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Headwaters Workshop, Fall 2008

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Most of southern Alberta's surface water originates from runoff out of the Rocky Mountains. It is crucial, not only for healthy aquatic ecosystems but for human health, that we place the best possible protection at the headwaters to maintain healthy water quality and quantity.

To support this goal, AWA is working with other NGOs and representatives from several provincial and federal government departments to organize a science and policy workshop called "Our Place in the Headwaters: Managing the Commons." It will take place in early November 2008 in Cochrane. The focus will be on the North and South Saskatchewan river watersheds.

We are hoping that local and provincial government decision makers, industry players, and media will attend, as well as those involved in watershed management and stewardship. Our objective is to raise awareness of groundwater and surface water interactions in the headwaters and how various human activities affect these water flows. Just as important, the workshop will link the scientific information presented to policy and management choices for our communities.

A key element of our planning includes a Next Steps/Legacy Action Committee. We are committed to concrete follow-up actions arising from the workshop to increase the uptake of the ideas presented. Legacy actions that we are considering include capacity building and outreach on applying best management practices, a fund for practical infrastructure projects, and a manual or "toolbox" to showcase best practices and policies. We will keep members informed of this important work.

