



SYLVAN LAKE WATERSHED STEWARDSHIP SOCIETY (SLWSS) NEWSLETTER / SPRING 2010

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Alberta Science Network /
Stewards in Motion 8VII
Conference
**Watershed Stewardship:
Science to Solutions**
June 3, 2010
Sylvan lake legion
8:30 - 4:30
• Keynote - Bob Sanford

June 4, 2010
The Town of Sylvan
Lake
EnviroExpo

WE ARE "THEY"

Imagine Sylvan Lake, as a foul smelling, algae infested slough. Swimming carries the risk of swimmers itch and fish kills are common. Prime real estate is worth much less and business closure is common, as there is little incentive for summer crowds to go to the lake.

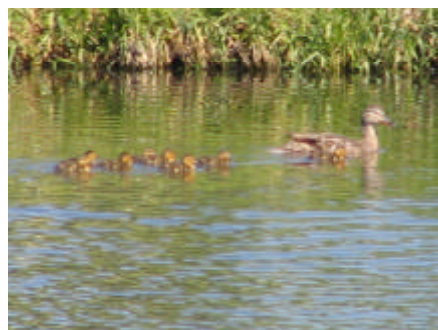
This is not a pretty picture; however, it is one that could easily occur. Sylvan Lake is currently blessed with good quality water. However, it is possible for the water condition to deteriorate quickly from clean and appealing to slimed with algae almost overnight, as a result of the release of its accumulated nutrient and toxin loads. This rapid deterioration in water quality is called "tipping" and unfortunately is not a rare condition in lakes similar to Sylvan where development and pollution run unchecked.

It is not possible to predict the exact time a lake will tip, and it has been shown that once the change occurs, it is nearly impossible to return to the original clean condition.

Have you ever thought or heard someone say, "**THEY should do something!**"

As members of the Sylvan Lake Watershed Stewardship Society, the Board is working hard to prevent this scenario from happening. But the solution lies with all of our membership.

WE are "THEY"!



If you enjoy any benefits from the clean water of Sylvan Lake, it is now time to take some action. You must act now to ensure that this valuable resource is conserved for generations to come.

So what can you do? Here's a shopping list of some actions you could choose from:

Make a phone call

Time commitment 5 minutes

- Call Lacombe County of and ask them to halt development within the watershed until there is an Inter-municipal Development Plan to assure that the lake's water quality is maintained and that the aquifer that supports the lake is protected. Ask them to take the lead on commissioning a cumulative impact assessment to address these matters
- Call the Ministers of Sustainable Resource Development and Municipal Affairs
- Call Luke Oulette, Ray Prins, Ty Lund, Earl Kinsella

Write a Letter

Time commitment 30 minutes

- To the Ministers of Sustainable Resource Development (SRD) and Municipal Affairs
- To Local MLA's
- Copy everything to Lacombe County

Send an email via the SLWSS Website

Time commitment 5 minutes

- To the Ministers of SRD and Municipal Affairs
- Copy everything to Lacombe County
- Copy Luke Oulette, Ray Prins, Ty Lund, Earl Kinsella

Visit the SLWSS website for talking / writing points and information on how to contact local MLA's and County officials

Become a member or renew your membership in the SLWSS.

Consider this:

- One phone call carries the impact of 10 letters
- One letter carries the impact of 100 emails

Think about the impact you want to have and take action now!

YOUR WATER REVIEW

This year the Government of Alberta will decide about the amount of water in your river and the price you might pay for water. For the first time in 12 years, the provincial government plans to review the current water rights system on how water is allocated, and more importantly, who gets access. Your input is important, especially in a future of shrinking water supplies and greater demands. To guarantee your right to express concerns about clean water for people and rivers, learn about the upcoming review by joining the campaign *Share the Water*, and write a letter to the Honourable Minister Rob Renner or your local Member of the Legislative Assembly.

Alberta doesn't possess abundant water resources and its future availability of water is at risk because of a growing demand for water from a burgeoning population and the coming challenges of climate change. Eighty percent of Alberta's population has access to only twenty percent of Alberta's water supply. According to research by the Calgary Regional Partnership, communities such as High River (2012), Okotoks (2012), and Turner Valley (2016) will be short of water in their license even with a 30 percent reduction in water use by their respective year. Communities that face water shortages will need to look for water from existing license holders, and this will come at a price.

Climate change poses the most serious risk to Alberta's water supply. Climate change has caused dwindling glaciers, less precipitation as snow, and more evaporation, events that will cumulatively decrease the overall supply of water to all who use water. That's why this upcoming review is so important because those who participate in it will determine who gets the water and how much is left in our rivers. This decision is not just for the experts. The public needs to weigh in regarding water for people and water for the environment.

Alberta's water rights system is commonly known as First In Time and First In Right (FITFIR). A water right is a fixed amount of water that a licensee can take from rivers, lakes, and aquifers. Designed in the late 1800s, FITFIR is a first-come, first-served system that prioritizes who gets water according to license date during a water short year. Older rights holders (receiving water in the 1930s) are guaranteed water over junior rights holders (those in the 1960s) who may not have any access to water.

The current system of First in Time and First in Right (FITFIR) produces winners and losers without a fair explanation for how the use of water benefits Albertans. A deregulated water market has been proposed as the only solution so far, which would mean access to water will be determined by access to money rather than a reflection of public values.

The current water rights system does not prioritize water use. Under this system, the value of water for basic human needs (cooking, cleaning, and drinking) is the same as the value of water for secondary needs (lawn watering, car washing, and golf courses). Moreover, the value of healthy rivers is not prioritized. Healthy rivers provide Albertans with clean air and clean water. Healthy rivers support fish for anglers, recreational activities for Albertans, and habitat for wildlife. They need a certain amount of water to keep them healthy, but under our current water rights system that amount is inadequately protected.

Water Matters recommends that Alberta's water rights system be updated to reflect modern water management science and practices. Alberta needs a system that can adapt to climate change, fairly distribute water to all Albertans, and, most importantly, prioritize water for basic human needs and for healthy river ecosystems as first in line, not last.

Water Matters has launched a campaign called *Share the Water* that encourages Albertans to participate in the upcoming review. *Share the Water* calls for an updated water rights system in Alberta that ensures water is secured for people and the environment. Please join us to raise the awareness among your peers about this issue and learn what you can do –not just for your family, but also for future generations in Alberta. Public consultations for this review are expected in March or April of 2010. Keep informed about public consultations for the water allocation review, please sign our petition at <http://www.water-matters.org/program/share-the-water/act#petition>.

Nonetheless, writing a letter guarantees your input in this upcoming review.

Alberta Science Network / Stewards in Motion VIII Conference

Watershed Stewardship: Science to Solution

June 3, 2010 8:45 - 4:30

Sylvan Lake Royal Canadian Legion

Keynote Speaker: Bob Sanford - "Corralling the Water Hole : Avoiding Conflict Over Western Water"

- Dr. Arlene Kwasniak - Overview of relevant watershed legislation
- Alberta Stewardship Network AGM
- Tools for Stewards - Ecotrust
- Sylvan Lake boat tour

The Public is welcome to attend!

Register by May 27 at 10:00 a.m.

Visit www.ab.stewardshipcanada.ca

Or call ASN @ 1 877 727 5276



Blue-Green Algae (Cyanobacteria)

What are cyanobacteria?

Cyanobacteria is the scientific name for blue-green algae, or "pond scum." The first recognized species were blue-green in colour, which is how the algae got their name. Species identified since range in colour from olive-green to red.

Cyanobacteria form in shallow, warm, slow-moving or still water. They are made up of **cells**, which can house poisons called **cyanobacterial toxins**. A mass of cyanobacteria in a body of water is called a bloom. When this mass rises to the surface of the water, it is known as **surface scum** or a **surface water bloom**. Although we don't know the extent to which cyanobacterial blooms occur across Canada, we do know they mostly appear in the hot summer months and are quite prevalent in the prairies. For further information visit: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ewh-semt/pubs/water-eau/cyanobacter-eng.php

Postage Stamp Design Contest

Six local schools have been invited to participate in the "Send Your Message to the World" postage stamp design contest. We should receive artwork for judging between May 1 and May 15. The entries will be displayed at the Stewards in Motion Conference on June 3 and during the Sylvan Lake EnviroExpo on June 4.

SYLVAN LAKE WATERSHED STEWARDSHIP SOCIETY

MEMBERSHIP REQUEST:

NEW

RENEWAL

Name: _____

Please provide current information for the following: (SLWSS will not SPAM you)

Address: _____ PC _____

Telephone: _____ (Home) _____ (Work) _____

eMail: _____

Membership Annual Dues: Individual - \$20.00

Please make cheques payable to: Sylvan Lake Watershed Society