



To Enhance, Preserve & Protect Pigeon Lake & Its Watershed

**PLWA News Volume 1
January 2008**

Welcome to the 1st Pigeon Lake Watershed Association (PLWA) newsletter!

Since the first meeting on July 7, 2007 of the groups, which combined and adopted the PLWA banner, it has been a story of continuous growth and increasing activity. The Association's membership is approaching 900 and we are continuing our membership drive throughout the winter. We are also moving as quickly as possible to make our activities transparent, responsive and effective.

Our 1st AGM !

On September 29th almost 300 people attended. Dr. David Schindler was our keynote speaker and Jay White, our consultant, spoke to the condition of Pigeon Lake. The Association members reviewed and approved changes to our by-laws, and elected a 22 person board including directors from each of the summer villages and other beaches around the lake, the communities of Mulhurst and Westeros and rural areas. Board members now represent the various populations on and around the lake and are a mix of family cottagers, residents and members from the agricultural, business and watershed communities. We welcome all interested members to participate on our committees. Please be patient as we work our way through the list of volunteers and respond to everyone who has expressed an interest in working with us.

The PLWA will be hosting many public events and we will make sure they are advertised to all residents of the watershed.

A current list of all PLWA events will be available on the website.

See regular updates on the website
www.pigeonlakewatershedassociation.com
Bookmark website for easy check-ins.

During the Association's first six months, we have:

- Produced a coalition of interested groups from the entire shoreline and watershed communities around Pigeon Lake and built a consensus that our Association will develop, advocate and represent ideas and actions to enhance, preserve and protect the lake and its watershed for existing users and all succeeding generations of users.
- Retained Aquality Environmental Consulting Ltd. to prepare a State of the Watershed Report to summarize prior studies and to recommend best practices to manage the watershed.
- Undertaken water quality sampling and prepared a water quality report that found that nutrient levels in the lake have increased significantly over the past 20 years.

Supported the Regional Wastewater Strategy by:

- Publicly supporting the option recommended by the consulting engineers at their public meetings;
- Advocating the approval by all of the local governments;
- Meeting to express our support with our local provincial MLA, Wetaskiwin and Leduc County Councillors and staff, the Association of Pigeon Lake Municipalities, and the North East Pigeon Lake Commission; and,
- Seeking a meeting with the provincial government to recommend rapid implementation.
- Met with MLA Tony Abbott and his successor Diana McQueen, Wetaskiwin County Councillors Nancy Watson, Rick Wilson and Rick's successor Larry McKeever, Leduc County Councillor Ruth Harrison and her successor Vern Siemens.
- Presented to summer villages, the Association of Pigeon Lake Municipalities, the Pigeon Lake Regional Chamber of Commerce and other interested groups.
- Made submissions to the Province of Alberta including Environment, Sustainable Resources Development, Municipal Affairs, Health and Wellness, Tourism, Parks and Culture, the Energy and the Energy and Utilities Board and the health districts.
- Attended Farmers Markets at Lakedell throughout the summer and the Lakedell Fair to expand the Association's membership and meet with the community.
- Coordinated the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup with volunteers in 10 locations around the lake who removed almost a ton of debris.
- Met with leaders of the indigenous community and included them in our meetings.
- Developed an interactive website as a 'go to' place for great information.
- Developed relations with the media and published Association activities.
- Raised sufficient donations to conduct the studies and reports commissioned to date, and to advance the views of Association members.
- Facilitated an Alberta government open house at Lakedell on October 10, 2007 on the role of various agencies in dealing with blue green algae. There were presentations by Alberta Environment, Sustainable Resource Development and the Capital Region and David Thompson Health Districts.
- Sponsored presentations by SolarBee at Vasa Lodge (north end of lake) and Lakedell (south end of lake) on October 13th.
- Became members of the Pigeon Lake Chamber of Commerce, the Alberta Stewardship Network, the Alberta Lake Management Society and Synergy Alberta.
- Participated in the Battle Lake Synergy Group and met with oil & gas companies about their operations in the area.
- Participated in an advisory committee with Sustainable Resource Development on the Pigeon Lake Fisheries Management Plan. We advocate a balanced approach to the sustainability of the two primary species lake whitefish and walleye and a balanced approach to the sport, food, and commercial fisheries.

Current & Upcoming Activities

- Finalizing and posting the State of the Watershed Report.
- Continuing to lead shoreline cleanups each spring and fall.

- Holding public meetings in partnership with government agencies addressing the blue green algae issue.
- Sponsoring environmental stewardship workshops in partnership with the Alberta Environmental Farm Plan Company. Workshops will be ongoing and tailored for the agricultural community, acreage owners and cottagers. Once completed the graduate farmers and acreage owners may apply for matching funds up to \$50,000 to complete projects which reduce environmental impacts.
- Expanding our dialogue with the oil & gas industry, including meeting with representatives of Esso to discuss the winding down of the Bonnie Glen gas plant.
- Addressing development concerns by attending community meetings with developers and working with local groups as they negotiate with the developers. This includes the Ayers Estates and Silverwoods development proposals, monitoring and responding to developers who propose high-density developments which will impact the lake and its watershed. Also, we are participating in public meetings with developers and the counties and, if necessary, in the appeal process and litigation if the impacts on the lake and its watershed are not effectively addressed. (For more information on Silverwoods check out www.plrg.resco.ca/wordpress).
- Exploring with the Association of Pigeon Lake Municipalities a regional planning process for the Pigeon Lake area.
- Pursuing with the new oil and gas regulator the creation of a Tier 1 status for the area around Pigeon Lake similar to the Tier 1 established around Battle Lake which would designate Pigeon Lake and its immediate watershed as a zone which would emphasize environmentally sound practices and procedures for oil & gas companies.
- Entering into a partnership with Environment Alberta under the new Respect Our Lakes Program which would create a direct link with all of the local, provincial and federal government departments and agencies with responsibility for Pigeon Lake. It would create an umbrella steering committee and a platform for consultation and action. Its mandate would include an economic analysis of activities around the lake, the impact of environmental phenomena like toxic algal blooms and a comprehensive review of the regulations and the enforcement budgets and programs administered by the federal government, the province, counties and summer villages around the lake to enable the Association and the various governments to identify, advocate and enforce best practices. The partnership would include some matching funding for Association operations.
- Considering a SolarBee and other proposals to apply technologies in the short term to prevent or reduce the impact of algal blooms and other environmental problems or events while the more fundamental issues associated with nutrient loading, lake water turn over, etc. are addressed for the long term.
- Hosting community open houses and workshops around of the lake to help users to:
 - Understand the environmental issues confronting us;
 - Adopt individual actions to reduce the human impact on the lake,
 - Build our membership; and,
 - Get to know each other as a lake and watershed community with a shared interest in Pigeon Lake.

Our priorities for 2008 include:

1. Continuing to lobby for the implementation of a regional wastewater system and a suspension of significant residential development until that system is in place.
2. Combating the blue-green algae problem.
3. Expanding stewardship and sustainability activities, and public education.
4. Identifying best practices to provide guidelines for a universal approach to lake water quality and management at Pigeon Lake.
5. Working cooperatively with stakeholders to enhance and protect Pigeon Lake and its watershed.

Although many organizational activities have been accomplished, there are a number of stewardship and educational activities underway so there is much more to be done.

You can help by:

- Joining one of the Association's Committees. Contact a Committee Chair to volunteer - they all need members!
 - Communications
 - Fund Raising
 - Government Liaison
 - Membership
 - Stewardship (events, shoreline cleanup and public education)
 - Technical/Research
- Providing your feedback and suggestions on the association activities to any member of the Board of Directors.
- Helping to expand our membership by talking to other interested people and watershed residents, encouraging them to sign-up on-line at the PLWA website.
- Donating to the Association to help fund our activities.
- Expressing your concerns to your elected officials (Summer Village, County Council and/or Member of the Legislative Assembly).

See you at a workshop!!

Check Out News and Events on the PLWA Website

Share this Newsletter with Your Watershed Neighbours

Encourage Others To Become Members Of the Association