



PLWA Winter 2011 Email Newsletter

Working for a Healthy Lake & Watershed

President's Message

At the end of September, I accepted the role of PLWA President. I have been a PLWA Director for a couple of years and a volunteer before that. I have served on other boards in different roles including the position of Chair. Through my family, I have had the privilege of enjoying summers at the lake for over 40 years.

I took on this honour and responsibility because I firmly believe in the PLWA mandate. I believe that the work of PLWA will provide critical pieces in our journey to ensure that the lake is, and stays, as healthy as possible.

This summer I was disheartened to see the amount of algae, and heard from Mom's who took their kids elsewhere for water playtime. Together, our changing environment and our combined human activities have affected the lake and its health. Together, we can and must, turn this trend around.

PLWA has a terrific board of directors and volunteers committed to the health of the lake and its watershed. To have a healthier lake and watershed we need to:

- **Increase Effective Stewardship:** *Stop contaminates going in the lake. Control what we can control – e.g. fertilizers and wastewater going into the lake from all sources.*
- **Preserve / Restore the lake's Natural Ecosystems:** *Enhance and restore the watersheds' (lake and land's) own capacity to filter and deal with nutrients and contaminants.*
- **Keep learning and filling in knowledge gaps** *in order to make better decisions and to hone our focus as to where we can make the greatest difference (e.g. water input monitoring).*
- **Engage people** *in creating and implementing collective agreements for the long-term health of the lake and watershed. A united and demonstrated commitment is necessary to garner government support.*
- **Science technology and planning** *-Keep up-to-date on the ways we might enhance water quality without detriment to the natural systems.*

Our 2012 programs are designed to make progress in each of these areas. To make progress we need support and resources. To get support and resources we need to build relationships, credibility and trust. To increase credibility and trust, we need to show progress. To show progress we must deliver, to deliver we need people and resources.

PLWA is working to hire a part-time, dedicated person, to add some capacity to help us realize greater progress. We are looking at ways people can engage in our programs; volunteering and in making healthy lake changes. We are looking to bring information, education and resources to people. Please read on for more details.

People and organizations throughout the watershed, each doing their part, will be the key to making a difference in our watershed. Thanks for your on-going support, and for developing your own healthy lake habits.

Susan Ellis
PLWA President

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PLWA thanks everyone who lives, works and plays in the Pigeon Lake area for all the changes large or small, that you have made to be a great steward of the lake and its watershed. In this issue we'd especially like to congratulate Peggy Juchli and the Beach Captains' around the lake who conduct the Great Canadian Shoreline Clean-Up on behalf of the Pigeon Lake Stewards. See their Report.

Be an inspiration:

Please tell us what you or your neighbour is doing differently these days to minimize what goes in the lake and/or to enhance the health of the watershed. Take creative license. Help us to inspire others. We want to share some of these actions in our PLWA Updates with or without names, as you wish. Three of these will be read at our next AGM! Email: info@pigeonlakewatershedassociation.com

Thanks

Annual General Meeting and Open House – the hall was packed with record attendance on August 27th

- The *Respect Our Lakes* Open House preceded the AGM with displays, resources and advice provided by environmental, government and stewardship organizations. [See more AGM pictures.](#)
- Speakers included Chris Teicheb of Alberta Environment on water quality monitoring and David Trew of the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance on watershed management. [View AGM Presentations](#)



Nominations

PLWA said goodbye to a few long-serving Directors Dennis McCoy, Bryan Kickham, Mary Ellen Herman and Gene Begg who continues to serve on the IWMP Steering Committee.

We wish to welcome new Directors: Back to the board is Jim Stevens, a life-time member and past Board Chair who resides in Westeros; Bob Gibbs (Silver Beach) is new to the board, but not to PLWA. Bob assisted with challenges such as MEC's application to use non-saline groundwater (groundwater from the underlying aquifer) a couple years ago. Jeff Lloyd (Ma-Me-O) who was also part of PLWA in the early years.

We also welcome a couple of key volunteers: Lynda Anderson who has joined the Membership Committee, and last but by no means least is Scott Fisher, who is applying his extensive competence to managing our website.

Note we have room for a couple more Directors. [See the list of PLWA Directors.](#)

Land Use

- The very important priority work of the Land Use Committee is moving the Integrated Watershed Management Plan (IWMP) process forward. Bob Gibbs is a welcomed new committee chair, and PLWA Director. He is competent to lead this project. This process is critical for a number of reasons including the engagement of people and organizations around the lake and in addressing the impacts on it. As well, the process and plan will help to garner support from the government. Under Bob's leadership this committee has chosen an action process approach. It has the committed support of key people, organizations and government. [Please read the IWMP Update.](#) This brief update explains the importance of this work, the work done to-date, the next steps and the many reasons to support it and the easy ways we can be supportive.

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- Please tell us about land developments in the watershed when you see a public notice in a paper. We respect the roles of the regulators. Our role, when we hear of a development can be to identify, educate, inform and encourage lake healthy, sustainable decisions for all parties. Last year, for one proposal close to the lake, PLWA helped to bring attention a two page single space list of deficiencies of the current regulations and our recommended [PLWA Development Principles](#). Directors presented this at one of the public hearings.

Stewardship

- **Best Practices** – We’ve talked before about the [Phase II - Discussion](#) paper PLWA created with the aid of the Environmental Law Centre. In it are recommended Best Practices for the lake. This fall PLWA sent an offer and request to support Summer Villages who are willing to work on putting some of these in place for the health of the lake and watershed. Ideally, together we will create a process for talking through considerations, and together, find ways to address concerns, and to supportively implement changes.
- **Restoration** – PLWA is keen to work on 1 – 3 demonstration restoration sites in 2012. You may know that in 2008 Alberta Fish and Wildlife completed a Pigeon Lake Health Assessment which shows 65% of our shorelines are highly impaired and only 29% is healthy.
- **2011 Home Site Consultations** – (3rd year) Another twenty-three people and four Summer Villages took advantage of this opportunity for a free assessment and comprehensive report of their watershed area. Nature Alberta provides confidential reports about the best environmental options for their lot and waterfront. These assessments are especially good to do prior to making property changes. One newcomer reported that if he’d known more before rebuilding, they would have made better lake choices and had more time to relax!
- **Education: PLWA Summer Workshop Series** – PLWA knows that education is key for people to understand about our impacts on the lake and watershed. How can we continue to enjoy the lake while being good stewards? PLWA knows how precious “lake time” is, so this year we tried a 1½-2 hour format for our workshop series in 2011. Unfortunately, turnouts were low. Those who attended felt they learned a lot of good information. The series included the following workshops and answered a lot of common questions.
 - **Central Alberta Lake Biology 101** – Participants learned how Pigeon Lake was formed; how lake ecosystems work; and about what lives in our lake. It covered the importance and connection of all lake creatures, lake levels, algae, fish and aquatic vegetation.
 - **Private Sewage Systems 101** - Participants learned how a septic system works; how long septic fields last; how to know if it’s working; when a holding tank is a good idea and related regulations. Holding tanks, pumping, treatment systems and a regional wastewater system update were included.
 - **Lakeshore Living 101** – Participants learned of the rewards and responsibilities lakeshore living. Shorelines, who own them; key whats and whys of riparian and littoral zones, along with the dos and don’ts to protect the lake.
 - **Invasive Plants 101** – Don Battiste from the Alberta Invasive Plants Council educated participants on the concerns about invasive plants; what plants are around the lake and how to deal with them.



Ryan Devlin presenting – Lakeshore Living 101

Please watch for information on our 2012 offerings in our Spring Newsletter.

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○ Waterfowl +

- PLWA started what may become an on-going **Waterfowl Habitat Protection Conversation**. Thanks to Michael Frost this initial step may lead to a brochure to inform and encourage people about the waterfowl and shorebirds that depend on Pigeon Lake for their home or as an important stop over on their migration routes.
- Partnering with Nature Alberta we were able to sell copies the amazing Atlas of Breeding Birds of Alberta for a low price at our AGM.
- PLWA applauds the Purple Martin Conservancy who looks after 80 Purple Martin condos, here in our watershed. Their key mandate is to preserve diversity.
- PLWA also applauds the folks in the watershed who build Wood Duck Boxes. With fewer and fewer big old trees for our cavity nesting birds and creatures, we encourage people to buy and put one up.
See: [Wood Duck Box](#).



Technical & Research

- The Association of Pigeon Lake Municipalities (APLM) and PLWA have shared concerns with the lake water monitoring at Pigeon Lake. For different reasons, the monitoring has had some inconsistency with respect to the frequency, sampling protocol, reporting format and availability, and monitoring agency. Lake water sampling provides necessary, but not complete, information towards an action plan for remediating lake water quality. Since its inception PLWA has been actively involved in lake monitoring. PLWA has proposed, with funding support from members of the APLM, to take a lead role in ensuring that a recognized lake monitoring program is conducted every year through Alberta Environment (AENV) or Alberta Lake Management Society (ALMS).
- PLWA is talking with AB Environment about starting to conduct “point source monitoring” of nutrient and other inputs into the lake. Point source sampling would help to shed more light on where the nutrients are most significant and hence, where focused efforts may make the greatest difference.
- PLWA will continue to monitoring the research and testing of using iron chloride to reduce nutrients in lake. This research is still in the early stages and PLWA will report any significant updates.

Government & Community Relationships

- PLWA is beginning to work closer with the greater Pigeon Lake community, including key organizations such as the Association of Pigeon Lake Municipalities (APLM) and the Chamber of Commerce.
 - On October 25th PLWA met with the APLM. We presented and made recommendations on:
 - Annual water quality monitoring (See Technical Committee),
 - Continuing with the development of an IWMP (Integrated Water Management Plan), and
 - Developing best regulatory practices.
 - PLWA is going out to Summer Village Council meetings.
- PLWA applauds the work of The County of Westaskiwin for their Area Concept Plan work for the County’s portion of the watershed. PLWA Director Hugh Sanders, is participating with the Working Group on behalf of PLWA members, and is the Chair of the BRWA (Battle River Watershed Alliance). (Note an ASP is adopted as a bylaw and is enforceable while an ACP is adopted as a policy to provide guidance.)
- In case you missed it, last year The County of Leduc received an award for Environmental Planning Excellence from the Canadian Institute of Planners for the [North Pigeon Lake Area Structure Plan](#) for the portion of the watershed that falls within it.

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Communications

- o PLWA welcomes Scott Fisher as our Website Manager. Scott's priority task has been to find and implement software that will manage our membership and stakeholder lists to facilitate better email communications with members and other watershed community members and organizations along with better access to website.
- o A review of the PLWA Board Game Plan to establish 2012 deliverables was conducted.
- o We have started to meet with the Summer Village CAO's on a regular basis to facilitate the effective flow of information.
- o We are developing a PLWA Waterfowl pamphlet in conjunction with Nature Alberta.



From Left: Sylvia Roy CAO for 7 south shore SV's, June Boyda Itaska and Sunset Harbour CAO, Susan Ellis PLWA Communications Committee Chair and via conference call was Harold Wynne CAO for some north shore SV's.

Membership / Volunteerism

- o Over the 2011 summer this committee distributed membership renewals, newsletters and the AGM and Open House Notice. They also compiled packages of the spring newsletters and membership renewal forms for Directors to take to the Summer Village Annual Information Meetings.
- o With Mary-Ellen hanging up her hat we are looking for a new Committee Chair.
- o Opportunities for meaningful participation will grow in 2012.

Fundraising

- o PLWA is seeking financial support from Summer Villages. To really make a significant difference for the lake we need some human resources to support the volunteers." The first funding request was for sustainable funding for PLWA and to hire a Project Coordinator to deliver on the projects in the Game Plan. This was made early in the summer of 2011. The majority of the Summer Villages indicated that they would prefer to fund specific projects. To respond to this feedback PLWA is developing a progress report to share outcomes, progress and the related financial details of our priority projects for the Summer Villages.
- o PLWA is working to secure some larger grants to support our work
- o Similar to the membership sign-up, PLWA now has a convenient Donations page on the website.



Beautiful evening



The first (we think) 2011 fishing hole



Kayaking on Pigeon Lake

Your thoughts and feedback are always welcome. If you have the urge to email, do.

Our email: info@pigeonlakewatershedassociation.com

Thanks from the Directors of PLWA.

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