



Stewardship Newsletter

Caring for Sylvan Lake

June/July 2005

Lake Developments

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 other government authorities. (See following section) 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 in the "lakeshore residential" land-use classification.

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, **Kent Lyle as President of the Sylvan Lake Watershed Stewardship Society (SLWSS), by E-mail urged 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."**

Sylvan Lake Watershed Stewardship Society

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

Some observations:

- Despite strong, passionate and informed opposition to the projects voiced at the Public Hearings, Council voted its approval **unanimously** on each of the approved rezoning third readings.
- **Some progress has been made at the Public Hearings. A By-law regarding sewage disposal in the lakeshore residential land-use districts requiring pump-out tanks instead of septic fields** was approved by Lacombe County Council. **The SLWSS advocated for this change at the Public Hearings.**
- **The CEA report was received only days before the vote. The report contained a great deal of information. A thorough analysis and understanding of the report would be essential information for the decision makers.** The report contained about 165 pages of text plus extensive maps, tables, references and graphs.
- **Of considerable concern is that unfortunately the process did not allow the public a reasonable time to respond to the CEA report prior to the massive landuse zoning approval.**
- **Another issue is the transparency of the process.** At the time of third reading approvals, County Council only had a "concept plan" of each proposal. Although staff, Council and the developers may, and very likely will, change these concept plans, **there is no mechanism for the public or organizations such as the SLWSS to review concept plans from this point on. The developers will have input and opportunities to persuade staff and perhaps even Council to make perhaps significant changes to the 'concept plans'. The public does not enjoy such opportunities.**
- **Nutrient loading** has been identified as the primary risk to the water quality of Sylvan Lake, a concern of the CEA experts.
- The concept plans as approved apparently do not meet the requirement for a **30 meter no development easement around the boundaries of all wetlands and all creeks as recommended by the CEA report.**

- Lacombe County has not yet responded to the **SLWSS call for Lacombe County to take a leadership role with respect to the increased recreational activity on the lake that will result from 238 new residences on or near the Lake.** Environmental concerns revolve around **raw sewage dumping** in the lake by boaters with on-board 'heads', **increased pollution in the lake from motorized watercraft and increased noise pollution** on the lake from boats without adequate noise abatement (Federal law). And, there will also be **safety issues, access and enforcement problems** considering the lake is almost at motorized capacity already. (Sylvan Lake Public Access Study) Again this points to the need for a **watershed approach to planning** which would include a **Recreational Capacity Plan for the lake itself.**
- Lacombe County and Red Deer County are jointly developing a **West Sylvan Lake Area Structure Plan (WSL ASP)** which includes the rezoned lands. The first WSL ASP stakeholder meeting was held **before** the rezoning vote.

SLWSS supports a Strategic Plan and Goals to guide the development and conservation of the whole lake and its watershed. The one-half area structure plan approach to planning the future of Sylvan Lake needs to be modified and enhanced bringing it up to the watershed planning standards as established by Alberta's Water Strategy.

Land-use surrounding the lake and the recreational use of the lake itself are the significant factors that will determine the future quality of the Sylvan Lake aquatic environment and the community's sustainability.

Report on CEA:

The AXYS Environmental Consulting Ltd. report has now been completed 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 & Vice-Chairman of the Sylvan Lake Mgmt 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 which happens to be a SLWSS Director, Barry Virtue.

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

Submitted by Barry Virtue, SLWSS Director

Update -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 WSL ASP will try to provide answers for the Counties for the following questions:

- What is the Vision for this area?
- What sort of lakeshore environment do we want in fifty years?
- How much development is appropriate and where should development be located?
- How will we protect the lake and the rural environment?
- How will we provide the infrastructure necessary to serve the large numbers of people who would like to live and visit in the Sylvan Lake area?
- How to create an ASP with appropriate jurisdictions involved in a coordinated approach?

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.

In the meantime, the red hot economy in Alberta will not wait for anyone. Submitted by Kim Schmitt, SLWSS Director of Watershed Planning

Groundwater at Sylvan Lake-U of C Study

The Stewardship Society is supporting U of C student 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.

Jeannette has requested that the municipal governments around Sylvan Lake help fund her project and, through the SLWSS, has asked for \$3600. This request was made in December 2004 to the Sylvan Lake Management Plan Committee (SLMPC) by the Society. **The result is that the five Summer Villages and the Town of Sylvan Lake have approved the funding request but, surprisingly, the Counties of Lacombe and Red Deer turned it down.** The allocation agreed to at the SLMPC was \$900 for the Summer Villages and \$900 from each of the Counties and the Town. We will continue to try to get the remaining funds for her project as we think it is important.

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 support and funding from the Alberta Real Estate Foundation** and with the **cooperation of the Alberta Living by Water Project, the Society has arranged for the delivery of about 1100 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 lakefront 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 run, enhance the water quality of the lake and your investment in your property.

Look for it near the end of June or early July. It will be delivered door-to-door by SLWSS volunteers.

The Alberta Real Estate Foundation supports real estate related initiatives that enhance the industry and benefit the people of Alberta. The Foundation's revenues come from the interest earned on public money deposited in real estate brokers' pooled trust accounts. Learn more at www.aref.ab.ca.

SLWSS Web Site Development

The Society's Directors **have agreed to develop a dedicated web site for the Society.** It was agreed that an effective site would significantly help advance the objectives of the Society. Our goal is to be up and running in early July, 2005. www.slwss.org

It will greatly assist the Society with communicating with our members and supporters and with the Sylvan Lake community, politicians and stakeholders. It will help the Society to make progress with its goal of shared community-based stewardship.

Annual meeting

The **Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Society will be held on Saturday July 23 at 10 AM at the Lions Hall in Sylvan Lake.** The various reports required by the Constitution for the AGM will be submitted including the Financial Report, the Nomination Report and the President's Annual Report. As well there will be a proposal to make some changes to the Constitution. The Directors for the 2005/2006 year will be elected. We urge all of our members to come and support the Society and the new Directors. There will be time to for an open question/answer session at the end of the business meeting. Drop in for a coffee!

Membership Drive

It is very important for the SLWSS to improve its membership base. At the time of writing it is about 170. Our goal is to bring it up to over 250 as soon as possible. A strong base results in the following advantages:

- More community strength when responding to issues including Public Hearings and Public Notices
- More funds to finance the Society's activities
- More ideas, energy and resources
- A bigger pool from which to attract Directors and committee members

If each of our current members can generate just one more member, we will easily exceed our goal. **Use the application form on the reverse for your one more member and copy it to renew your membership too** if you haven't yet renewed for the current membership year! (See over) Thank you for your help with finding one more member.

Any donation over and above the membership fee will be greatly appreciated. Or, alternatively, perhaps one of our members would prefer to help fund one our projects such as the web site development (anticipated cost \$1500).

Newsletter Editor and President-Kent Lyle

lylelanding@aol.com

403 887 5416

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

SYLVAN LAKE WATERSHED STEWARDSHIP SOCIETY

Note:

Any new membership purchased after November 30th of any membership year will include the remainder of that membership year and the full following membership year. If purchased, for example, on January 1st, a membership will last for 15 months. Our membership year is April 1 to March 31. Copy this form should you require extras.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION (April 1 to March 31)

[Please print clearly]

Name _____

Mailing Address _____ Home (____) _____

_____ Work (____) _____

Municipality _____ Lake (____) _____

Postal Code _____ E-mail _____

Your e-mail address will greatly help the Society communicate with you on important issues.

Sylvan Lake Address _____

Postal Code _____ County / Town / Village _____

Annual Dues: Individual _____ Business/Camp/Municipality _____ Student _____
[\$20.00] [\$40.00] [\$10.00]

(Please make cheque payable to: Sylvan Lake Watershed Stewardship Society)

Any additional donation is greatly appreciated.

I will assist the Society: any way I can ___ with membership dues only ___ with a donation ___

Mailing Address:

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

Thank You!

(Copy this form should you require extras.)

June 2005 Newsletter