



*To Enhance, Preserve & Protect
Pigeon Lake & Its Watershed*

PLWA News Volume 3

January 2009

This newsletter is distributed to members via their e-mail addresses. The newsletter is sent by surface mail if the member does not have an e-mail address on file with the PLWA. To lessen the impact of the newsletter on the environment Association members are encouraged to forward their e-mail address to the Association's Membership Chair at twounderpar@xplornet.com.

Annual General Meeting

The PLWA held its 2nd Annual General Meeting on August 23rd. At the meeting Jay White of Aquality Environmental Consulting presented the 2008 State of the Watershed Report <http://www.pigeonlakewatershedassociation.com/document/show/529>. Members elected 11 Directors of the Association, for two year terms which expire in 2010. In addition 12 directors, elected in 2007, have terms which expire in 2009. Members also approved amendments to the Association's bylaws to change the definition of Family Memberships, to increase the maximum number of Board members, to permit the Board to appoint Board members between Annual General Meetings, to amend the processes for Notice of Board meetings and the appointment of Officers of the Association, and to clarify the names and the responsibilities of Board Committees.

Regional Wastewater System

The system expansion remains the top government liaison priority of the PLWA. Last summer the County of Leduc and those summer villages that are not on the current North East Pigeon Lake wastewater system all approved the process recommended by Associated Engineering to review the governance structure and expand the existing wastewater system to provide service around the lake. The County of Wetaskiwin has been appointed as lead municipality for the expansion. The PLWA is working with the Wastewater Planning and Steering Committee and the Province of Alberta to secure funding for the system. The PLWA is working to keep the project on track and continues to urge all of the summer villages to continue to support the expansion of the regional wastewater system. The Association has also urged summer villages to prohibit the use of septic fields and outhouses, and the drainage of grey water into the lake. Most are in the process of doing so. With the agreement of the Association of Pigeon Lake Municipalities, the PLWA is drafting a guideline which can be used by the villages and ratepayers when converting to holding tanks which can eventually be hooked up to new local collection systems as part of the expanded regional wastewater system.

Water Quality

The Association continues to work with Alberta Environment to review short term solutions to lake water quality issues while longer term mitigation measures, such as the installation of the regional wastewater system, restoration of the riparian areas around the lake and the elimination of fertilizers with phosphorus in them, are completed.

Advocacy

Use of Fresh Water for Oil well production

The Association responded to a member recommendation by reviewing the application of MEC Operating Company to renew its license to inject potable water for the purpose of enhanced oil production and the impact on the aquifers which feed the south west area of Pigeon Lake. The review included the analysis of results of a helpful groundwater study recently completed by the County of Wetaskiwin and other studies recently completed by Hydrological Consultants Limited in the Pigeon Lake area. The PLWA determined that there was sufficient reason to submit a statement of concern calling for additional research by MEC and the consideration of alternatives under provincial policy. The PLWA also called on its members, the counties, summer villages and other groups like the Battle Lake Synergy Group and the Wizard Lake Stewardship Association to consider making similar submissions. Over 100 statements of concern and other submissions were made to Alberta Environment. As a result of responses received, the Energy Resources Conservation Board has temporarily extended the expiring MEC license and has instructed them to review other alternatives, including the PLWA's suggestion to use of brackish water from coal bed methane production, rather than water from the aquifer in the Pigeon Lake watershed. The Association continues to monitor this situation.

Residential Development – Mulhurst Bay Crossing and Silver Woods

The PLWA attended the public hearings before the Wetaskiwin County council to respond to the Mulhurst Bay Crossing and Silver Woods area structure plan proposals. Association members, legal counsel, interested residents groups and the adjacent summer villages were consulted and the Association reviewed the Pigeon Lake Management Plan approved by the summer villages and counties in 2000. The PLWA recommended, based on input received, lower densities, effective wastewater processing, improved road access and that developments must access aquifers which provide adequate fresh water supplies, without negatively affecting the lake or existing residents. Both of these area structure plans now require that these be done.

The Association expressed the view that all storm drain systems and run-off must be monitored to ensure that the lake is not adversely affected, which will have to be followed up with Alberta Environment. The PLWA raised concerns about the need for increased policing of traffic and other aspects of the increased activity in the summer time. Both counties and some of the summer villages have funded extra policing for these purposes.

The Association continues to recommend an environmental impact assessment for all new development within 800 meters of the lake.

In response to input provided, the review of land use by the Province of Alberta and the updating of land use rules in some neighbouring municipalities, the County of Wetaskiwin is currently conducting a review of its Municipal Development Plan and Land Use Bylaw. The County has indicated that it will include comparisons of the plans and bylaws in neighbouring municipalities, including the summer villages around Pigeon Lake and the County of Leduc County. The PLWA has recommended a moratorium on developments in the County of Wetaskiwin until the public input process for the draft updated Municipal Development Plan has been completed this summer.

The PLWA requires a member to chair a Real Estate Development Committee. To date there has been very limited member involvement on development issues.

Stewardship

Stewardship activities and education are the top operational priority of the Association. They are critical to the enhancement and protection of Pigeon Lake. The PLWA will continue to coordinate activities and programs such as:

- Christmas Creature Count
<http://www.pigeonlakewatershedassociation.com/document/show/911>
- Educational programs
 - Environmental Farm Plan
http://www.pigeonlakewatershedassociation.com/calendars/show_event/2419
 - Shelterbelt Workshop
<http://www.pigeonlakewatershedassociation.com/document/show/201>
 - Working Well Workshop
- Great Canadian Shoreline Clean-Up
<http://www.pigeonlakewatershedassociation.com/document/show/903>
- Living By Water Assessments
<http://www.pigeonlakewatershedassociation.com/document/show/199>
- Love The Lake
<http://www.pigeonlakewatershedassociation.com/document/show/200>
- Open Houses and Information Meetings

The PLWA has engaged the Environmental Law Centre to review all environmental regulations and compliance programs for Pigeon Lake at summer villages, counties, the provincial and federal governments. This review will be used to build an integrated model of best practices for use by these jurisdictions. The best environmental practices will be identified, supported and communicated to Association members and watershed stakeholders.

Fishery

The PLWA serves on the provincial Pigeon Lake Fisheries Advisory Council and has participated in the updating of the Pigeon Lake Fisheries Management Plan to achieve a more balanced approach to the sport and commercial fisheries. The draft plan will be available shortly and will be reviewed in March at public meetings to be scheduled in Nisku and Wetaskiwin. All interested members are encouraged to attend and to submit recommendations.

Membership

The Association membership has continued to grow to approximately 1200 individuals. In addition, the Summer Villages of Argentia and Golden Days have purchased an additional 356 family memberships in the Association for their ratepayers, further increasing the membership. Meetings are planned for each of the other summer villages to discuss similar block purchases of family memberships. Please let your summer village council know that you support this initiative.

The PLWA membership year runs from May 1st to April 30th each year. Members will receive notices to renew their memberships. Although membership fees help to defray expenses they also confirm the number of members when the Association represents them with government. Larger numbers are absolutely essential to the success of projects like the regional wastewater system, effective land use and the funding of larger scale projects.

Planning

On January 10th the PLWA Board of Directors held a planning session as the first step in preparing a Strategic Plan for the Association. Directors renewed the Association's purpose, identified priorities and goals within each priority. The next step will be to identify short and long-term objectives for each goal for approval by the Board. The Board will be reviewing the outcomes from the planning session at its February meeting.

One issue which was evident at the planning session was that the work to be done by the PLWA far exceeds the resources of Board members and current volunteers. Association Members concerned about the environmental health of Pigeon Lake are encouraged to contact the Chair of a PLWA Committee, to get involved in their activities. The Board member contact information is posted on the Association's website at <http://www.pigeonlakewatershedassociation.com/document/show/725> .

Public Meetings/Hearings

Events of interest to members of the Association are listed on the PLWA website including:

- County of Wetaskiwin Review of Municipal Development Plan and Land Use Bylaw on January 21st at 7:00 pm
- Environmental Farm Plan Workshop on January 27th at 10:00 am
- Energy Resources Conservation Board, Public Hearing re Trilogy Application to drill in the Battle Lake Watershed on February 2nd and February 4th at 10:00 am

Each of these three events is being held the Lakedell Community Centre.

Details of these and other events are available on the PLWA event calendar at <http://www.pigeonlakewatershedassociation.com/calendars/table/113>

The details about the meetings to review the Pigeon Lake Fisheries Management Plan will be posted on the PLWA website, once they become available.

YOU CAN HELP!

- **Encourage others to become members of the PLWA**
- **Decrease your impact on the watershed**
- **Give the gift of your valuable time - join one of the Association's Committees**
- **Provide your suggestions on Association activities to a member of the Board**
- **Donate to the Association - help fund our activities**
- **Express your concerns to your elected representatives (Summer Village, County Council, Member of the Legislative Assembly and Member of Parliament)**

<http://www.pigeonlakewatershedassociation.com/Home>