PARCS UPDATE #106
October 22/2019
An upcoming event & a recent event

1.1 Wetlands protect our lakes

Spending time on or near the water is something nearly everyone enjoys. Whether you are boating, catching fish in your secret spot or sitting beside your favourite lake, stream, wetland or river - there is something appealing and desirable about being there.

Without us realizing it, this appeal is associated with our nearness to healthy lakes, streams and wetlands. Visions of a waterbody covered by algae and carcasses of dead fish is not appealing and can also be hazardous to your health and that of pets, livestock and wildlife. Blue green algae produces dangerous toxins but even nontoxic blooms hurt the environment and local economies.

Clean, healthy, thriving lakes are the result of what surrounds them and what runs into them. One of the most widespread types of damage affecting the health of a lake is removal of shoreline vegetation. This can result in increased shoreline erosion and a higher sediment load in the water. Another reason for decreased water quality and increased growth of algae is more available nutrients, such as nitrogen and phosphorous. Nitrogen and phosphorus are primary components in fertilizers and animal wastes and these nutrients are carried to the lake in water coming from a variety of sources.

Editor's Note:

I have just returned from our annual PARCS convention and can hardly wait to share some of the things we learned there. I will begin with ***my favourite session*** (page 3 of this issue) and continue in subsequent issues.

But first, I must take time to tell you about an ***upcoming workshop on November 6th***. To explain why this workshop is important, I begin with this:

⬅ ***Guest Editorial submitted by Ducks Unlimited***.

Where does the water in your lake come from? Does it flow in above ground in streams or rivers or does it come from below ground through subsurface ground water flow? Is water being sent into your lake from other areas? When the snow melts in the spring where does the water flow before it enters your lake? If there is a heavy rainfall, where does this water flow before reaching the lake? The source of excess nutrients may be some distance away from the lake.

Wetlands, also called sloughs, ponds or marshes, are ***nature's own water purifiers***. When water moves through a wetland the bacteria on wetland plants, rocks and soils consume and process some common water pollutants. Soil particles suspended in the water sink to the bottom of the wetlands as the rate of water flow decreases and contaminants are held in the soils. Wetland plants are efficient biological filters and will absorb and use some of the excess nutrients. Wetlands also hold water, like a sponge, and release it slowly into the ground or downstream. This slow release decreases chances of downstream flooding.

Wetlands reduce the amount of contaminants flowing into our lakes. If the water from the wetlands flows into our lakes, the water coming out of the wetland is cleaner than it was when it flowed in. If wetlands upstream of your lake have been drained and cultivated or paved over, the water purification functions they performed have ended. Depending on how many wetlands have disappeared, this could have significant effects on both water quality and the water levels of your lake.

Wetlands provide society with many benefits including flood and drought protection, carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat and water filtration. Healthy lakes depend a lot on the surrounding wetlands, and like our bodies, on what we put into them.

See 1.2 on next page ⟶

1.2 AGRICULTURAL DRAINAGE and the ENVIRONMENT CONFERENCE

This conference is just two weeks away and looks to be packed full of excellent sessions, such as:

- Highlights of the Qu'Appelle River Qu'Appelle Watershed Land Use and Water Quality Study
- To Drain or Not to Drain – Farming with Wetlands
- The Hydrology of wetland Drainage in Prairie Potholes
- Carbon Losses from Wetland Drainage
- Agricultural Water Management Strategy and a New Mitigation Policy for Agricultural Drainage in Sask.
- The Challenges of Accumulated Effects in Federal and Provincial Environmental Assessment
- Mitigation of Wetland Loss for Industries in Sask.
- A Producers Viewpoint on the Benefits of Agricultural Drainage and Proposed Mitigation
- An Environmental View of Agricultural Drainage and the Agricultural Water Management Strategy
- First Nations Perspective on Farmland Drainage to Land, Water and Rights
- When a Water Problem is More than a Water Problem: Fragmentation, Framing and the Case for Agricultural Wetland Drainage

When – ***Wednesday, November 6***
8:30 am to 4:30 pm

Where – ***Regina, SK***
4177 Albert St. South
Travelodge

Sponsors –

- ***Bird Studies Canada***
- ***Citizens Environmental Alliance***
- ***Ducks Unlimited***
- ***Sask Alliance for Water Sustainability***
- ***Sask Environmental Society***
- ***Sask Wildlife Federation***
- ***Sierra Club Canada***
- ***Nature Saskatchewan***

To Register –

- Phone ***306-647-2624***
- Phone ***306-620-5962***
- Email ***cea.sask.2018@gmail.com***

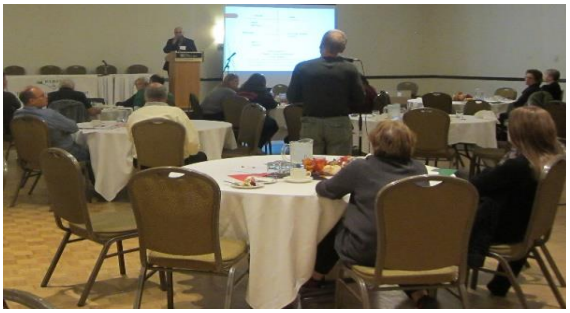
Regular Fee ***$75***

Student Fee ***$20***

Book your stay for a discount rate at the Travelodge by calling 306-586-3443 and use the block code 1105119CEA

2.1 A Great Time had by all at Recent PARCS CONVENTION

The room was humming with discussion between sessions. Delegates enjoyed sharing information with other delegates from other cottage communities.



The floor mike was busy throughout the convention as delegates rose to question speakers or to make suggestions to the PARCS executive chairing the sessions.

The food was great; the discussion was lively and the speakers were informative.
Watch for more information about the convention sessions in our next newsletter.
Meanwhile, however, I've included a report on my favourite session, on the next page.

The PARCS directors and staff, along with volunteers from the OH of North Colesdale & the RV of Melville, entertained with a skit about Mayor "Wishy Washy", his odd-ball Councillors and a crooked community delegation!

2.2 My Favourite Session[1] at our Recent Convention featured 4 RMs with OHs

The ***RM of North Qu'Appelle*** has ***2 OH's***. **RM Councillor Ron Palmer** hails from the OH of Taylor Beach. Ron described how his RM and the OHs have worked together to develop a set of procedures to follow to ensure the delivery of services to the OHs in a timely and mutually acceptable manner. Ron describes how each OH is encouraged to have an OH Board Member give a report at RM meetings. Their emphasis is on encouraging ongoing liaison.

"***We now set our own budget and our own mill rate***", Ron stated. "We know what we need and there's no need to have it done for us."

The ***RM of Mervin*** has 18 hamlets (12 OHs and 6 unorganized), of which ***16 are cottage communities***. The RM's **Chief Administrative Officer, Ryan Domotor** explained that the RM not only allocates 40 to 75% of their tax revenue back to the organized hamlets (as required by law) but the RM also encourages the unorganized hamlets to elect a board and develop a budget to have their allocation as well. The RM has a handbook for OH Board members and allocates specific office staff to handling OH enquiries. He acknowledged that the frequent changes to OH Boards can make for communication challenges. "***Every development permit application goes to the OH Board for their input,*** along with subdivision applications. We invite OH membership on committees such as the one dealing with lake water quality."

The ***RM of McKillop*** has ***9 organized hamlet cottage communities*** (and 11 unorganized hamlets). ***Councillor Marilyn Labatte*** explained that the recent restructuring of the RM means that there now are cottage communities in four of the RM divisions and the majority of the RM councillors are from cottage communities. A priority of the newly elected RM Council has been to review ***13 draft policies*** about how the RM will deal with OHs. For example, there are policies about: • OH budgets • OH meetings • Areas of jurisdiction • Authorizing hamlet expenditures, etc.

Councillor Labatte admitted that these policies now need to be reviewed by the OHs for their input and possible revision.

The ***RM of Meota*** has 13 hamlets, of which 12 are organized (11 of which are lakeshore communities on Jackfish and Murray Lakes). ***Reeve, Sherry Jimmy***, who hails from an OH cottage community, explained that their current council includes 3 councillors from the agricultural sector and 3 councillors from the hamlets. Some OHs are more independent than others and the RM of Meota allows ***each OH to set different mill rates***. The RM now has 4 stand-alone water treatment plants with 2 Water Boards. Reeve Jimmy feels that RM's main job is to "manage relationships, to listen as well as to talk". All new policy is put out for review and consultation. Applications for discretionary use go to OH boards first. She sees their biggest challenges as: new developments adjoining existing OHs, bylaw enforcement and stresses on their lake (they are looking at a lake capacity study). ***"OHs will always get their say, but may not always get their way."***

[1] **These RM speakers were accompanied by an OH speaker from their RM. The panel modelled how RMs and OHs can work together.**