its shoreline.

Our expenses were under budget and the costs of the books were offset by an \$11,000 grant from the **Alberta Real Estate Foundation**. We thank the Alberta Real Estate Foundation for its grant and the Society's volunteers for making this program possible and successful.

RED DEER RIVER WATERSHED ALLIANCE

Kent Lyle

The Red Deer River Watershed Alliance (RDRWA) is an inclusive, collaborative partnership of interested stakeholders working together to promote the long-term health of the Red Deer River watershed to ensure ecological integrity and economic sustainability.

The RDRWA was formed on June 15, 2005, in response to the Province's "*Water for Life: Alberta Strategy for Sustainability*" and grass roots recognition of a need for a partnership of interests to

promote and maintain a healthier Red Deer River watershed. The Sylvan Lake Watershed Stewardship Society was a founding member of the RDRWA and the SLWSS's President at the time, Kent Lyle, played a role in the formation process.

A watershed is an area of land defined by a divide within which water drains into a river, lake or other body of water. Sylvan Lake is located in the Red Deer River watershed.

A healthy watershed has wide ranging benefits, which include:

- Human Health
- Ecological Health
- Economic Health

Since the formation meeting in Trochu, the SLWSS Directors have undertaken a number of actions to help build a firm foundation for the RDRWA Alliance. One of its key successes to date is that in September 2005, Alberta Environment granted the RDRWA status as a Watershed Planning Advisory Council (WPAC). Such an appointment will greatly help the Alliance effectively do its work and brings with it key financing from the Alberta Government.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Doug Norris

The Sylvan Lake Watershed Stewardship Society is a relatively young organization (formed six years ago) and membership has grown to almost 200 members who are supportive of the efforts of the SLWSS. Although significant organizational progress has been made, the Board of

Directors agreed in August of this year to embark on a strategic planning process with the objectives of bringing focus to the challenges at hand and of providing a guide to the Society's future work, in terms of direction and priority. It is the Society's intention to raise the profile of the relevant issues and to encourage fact-based and well thought out solutions that will be in the best interest of our valuable resources for the long term.

The Society contracted Ken Penney of Planned Environmental Associates to facilitate the strategic planning process.

The initial meeting was held with the Directors on September 15, 2005. A draft document was developed and later presented at the Directors Meeting, September 29.

A committee of four directors was formed to further develop the draft document. The committee made good progress over four meetings, delivered an interim report to the Board of Directors on November 17 and met with all Directors on December 8 in order to agree on the priority of the objectives and key actions that have been identified.

The next step in the process is to assign responsibilities to individual directors and develop work plans for the agreed upon tasks.

*Best Wishes for a
Happy New Year!*

