



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
ALBERTA CENTRE FOR SUSTAINABLE
RURAL COMMUNITIES

Watershed Toolkit



Alberta Centre for Sustainable Rural Communities

ACSRC Report Series #16-12

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Acknowledgements

This report was created by the staff of the Alberta Centre for Sustainable Rural Communities, University of Alberta- Augustana Campus.

The Creation of this report would not have been possible without the involvement of the Toolkit workshop participants and presenters, as well as Sustainability Resources Ltd. No particular observation or comment should be attributed to any specific individual, unless otherwise specified. Any errors in the description or interpretation are those of the authors.

Research funding for this project was provided by Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN).

Abstract

This project provided a social-network based peer support and water network community for rural water leaders and decision makers while providing improved access to resources, tools, and capacity building sessions that will help create knowledge brokers within our rural communities. It was a combined in-person engagement through a regional workshop series which accelerated knowledge transfer and was complimented by an online crowdsourcing and social network initiative that is poised to support the various objectives of both rural community water leaders and watershed stewardship and management organizations. The workshops followed 3 themes: 1) Municipal Water, 2) Traditional Ecological Knowledge & Watershed Management Planning, and 3) Natural Gas Development & Water Management.

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AUTHOR, TITLE, ACSRC REPORT SERIES NO./YEAR [URL]

Executive Summary

This project is a combined in-person engagement through a regional workshop series which will accelerate knowledge transfer and be complimented by an online crowdsourcing and social network initiative (<http://watershedresources.ca/index.php/toolkit-project>) that is poised to support the various objectives of both rural community water leaders and watershed stewardship and management organizations. With the help of the watershed community, this project is poised to receive broad support and uptake and will reach a large and diverse range of participants (across age, sector, remote/rural/urban, and capacity).

The workshop content for 5 interactive seminars was developed based upon the input received through earlier engagement phases of the project and followed the following 3 themes:

1. **Municipal Water Policy & Water Management** - this workshop was hosted in Lethbridge and in Edmonton with a focus on conservation, water reuse, and provincial policy initiatives to support municipalities in managing water.
2. **Traditional Ecological Knowledge & Watershed Management Planning** - this workshop was developed in response to requests from northern communities and water leaders to focus on the role of TEK in resource management planning.
3. **Natural Gas Development & Water Management** - this workshop received the most interaction between sessions on the Watershed toolkit Site and had a high demand from both the Calgary and Edmonton region so was hosted in both communities. This workshop focussed on developing the understanding of community decision makers around the impacts of natural gas development on water resources and the role of science in decision making.

Outcomes:

1. Increased capacity for decision making around water sustainability planning, conservation initiatives, wastewater treatment options, We discussed decision making, industry development in rural communities and the impacts on water supplies, and the role of traditional knowledge as it informs watershed management planning.
2. This Watershed Toolkit Project provides for an interactive knowledge transfer between community leaders, the scientific and academic communities and includes: multiple community engagement sessions, capacity building, crowdsourcing input into a rural community resource toolkit, understanding accessibility needs of users, further resource and information needs of communities, and building relationships and strengthening peer-support networks between rural community water leaders and stewards.

Impacts:

Attendance at the in-person networking events totalled 69 participants with 20 community members from across 20 communities and several industry, academic, and organizations developing relationships and common understanding of water issues, resources, and initiatives specific to each of the regions we had targeted for this phase of the project.

Impacts can be assessed in terms of self-assessment (see (b) above) for water and watershed management, increased regional networking and potential collaboration (evidenced through workshop attendance and engagement in the Water Network), ongoing interest and growth in the Toolkit as a project (as per a recent Advisory Committee meeting held in mid-January), and continuing engagement from organizations such as the U of Alberta, Alberta Eco-Trust, Cows and Fish, various WPACS, the AUMA and Alberta Innovates – Water.

Next Steps:

The ACSRC and Sustainability Resources are planning to review the feedback obtained from all participants with our program partners and develop a strategic business plan for the Alberta Watershed Toolkit project for 2013. This will include a comprehensive sustainable funding strategy.

Other possibilities include smaller regional pilots in rural communities, proof of concept funding from the University of Alberta, and a revised web-interface for scenario-based training (SAIT)