



April 29, 2009

Decision Makers and Resource Experts Assess Headwaters Management and Strategy

Fifty decision makers and water resource experts from a diversity of sectors across the Oldman, Bow and Red Deer River Watersheds will meet in Cochrane on May 1, 2009. Evan Berger, MLA Livingstone-Macleod, will be accompanied by MD of Bighorn Reeve Dene Cooper and other government representatives, landowners and industry stakeholders in a discussion of management ideas and strategies for headwaters – the heights of land in the mountains and foothills and the source of drinking water for the majority of Albertans.

“Albertans are increasingly recognizing how critical it is to protect our water supply by sensitive management of our headwaters,” says Carolyn Campbell, AWA conservation specialist.

The workshop is the legacy of a November 2008 Headwaters Science Workshop, in which 100 decision-makers from government, industry, and non-government organizations gathered to consider recent scientific research and associated policy options for the upland watersheds of the North and South Saskatchewan Rivers.

Speakers at the science and policy discussion included Alberta Sustainable Resource Development Minister Ted Morton, Dr. Henry Vaux, Chair of the Rosenberg International Forum on Water Policy and Calgary Alderman Brian Pincott, all of whom joined a panel of experts that discussed the latest science and threats to upland watersheds.

Research was presented by noteworthy scientists including Dr. John Pomeroy, Canada Research Chair in Water Resources and Climate Change; Dr. David Sauchyn of the Prairie Adaptation Research Collaborative; Dr. Brad Stelfox of ALCES Group; Dr. Uldis Silins from the University of Alberta; and Dr. Cathy Ryan from the University of Calgary. They stressed the importance of accelerated monitoring of the impacts of climate change and land use on the alluvial aquifers and surface water systems and the development of a strategy to protect these fragile water supply systems for downstream communities.

Bob Sandford, local historian and Chair of the United Nations Water for Life Decade reflected on the outcomes of the Science workshop: “It was abundantly clear that Alberta’s upland watersheds are facing unprecedented changes that are directly attributed to the cumulative impacts of climate change, industry practices, recreational land uses and the impacts of mountain pine beetle.”

May 1 workshop participants will discuss the positive aspects and gaps of current headwaters management, and identify priorities to carry forward through to implementation.

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