



## Annual Report 2015-2016



The Vermilion River Restoration and Enhancement Project is funded through grants from:



This project was undertaken with the financial support of:  
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Environnement  
Canada

Environnement  
Canada



Canada

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And in Partnership with:



North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance

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## 1. Introduction

The Vermilion River Watershed Alliance (VRWA) was incorporated as a non-profit society in July 2015. With representatives from five rural and three urban municipalities, provincial and federal governments, non profit organizations, academia, and a drainage district, the mission of the VRWA is to implement the 2012 *Vermilion River Watershed Management Plan* within a collaborative framework.

In August 2015, the VRWA, in partnership with the NSWA, held an Educational Forum at Lakeland College in Vermilion to raise awareness and increase knowledge of the Vermilion River Watershed. This Forum also served as an introduction to the upcoming *Vermilion River Watershed Restoration and Enhancement Project* (VRWREP). The VRWREP—funded through the Government of Alberta’s Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program as well as Environment Canada’s EcoAction and National Wetland Conservation Fund grants—will be delivered in partnership with local landowners, who were invited to propose individual restoration and enhancement projects on their lands.

In November, the VRWA officially kicked off the VRWREP with 5 launch events over three weeks in Marwayne, Bruce, Vegreville, Two Hills and Mannville. As a result of those events, local advertisements, and project promotion by VRWA partners, we received 25 different VRWREP proposals from 16 applicants across the watershed. Selection of projects is currently underway and project commencement is slated for June 2016.

This year also saw the completion of a review of hydrological studies (Sal Figliuzzi and Associates), two contracted technical studies on the Vermilion River (Golder Associates’ *Aerial Assessment of Riparian Areas of the Vermilion River and its Major Tributaries* and CPP Environmental’s *Aquatic Ecosystem Assessment*), and a *Communications Plan* developed by Cows and Fish (the Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Society). Our communications strategy will continue in 2016-17 with the development of a VRWA website as well as a VRWREP video through Habit HQ.

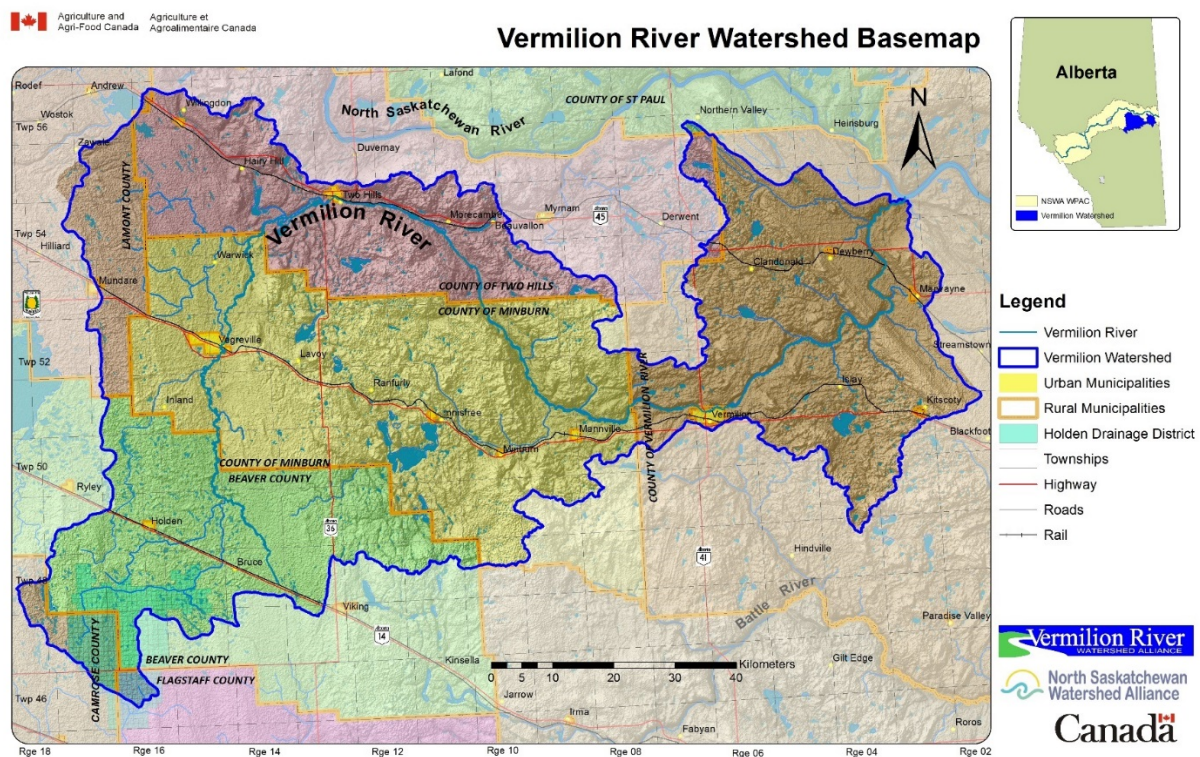
## 2. Vermilion River Watershed Restoration & Enhancement Project

The North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance (NSWA), in partnership with the Vermilion River Watershed Alliance (VRWA), received grants from three sources (Table 1) to restore or enhance wetlands and riparian areas in the Vermilion River Watershed (Figure 1) for the period 2015-2018. Projects under these grants are collectively called the *Vermilion River Watershed Restoration & Enhancement Project* (VRWREP).

The VRWREP contributes to several of the recommended actions of the *Vermilion River Watershed Management Plan* (2012) ([www.nswa.ab.ca/Subwatershed Plans](http://www.nswa.ab.ca/SubwatershedPlans)) under its **Goal 1** - Develop capacity and knowledge, **Goal 2** - Improve reliability of surface water supply, **Goal 3** - Maintain or improve surface water quality, and **Goal 4** – Maintain or improve aquatic ecosystem health. Other goals of the plan relevant to the VRWREP include **Goal 5** - Protect and sustain ground water quality and supply.

**Table 1: VRWREP Funders, Deliverables, and Goals**

Funder	Deliverables	Goals
<b>Watershed Resiliency &amp; Restoration Program (WRRP), Government of Alberta</b>	Restore degraded or lost, or enhance existing wetland and riparian areas in the Vermilion River watershed:  Wetlands = 40 ha total  Riparian areas = 10 km total (20 ha equivalent)	Improve watershed resiliency to floods and drought.
<b>National Wetland Conservation Fund (NWCFC), Environment Canada</b>	Restore wetlands in the Vermilion River watershed = 24 ha total	Improve biodiversity and watershed function.
<b>EcoAction Community Funding Program, Environment Canada</b>	Restore degraded riparian areas in the Vermilion River (main stem) = 2 km (equivalent 4 ha), and conduct a survey of aquatic species & habitat.	Improve water quality, assess aquatic condition.



**Figure 1: The Vermilion River Watershed.**

### 3. Work Plan, Expenditures and Achievements 2015-2016

The Work Plan (Table 2) and cash flow data for each funder were updated from the original grant proposal in June-July 2015. These were updated as needed at each quarterly report on September/October and December 2015. The Work Plan presented in Table 2 reflects the 2015-16 reporting period and also shows the corresponding budget amount from each grant funder, and achievements.

**Table 2: Work Plan Activities, Costs, and Achievements for 2015-2016 VRW REP (April 2015-March 2016)**

Project Activity	Activity Description	Time frame	Costs WRRP	Costs NWCF	Costs EcoAction	Reporting Targets	Achievements
Capacity building	A Project Assistant is hired; works in the field to recruit landowners to participation; assists in project communications.	Sep 2015-Mar 2016		\$28,509		# landowners contacted/ responded; # sites visited; events organized/ assisted; processes coordinated, etc.	a) Follow-up/contact with 64 interested individuals (see breakdown below) as of Mar 31, 2016: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nov 2015 project launch events: 32</li> <li>• VRWA referrals: 15</li> <li>• Advertisements: 9</li> <li>• Other: 8</li> </ul> b) As of Mar 31, 2016, received 25 project proposals from 16 applicants.
Review & synthesis of past studies	Hire a hydrology consultant to recommend wetland restoration areas based on hydrological studies; present information to the VRWA NSW.	Apr-15		\$13,000		# participants at presentations; #readers of the report.	a) Sal Figliuzzi and Associates, St. Albert, AB, was hired as the contractor. Sal delivered a presentation at two board meetings attended by 15 participants at the NSW (Apr 15, 2015), and 18 participants at the VRWA (Apr 16, 2015) board meetings. b) The final report, <i>An Overview of the Hydrological Impacts of Wetland Drainage/Reclamation in the Vermilion River Watershed</i> , was submitted to the NSW on Sep 23, 2015.
Communications Plan 2015-2016	Develop and send out Request for Proposals; choose a communications consultant; develop and implement a Communications Plan for wetland and riparian area restoration projects.	Jul 2015 - Mar 2016		\$28,847		A consultant is selected; complete a communication Plan; # of landowners recruited to participate in the restoration project with	a) Cows and Fish (Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Society) was hired as the contractor. b) A 2015-2016 Communications Plan was received by NSW on September 11, 2015 c) Recruitment of landowners was done.

						<p>corresponding # ha; list of events organized/promoted; list of materials produced; a project report.</p> <p>d) Cows and Fish provided a presentation at the Education Forum (Lakeland College, Vermilion, Aug 12, 2015) and Project Launch (Nov 14/21/28, 2015) events. Cows and Fish promoted these events on their website and Twitter.</p> <p>e) The following items were prepared by Cows and Fish:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Newspaper article published in the Vermilion Voice: "The value of a puddle in a dry land"</li> <li>• Info Sheet #1 - The Vermilion River Watershed Alliance</li> <li>• Info Sheet #2 - Project Overview - Available Funding for Landowners</li> </ul> <p>Info Sheets available at:  <a href="http://www.nswa.ab.ca/content/vermillion-river-watershed">http://www.nswa.ab.ca/content/vermillion-river-watershed</a></p> <p>f) The 2015-2016 Communications Plan final report, "<i>Development and Implementation of a Communications Plan to Support the Vermilion Restoration Project</i>," was submitted by Cows and Fish to NSWA on March 31, 2016.</p>
Communicate with stakeholders (those who live, work, and do recreation in the watershed); focus on landowners	Produce communications materials, develop/use communication tools to promote the restoration projects and advertise events, and hold events (e.g., forum, workshop), according to the Communication Plan; print consultant reports.	Jun 2015 - Mar 2016		\$6,003	\$950	<p>List of communications materials developed &amp; distributed; list of events held with # participants and feedback.</p> <p>a) Communications Materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Info Sheets 1,2,3 &amp; 4 (Available at <a href="http://www.nswa.ab.ca/content/vermillion-river-watershed">http://www.nswa.ab.ca/content/vermillion-river-watershed</a>)</li> <li>• Two pull-up banners for VRWA with the slogan "<i>Local leadership for a healthy and sustainable watershed.</i>"</li> <li>• Promotional VRWA magnet <i>See Appendix A for examples</i></li> </ul> <p>b) Communication Tools to advertise VRW REP-related activities, events, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vermilion River Watershed webpage <a href="http://www.nswa.ab.ca/content/vermillion-river-watershed">http://www.nswa.ab.ca/content/vermillion-river-watershed</a></li> <li>• NSWA News webpage, <i>Instream</i> newsletter, Facebook, Twitter</li> </ul>

						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local newspapers: Vermilion Voice, Vermilion Standard, Two Hills Chronicle, Vegreville News</li> <li>• Websites: municipalities, agricultural society, water and environmental organizations</li> <li>• Newsletters: municipalities, counties</li> <li>• Post card mass mail-out to 2177 homes and farms within the watershed- invitation to landowners to apply for funding under the VRW REP.</li> <li>• Cold Calls - invitation to landowners to apply for funding</li> <li>• County AgFieldmen meetings - obtained landowner contacts; discussed approaches for recruitment</li> </ul> <p>c) Events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational Forum: <i>Wetlands and Riparian Areas Conservation and Restoration</i>, Aug 12, 2015, Vermilion; eighty-one (81) participants.</li> <li>• Vermilion River Watershed Restoration and Enhancement Project launches: Marwayne (Nov 14), Bruce (Nov 14), Vegreville (Nov 14), Mannville (Nov 28), and Two Hills (Nov 28) 2015; 47 participants.</li> <li>• AgriVisions 2016, Feb 17-18, 2016 Lloydminster</li> </ul>
Science/ baseline study	Develop and send out a Request for Proposals; choose a consultant to do a survey of aquatic species and habitat in the Vermilion River.	Jul 2015 - Mar 2016		\$950	\$49,050	<p>Consultant is selected; a progress report.</p> <p>CPP Environmental, Sherwood Park, AB was hired as the contractor for the project, <i>Survey of Aquatic Species and Habitat in the Vermilion River, AB</i></p> <p>A progress report was received by NSWA on November 25, 2015.</p> <p>Interim results were presented at the VRWA board meeting on Dec 10, 2015 at Vegreville.</p> <p>A draft report was received on May 12, 2016</p> <p>Project closure on May 31, 2016; the final report is due June 30, 2016.</p>

Science/ baseline study	Develop and send out Request for Proposals; choose a consultant to identify by aerial assessment riparian areas for restoration.	Jul 2015 - Mar 2016	\$194,892			A formal report, maps, photos and other illustrations, geodatabase, all data.	Golder Associates, Edmonton, AB was hired as the contractor.  A draft final report was received Mar 7, 2016.  The final report <i>Aerial Assessment of Riparian Areas of the Vermilion River, AB and its Major Tributaries</i> , maps, and geodatabase were received Mar 21, 2016.
Communication Plan 2016-2018	Develop and send out Request for Quote; choose a communications consultant	Jan - Feb 2016	\$0	\$0		A contractor is selected.	Habit HQ, Edmonton was selected to create a stand-alone VRWA website and a landowner stewardship video.
Landowner application for funding process	Develop the process for landowners to apply for funding for wetlands and riparian areas restoration and enhancement, and establishment of riparian buffers. Develop the application form and related documents.	Aug 2015- Dec 2015	\$0	\$0	\$0	Documents are ready for distribution at project launch and posted on the NSWA website/Vermilion page.	The landowner application for funding process closed mid-March 2016. The application package consists of: Introduction, Definitions, Eligibility, Application Form, Funding Levels, Examples of Restoration and Enhancement Practices, and Eligible Costs. Documents are available online: <a href="http://www.nswa.ab.ca/content/vermillion-river-watershed">http://www.nswa.ab.ca/content/vermillion-river-watershed</a> .  Other documents in preparation are the Reimbursement Claim Form, and Project Approval Letter.
Legal advice	Advice on Contract Agreements between grant donors and NSWA, and NSWA and consultants/ contractors.	Apr 2015 - Mar 2016				# Contract Agreements reviewed/ advised	Two Consultations: Contract Agreements with grant funders and Terms and Conditions.
Travel	Project related travel by Project Assistant and Project co-Managers. Mileage and accommodation.	Apr 2015 - Mar 2016	\$0	\$3,690		List of meetings attended and sites visited.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Educational Forum, Vermilion, Aug 12, 2015</li> <li>· Project launches, Marwayne, Vegreville, Bruce, Mannville, Two Hills; Nov. 2015</li> <li>· AgriVisions, Feb 16-18, 2016, Lloydminster</li> <li>· VRWA Meetings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Apr 16, 2015, Vegreville</li> <li>- May 29, 2015, Two Hills</li> <li>- Jul 10, 2015, Lea Park</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dec 10, 2015, Vegreville</li> <li>· Technical Team Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Aug 13, 2015, Vermilion</li> </ul> </li> <li>· Meetings with county Agfieldmen and VRWA members for landowner contacts/recruitment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jan 12, 2016, Ryley</li> <li>- Jan 15, 2016, Vegreville</li> </ul> </li> <li>· Feb 10, 2016, Drainage Council meeting, Wetaskiwin</li> <li>· Site visits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Mar 10, 2016, Marwayne (2 locations)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Meeting costs	VRWM Project Implementation Team & Executive Team meetings (6-7 meetings each); Communications and Technical Task Teams meetings as project steering committees (4-5 meetings each).	Apr 2015 - Mar 2016				<p>Minutes of meetings.</p> <p>Minutes of all the meetings held are available upon request:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Implementation Team (interim VRWA Board as of Dec 10, 2015) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Apr 16, 2015, Vegreville</li> <li>- May 29, 2015, Two Hills</li> <li>- Jul 10, 2015, Lea Park</li> <li>- Dec 10, 2015, Vegreville</li> </ul> </li> <li>· Executive Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Apr 10, 2015</li> <li>- May 11, 2015</li> <li>- May 14, 2015</li> <li>- Jun 22, 2015</li> <li>- Oct 01, 2015</li> <li>- Oct 08, 2015</li> <li>- Nov 06, 2015</li> </ul> </li> <li>· Technical Team (Technical and Communications Team were combined as Steering Committee of the Vermilion River Watershed Restoration and Enhancement Project, as of Dec 10, 2015.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Jul 16, 2015, Teleconference</li> <li>-Aug 13, 2015, Vermilion</li> <li>-Sep 22, 2015, Teleconference</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$194,892</b>	<b>\$81,000</b>	<b>\$50,000</b>	

## 4. Income and Expenditures

The total income for 2015-16 was \$325,892 (Table 3). The 2015-16 funding primarily was spent on three contracted reports and the development of a communications plan, as well as communications materials and events to promote knowledge of and participation in the VRWREP. Projected spending for the remainder of the project includes riparian and wetland restoration works and maintenance (Table 4).

**Table 3: Actual (2015/16) and projected (16/17; 17/18) funding for the VRWREP**

<u>Year</u>	<u>WRRP</u>	<u>NWCF</u>	<u>EcoAction</u>	<u>Yearly Total</u>
2015-16	\$194,892	\$81,000	\$50,000	\$325,892
2016-17	\$662,108	\$179,000	\$40,000	\$881,108
2017-18	\$588,000	\$274,254	\$10,000	\$872,254
<b>PROJECT TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,445,000</b>	<b>\$534,254</b>	<b>\$100,000</b>	<b>\$2,079,254</b>

**Table 4: Budgeted items, actual 2015-16 spending, and projected future spending for the VRWREP**

<u>Budget Item</u>	<u>Actual 2015-2016</u>			<u>Projected 2016-2017</u>			<u>Projected 2017-2018</u>		
	<u>WRRP</u>	<u>NWCF</u>	<u>EcoAction</u>	<u>WRRP</u>	<u>NWCF</u>	<u>EcoAction</u>	<u>WRRP</u>	<u>NWCF</u>	<u>EcoAction</u>
Salaries (Project Assistant)		28,509		68,000			68,000		
Wetland restoration works -NWCF				24,300	47,700			72,000	
Wetland restoration -securement, leases, easements, etc. - NWCF				56,700	86,300			143,000	
Wetland restoration - WRRP				333,108			375,000		
Riparian restoration - WRRP 10 km				50,000			50,000		
Riparian restoration - EcoAction 2 km (4 ha)						12,000			8,000
Communications - materials, tours, events		6,003	950	5,000		2,000	5,000	5,000	2,000
Repair and maintenance							20,000	9,254	
Consultant - wetlands restoration areas targeting (Sal Figliuzzi)		13,000							
Consultant - riparian restoration areas targeting (Golder)	194,892								
Consultant - Communications (15/16 Cows & Fish; 16/17 Habit)		28,847		30,000					
Consultant – pre/post site assessment				55,000	45,000		55,000	45,000	
Consultant - Aquatic species & habitat survey (CPP Environmental)		950	49,050	24,000		26,000			
Travel		3,690		6,000			6,000		
Legal advisor				4,000			4,000		
Contingency				4,000			3,000		
Meeting costs				2,000			2,000		
Services									
Meeting hall rent									
Project Management									
Overhead									
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>194,892</b>	<b>81,000</b>	<b>50,000</b>	<b>662,108</b>	<b>179,000</b>	<b>40,000</b>	<b>588,000</b>	<b>274,254</b>	<b>10,000</b>

## 5. Remaining Two Years

### **VRWREP Landowner Applications**

Based on eligible proposals received, we are on track to restore/enhance at least 12 km (equivalent 24 ha) of riparian areas and enhance 40 ha of wetlands, which fulfills deliverables for our WRRP and EcoAction grants. It is unlikely that we will call for another full round of proposals for the 2017/18 season, but may be open to new restoration/enhancement projects as they arise.

### **Ducks Unlimited Canada**

In order to fulfill the NWCF deliverable of restoring 24 hectares of wetlands, we are exploring a partnership with Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) wherein the NSWA—through the NWCF grant—would compensate DUC to assist in wetland restoration work. The NSWA would still be responsible for direct payment to landowners for land securement and compensation over the term of the project.

### **Habit**

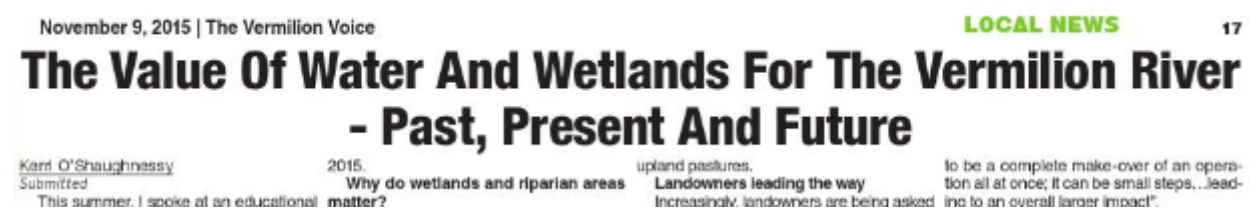
For the 2016-17 year, we hired Habit HQ to create a dedicated VRWA website, and to create a short (7-10 minute) film. The website will be a resource for several audiences, including the existing VRWA Board, watershed stakeholders, landowners engaged in current restoration projects, and the general public. It will provide both VRWA-specific information as well as partner (i.e., Ducks Unlimited Canada, Cows & Fish) information and events. The film is designed to highlight select restoration projects, landowners, stewardship “wins,” and showcase the general landscape of the area. This film is meant to increase knowledge of the VRW as well as encourage and facilitate interest in the region and stewardship of riparian and wetland areas. Filming will take place July/August 2016.

### **Financial**

Projected spending for the remainder of the project is reflected in Table 4. Due to the high number of riparian applications relative to wetland applications, projected spending may shift between existing categories within a specific grant, in order to accommodate a greater number of projects. Spending of WRRP money is flexible throughout the entire project term. Funding from NWCF and EcoAction must be spent as noted in the original contribution agreements, for each year of the project (i.e., funding may not be carried over to future project years).

## 6. Appendix A-Examples of Communications Materials, Tools, and Events

### 6.1 Materials



The article is available at: <https://issuu.com/vermilionvoice/docs/590>

## 6.2 Tools

### LANDOWNERS WANTED!

The North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance & the Vermilion River Watershed Alliance are providing **full-cost funding** for **wetland and/or riparian restoration & enhancement activities** to landowners within the Vermilion River Watershed (see reverse map for project area).



**APPLY FOR FUNDING THROUGH  
1 MARCH 2016**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**  
Mara Erickson, Extension & Stewardship Coordinator  
[VRWAsociety@gmail.com](mailto:VRWAsociety@gmail.com), 780-267-9658

Or contact your county Agricultural Fieldman, Conservation Coordinator, or ALUS Coordinator.

<https://www.nswa.ab.ca/content/vermilion-river-watershed>

**Vermilion River Watershed Basemap**

**Legend**

- Vermilion River
- Vermilion Watershed
- Urban Municipalities
- Rural Municipalities
- Hidden Drainage District
- Townships
- Highway
- Roads
- Rail

**IF YOU ARE A LANDOWNER IN THE VERMILION RIVER WATERSHED WITH A WETLAND OR RIPARIAN RESTORATION/ENHANCEMENT IDEA, BUT NEED SOME CASH TO GET IT DONE, WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!**

**UNSURE IF YOU'RE IN THE WATERSHED? CHECK IT OUT!**

The Vermilion River Watershed is more than just the river itself. Covering an area of 7,860km<sup>2</sup>, the watershed contains numerous tributaries, creeks and countless wetlands.

Mara Erickson  
[VRWAsociety@gmail.com](mailto:VRWAsociety@gmail.com)  
780-267-9658

Front/back of postcard designed for mass mailing blitz to advertise VRWREP in the watershed

## 6.3 Events

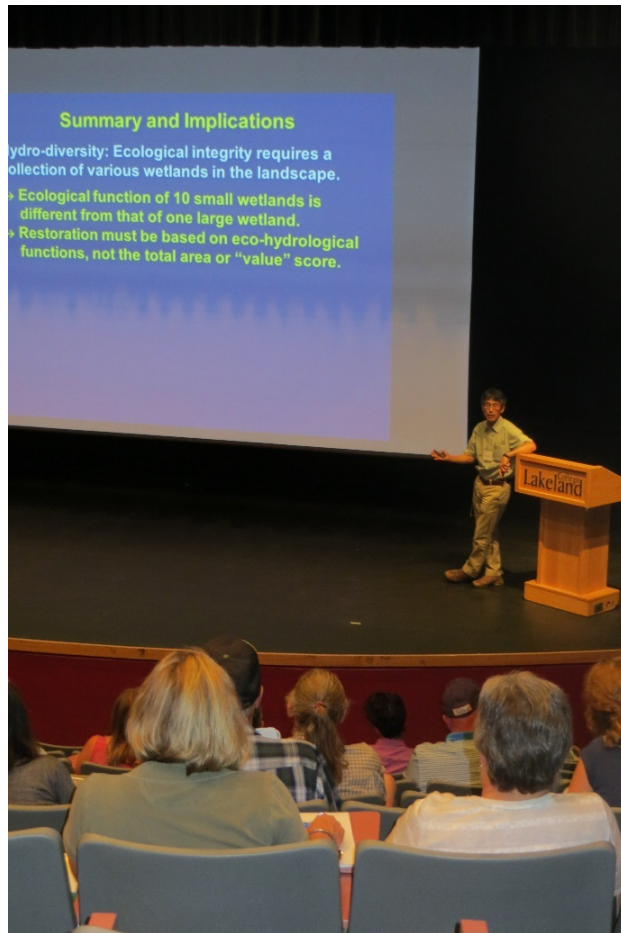
**Educational Forum: August 12, 2015, Lakeland College, Vermilion (Photo credits: Elisa Brose)**



Participants at lunch.



Sean McGrath, rancher/landowner delivering a presentation regarding his perspective on conservation of wetlands and riparian areas.



Dr. Masaki Hayashi, University of Calgary delivering a presentation on the eco-hydrology of prairie wetlands.



Councillor Pat Gordeyko, Chair, Vermilion River Watershed Alliance, delivering his closing remarks.

## 2) Project Launches (Photo credits: Marilou Montemayor)

*Marwayne, Alberta: November 14, 2015*



Councillor Ed Parke, Vice-Chair, Vermilion River Watershed Alliance, introducing the VRWA.



Melissa Logan, P.Biol, Watershed Planner, North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance, introducing the NSWA.

*Bruce, Alberta: November 21, 2015*



Participants with VRWA member Councillor Dale Collison introducing the VRWA.

*Two Hills, Alberta: November 28, 2015*



Participants with Marilou Montemayor, NSWA, introducing the project. (Photo: Mara Erickson)

**3) AgriVisions 2016: Lloydminster February 17-18, 2016.**



Booth with banners of NSWA, VRWA and ALUS in the background.



Communications materials on display at the booth.