



To Enhance, Preserve & Protect Pigeon Lake & Its Watershed

**PLWA News Volume 2
May 2008**

Welcome to the 2nd Pigeon Lake Watershed Association (PLWA) newsletter!

This newsletter is now distributed to members electronically via their e-mail addresses, or by surface mail if the member, or a member of their household, does not have an e-mail address on file. All members are encouraged to register their e-mail addresses at the PLWA website in order to lessen the impact of newsletter mailings on the environment (and on our volunteers)!

A list of all PLWA sponsored events will be available on the website and events organized by others will also be advertised on links to improve access to information for all residents of the watershed.

See regular updates on the PLWA website

www.pigeonlakewatershedassociation.com

Bookmark the website for easy check-ins.

During the past four months, we have:

- Increased our membership to almost 1,000 individuals.
- Continued to request donations to fund the Association's activities. Confirmed our partnership with Alberta Environment under the Respect Our Lakes Program which has produced matching funding for our education and public information activities, including \$10,000 to assist with the completion of the State of the Watershed Report.
- Continued advocacy efforts to raise the awareness of our watershed residents' concerns and PLWA priorities about the proposed regional wastewater system and other matters, with elected representatives and officials in local, provincial and federal governments:
 - Co-sponsored an all candidates forum with the Pigeon Lake Chamber and the Lakedell Ag Society, prior to the provincial election.
 - Met with Drayton Valley-Calmor MLA Diana McQueen after the provincial election. Diana will meet with the PLWA Board to discuss issues related to Pigeon Lake and the watershed. She is ministerial understudy to the Minister of Environment. We have established an ongoing liaison.
 - Established a working relationship with Alberta Environment, Sustainable Resource Development and Transportation & Infrastructure officials regarding Association activities and the proposed regional wastewater system.

- Met with an official of the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans regarding fisheries management at Pigeon Lake. Served on the provincial Pigeon Lake Fisheries Advisory Council. Achieved a more balanced approach to the sport and commercial fishery.
 - Met with Reeve Garry Dearing and Counsellors Larry McKeever and Nancy Watson of Wetaskiwin County and Counsellor Vern Siemens of Leduc County. Made presentations to the full Wetaskiwin County council on issues associated with high density development in close proximity to Pigeon Lake. Wetaskiwin County has taken the important decision to take the lead for funding applications to the province for the proposed regional wastewater system. The PLWA has volunteered to assist by lobbying the provincial government for this funding. Participated in the County's 25th Anniversary celebrations.
 - Developed a working relationship with Frank Coutney, Chief Administrative Officer, and senior staff at Wetaskiwin County.
 - Developed an ongoing liaison with the summer villages and the Association of Pigeon Lake Municipalities. Met with the mayors of the Summer Villages of Sundance and Grandview to respond to their concerns and explain our support for a regional wastewater system and the importance of a unified effort among all of the summer villages. All summer villages are participating fully, except for Sundance and Grandview. The counties and the province would prefer a unified approach. Funding requests across the province currently exceed the funds allocated for projects like the proposed regional wastewater treatment system at Pigeon Lake. Communities which can demonstrate a unified approach are in a better position to receive funding.
 - Developed an ongoing liaison with the North East Pigeon Lake Services Commission Chair Ralph Johnston and Vice-Chair Ernie Elko, and the Regional Wastewater Steering/Planning Committee and its Chair Roger McKeachern. Ralph Johnston and Ernie Elko, Wetaskiwin County Reeve Garry Dearing, and Dave Dextraze, Director of Public Works for Wetaskiwin County met with the PLWA Board to discuss the Mulhurst sewage treatment facility, its history and its future. This is part of an initiative by the NEPL and Wetaskiwin County to meet directly with the community around Pigeon Lake. More public meetings are planned in partnership with the PLWA. The NEPL has also commissioned a review of the sewer collection and processing system operating in the north east Pigeon Lake area, and will release the results shortly. It has offered to meet with the summer villages of Sundance and Grandview to discuss any concerns they have, and those meetings are ongoing.
 - Met with the Drayton Valley mayor and officials on their use of solar bees. Forwarded a proposal and recommended to Alberta Environment that they consider funding a pilot on Pigeon Lake to test this technology to combat blue green algae in the short term, while the more fundamental issues and needs are being addressed. Alberta Environment advises that it is planning a preliminary test of the technology in a more controlled situation to assess its effectiveness.
- Recommended to Wetaskiwin County an environmental impact assessment for all developments within 800 meters of the lake.
 - Provided the Association's proposed changes to Country Residential Zoning to the County of Wetaskiwin at a public hearing, including the Association's concerns with the proposed Mulhurst Bay Crossing development adjacent to the Hamlet of Mulhurst Bay and the Summer Village of Silver Beach.
 - Negotiated an agreement with the Environmental Law Centre to produce a complete review of all environmental regulations at the local, provincial and federal levels, which apply to Pigeon Lake,

including compliance procedures and budgets. Once completed a model of best practices will be developed and recommended to each jurisdiction with responsibility for Pigeon Lake, and a public information campaign will be launched to ensure that everyone understands the regulations and the need for compliance by all lake users.

- Met with Imperial Oil regarding the closure of the Bonnie Glen Gas Plant, and its use of water licenses from Pigeon Lake and the North Saskatchewan River.
- Continued to work with our consultant, Aquality Environmental Consulting Ltd. on the State of the Watershed Report that summarizes prior studies, reports baseline data and recommends best practices to manage the watershed.
- Sponsored Alberta Environmental Farm Plan Workshops for agricultural residents, cottage owners and small acreage owners to identify best environmental practices and develop implementation plans for their property to reduce its impact on the watershed.
- Promoted and attended Shelterbelt Program Workshops for acreage residents.
- Established a Founders Lifetime Membership for contributions of \$10,000 or greater.
- Prepared, in conjunction with Alberta Environment, a charter for a Respect Our Lakes Program for the Pigeon Lake Watershed which outlines how the PLWA and various government agencies can work together.
- Distributed PLWA membership information to the majority of the watershed's ratepayers, with the assistance of the County of Wetaskiwin and summer villages.
- Notified by the Energy Resources Conservation Board that Enerplus inquiry about additional wells in Westeros immediately south of Highway 13 abandoned for the time being. Local letter writing campaign opposed additional wells so close to the hamlet and the Village at Pigeon Lake.

Current & Upcoming Activities

Check out our PLWA website, <http://pigeonlakewatershedassociation.com/Stewardship> for further details.

- Stewardship Activities:
 - Enhanced the website "Steward Page". It now includes; descriptions of PLWA stewardship programs, a stewardship calendar of events, links on stewardship education and a "Love The Lake" list of things residents can do to reduce their impact on the watershed and descriptions of recent successes.
 - Farmers Market displays on Fridays at 5:00 pm at Lakedell Hall - May 9th to August 29th.
 - Spring Shoreline Cleanup - May 24th to June 1st.
 - Alberta Water Quality Awareness Day on June 5th (testing is from May 1st to August 31st but the registration deadline is April 30th).
 - Open House on Saturday on June 7th at Mulhurst Community Centre from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm, which will include numerous presentations and displays as well as fun activities for the family!
 - Co-sponsor, with Alberta Environment, an Information Session on Blue Green Algae on June 13th at the Mulhurst Community Centre;

- TD Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup - September 13th to September 28th.
- Establishing a “Love The Lake” program through which cottage owners can commit to activities to reduce the impacts of their activities on the lake.
- Co-ordinating “Living By Water” assessments, with the Federation of Alberta Naturalists, through which PLWA members can have lake properties assessed and receive recommendations on actions they can take to lessen its impact on the environment.
- Chamber of Commerce Trade Show – July 25th and 26th.
- Association’s 2007 Annual Report, including Financial Statements and Auditors Report, with the notice of the August 23rd Annual General meeting will be distributed via e-mail or hardcopy in July.
- PLWA Annual General Meeting – Saturday, August 23rd at 10:00 am at Vasa Lodge on Johnsonia Beach.
- Developing strategies to address high density development proposals in the watershed

The Province has delegated the authority to the counties, through their councils, to approve or reject proposed developments in accordance with the county’s land use bylaws.

High density developments continue to be proposed in the watershed. The Association is concerned about the cumulative impact of development on water quality of the lake and on the surrounding communities. In addition to the Mulhurst Bay Crossing development, approved by the County of Wetaskiwin, there are a number of other developments in the approval process including Silverwoods (behind Norris Beach), Hilah Ayers Estates (north of Argentia), and a major development by the Trans America Group (behind Johnsonia).

The PLWA will continue to work with residents of the communities impacted by these proposals to encourage the counties of Leduc and Wetaskiwin to only approve developments that contain appropriate measures to mitigate their impact on the surrounding environment.

- Find solutions to the problems that face Alberta lakes in support of the Province of Alberta *Water For Life Program* and its new proposed *Land-Use Framework*.
- Continuing to monitor any applications by oil & gas companies for approval to drill oil or gas wells around the lake. Monitoring ongoing servicing of existing wells and the de-commissioning of wells.

Our priorities for 2008 include:

1. Continuing to lobby for the rapid implementation of a regional wastewater system and for a balanced approach to high density residential development.
2. Combating the blue-green algae problem, and ensuring adequate testing of the lake water and protection of public health.
3. Expanding stewardship and sustainability activities, and public education.
4. Identifying best practices to provide guidelines for a long term 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.

6. Working cooperatively with the summer villages, counties, the province and the federal government to develop a uniform and environmentally sound planning, approval and compliance process for Pigeon Lake.

Although many of the Association's organizational tasks have been completed, the real work is just beginning. Pigeon Lake can only be protected through changes which all stakeholders make to lessen their impact on the watershed.

You can help!

- **Help to expand the PLWA membership influence.** Talk to other interested people and watershed residents, encourage them to sign-up on-line at the PLWA website.
- **Decrease your impact on the watershed.** Check out the "Stewardship Page" of the PLWA website to see and then implement ten things you can do.
- **Give the gift of your valuable time.** Join one of the Association's Committees (Communications, Fund Raising, Government Liaison, Membership, Stewardship (events, shoreline cleanup and public education) and Technical/Research). Contact a Committee Chair to volunteer - they all need members!
- **Join the Board.** Let your name stand for election to the PLWA Board of Directors, one-half of the Board will be elected at the Annual General Meeting on August 23rd.
- **Provide your feedback and suggestions** on Association activities to any member of the Board of Directors; their information is on the "Contact Us" page of the PLWA website.
- **Donate.** Help fund our activities with a donation to the Association, no matter how small!
- **Express your concerns** to your elected officials (Summer Village, County Council, Member of the Legislative Assembly and Member of Parliament).

Share this Newsletter with Your Watershed Neighbours and Encourage Others To Become Members Of the Association

Check Out News and Events on the PLWA Website including the PLWA Calendar of Events

See you at the PLWA Open House on June 7th!!