

The Following is an excerpt from:
Alberta Stewardship Network. 2007. Awareness to Action:
A Showcase of Environmental Stewardship in Alberta. Edmonton, Alberta. 66 pp.

Cottages and Farms - We Are All Connected



*Lac La Nonne Enhancement and Protection Association
& Lac La Nonne Watershed Stewardship Society*

Our Story

The Lac La Nonne watershed is a small drainage area 100 km northwest of Edmonton in the Boreal Mixedwood ecoregion. Situated within Lac Ste. Anne County and the County of Barrhead, the gently undulating landscape is known for its good agricultural land and its attractive lakes for recreation and year-round living. The Lac La Nonne watershed is 299 km² in size and includes Lac La Nonne Lake, Nakamun Lake, Majeau Lake, Tamarack Lake and Kakina Lake. These lakes are intermittently connected by numerous tributary streams. McDonald Creek flows out of Lac La Nonne to the Pembina River and eventually into the Athabasca River. Cottage owners and lake residents make up the majority of the population in the watershed and farmers own the majority of the land.

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*Lac La Nonne Groups * Athabasca River Watershed*

This watershed is lucky! It has two groups of dedicated volunteer stewards working to maintain and improve the watershed. The Lac La Nonne Enhancement and Protection Association (LEPA) was established in 1983. In 2003, LEPA initiated the formation of the Lac La Nonne Watershed Stewardship Society (LWSS) as a venue for members of LEPA, the agriculture community, lake residents from all the lakes, and the municipalities to work together.

Our Project

In response to increasing development and a sense of declining water quality and quantity in the watershed, LEPA launched the Water Quality Assessment and Improvement Project in 2004. The project established three agricultural beneficial management practice (BMP) demonstration sites. LEPA undertook two sites and a third was completed in partnership with LWSS. Farm families were approached with the idea of sharing their land to demonstrate different strategies for grazing livestock in riparian areas. When healthy, riparian areas trap sediment and nutrients and store and filter water, which improves both water quality and quantity. The demonstration sites illustrate how agricultural impacts can be mitigated through a combination of off-stream watering sites, fencing and controlled grazing strategies. Managing livestock access to riparian areas can reduce nutrient inputs to surface waters and provide critical rest to willows and native grasses during spring and fall.

Cows and Fish completed riparian health inventories on the demonstration sites. Two of the four new riparian pastures rated as "healthy but with problems," and two as "unhealthy." An ungrazed reference site was also inventoried and rated "healthy." The groups and farm families can now track the progress of riparian health and the success of the BMPs over time.

A sense of declining water quality and quantity stirred local residents, cottagers and farmers to look for ways of improving riparian health in the watershed. Three demonstration sites now illustrate how a few simple measures can lead to improvements in riparian health and in water quality and quantity.



Windmill construction.



This dugout was constructed to provide off-stream watering for cattle.

Achievements

Cottagers, lake residents and farmers worked side by side to create three demonstration sites in the Lac La Nonne watershed. In all, four new riparian pastures totaling ~40 hectares have been created to help control livestock access to sensitive shorelines. It took 3 km of fence plus the cooperation and hard work of a core group of volunteers to achieve this. New livestock water sources and distribution systems were needed at each site since livestock were now being kept out of the surface water. Two shallow wells and one dugout with an off-site well and motion-activated solar pump were developed. The shallow wells are pumped to an elevated storage tank and water is gravity-fed via buried pipeline to drinking troughs. One is powered by a solar system and the other by a windmill.

Newsletters, press releases and tours give everyone the opportunity to learn how these projects were developed, how they work and to observe that agricultural production and environmental protection objectives can (and do) co-exist. There may continue to be differences of opinion about what the issues are in the watershed and how to address them but these three projects demonstrate that there are ways to work together for a common goal - a healthy landscape that will benefit individuals, the environment and the community.



Solutions

Challenges

Volunteers with limited knowledge of administering a project of this magnitude.

Finding agricultural producers who were willing to cooperate with a group of cottagers and lake residents.

Lack of awareness or interest in stewardship among those not directly involved in these projects.

Partnered with government and other agencies to assist with grant applications, budgets and reporting, tours and workshops.

Found those that were willing and supported them. Landowners were front and center in design specifications and outcomes of the projects.

Providing newsletters, press releases, tours, workshops to get the word out on a continuing basis.

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Success Strategies

Partnerships between LEPA, LWSS, provincial and federal government (i.e. Alberta Agriculture and Food and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada - PFRA) and non-government agencies (i.e. Cows and Fish).

A core group of available volunteers with varied skill sets.

Outcomes

- ✳ Three new clean and accessible water supplies for livestock that can be showcased to others.
- ✳ Approximately 40 hectares of riparian lands transitioned from continuous summer grazing to time-controlled grazing.
- ✳ Sense of cooperation and ownership among those that worked on these projects.
- ✳ Increased awareness among the agriculture community that cottagers and lake residents are willing to help.



Investing in Stewardship

Cash

\$40,982

Provided by

Alberta Stewardship Network; Watershed Stewardship Grant Program

Agriculture & Food Council; Community Riparian Program Alberta Agriculture and Food; Canada-Alberta Farm Water Program

Canada-Alberta Farm Stewardship Program

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

Lac La Nonne Enhancement and Protection Association

Lac La Nonne Watershed Stewardship Society

Participating Agriculture Producers

In-kind

\$37,955

Provided by

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada - PFRA, Alberta Agriculture and Food, Cows and Fish, Lac La Nonne Enhancement and Protection Association, Lac La Nonne Watershed Stewardship Society, Participating Agriculture Producers

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