

## SECTION 7 COMMUNICATIONS

### 7.1 Introduction

The communication team continued regular contact with participating producers and partners to maintain relationships and expand partnerships for the project. A variety of communication strategies and activities were implemented this year including individual contact with producers, collaboration with partners, and the development of extension resources and presentations. A Project Steering Committee was established with industry representatives, research institutions, and funding partners to assist with reviewing and communicating the project results. The communication team also led the formation of watershed groups in the Indianfarm Creek and Whelp Creek watersheds this year to identify and address local issues.

### 7.2 Communication Strategies and Activities

The following is a summary of the communication activities and outcomes this year. For more details see the updated activity report of the communication plan in Appendix 3.

#### Producer contacts and meetings

- Maintained regular contact with participating producers to identify current farming practices and to plan and implement site specific BMPs for their operations
- Hosted information meetings for local producers and residents to discuss the project results and thanked them for their participation
- Prepared letters and agreements for additional participating producers

#### Media and public relations

- Newsletters – developed to inform local residents and producers about the project results and to encourage them to address issues through the formation of watershed groups (Four newsletters were prepared in



2008 and are shown in Appendix 3)

- Radio interviews – provided updates on the project to the general public
- Magazine article – published in Irrigating Alberta, Fall 2008 edition
- Brochure – updated and distributed at conferences and local events
- Website – updated with project information and newsletters on Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) website at [http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/epw11955](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/epw11955)
- Display and poster – developed to profile the project and partners
- Data request – Responded to a request through the Freedom of Information and Protection (FOIP) Act for the water quality data collected in the Whelp Creek Watershed

### **Collaboration with partners**

- Formed a Project Steering Committee to enhance stakeholder input and support
- Provided project updates to municipal representatives and Agricultural Fieldmen

### **Conferences and events**

- Canadian Water Resources Association Conference – poster presentation to 150 attendees
- Battle River Watershed Alliance Meeting – presentation to about 20 attendees
- Alberta Soils Tour 2008 – over 40 participants toured the Whelp Creek Watershed
- North American Lakes Management Society – presentation to about 50 attendees
- Alberta Environment Limnology Congress – presentation to about 30 attendees
- Source Water Protection Conference – presentation to about 40 attendees

## **7.3 Watershed Groups**

The communication team held information meetings with local farmers and residents to initiate the formation of watershed stewardship groups in the Indianfarm Creek and Whelp Creek watersheds. The watershed groups formed to assist in identifying and addressing local issues. The Indianfarm Creek Watershed Group identified stream bank erosion as an issue they want to address in the watershed. Local experts presented information to inform interested watershed residents about bioengineering techniques as a BMP option to address stream bank erosion issues. Groundwater and surface water interaction and water well protection is an area of interest for the Whelp Creek Sub-watershed Group. Groundwater and water quality specialists were invited to present information to interested residents on regional groundwater conditions.

## **7.4 Evaluation and Feedback**

The feedback and responses from local producers, residents and the project partners has been positive overall this year. Based on individual contacts and comments from participants at meetings, local awareness of watershed issues has increased and several people have indicated interest in adopting BMPs to enhance sustainable agriculture production. Generally, the participating producers and partners seem satisfied with the communication activities undertaken by the communication team this year.

In 2008, the Whelp Creek Sub-watershed continued to receive media attention over local concerns regarding nearby Lacombe Lake water quality issues. The communication team developed a newsletter and hosted an information meeting in collaboration with Lacombe County

in the summer of 2008 to address local water quality concerns. At the meeting, participating producers were also informed regarding a request, under the Freedom of Information and Protection (FOIP) Act, to release the water quality data collected in the Whelp Creek Sub-watershed. The meeting helped to ease some concerns and participants seemed to appreciate the opportunity to discuss some of the misunderstanding that resulted from the newspaper articles.

### **7.5 Future Communication Activities**

The following is a list of the potential communication activities planned for 2009:

- Continue to host information meetings and work with the watershed groups to identify and address local issues and to promote effective stewardship of the watersheds
- Host a bioengineering workshop for producers in the Indianfarm Creek Watershed
- Host a water well workshop for producers and residents in the Whelp Creek Sub-watershed
- Collaborate with Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils and other interested stakeholders and potential partners
- Communicate with producers, commodity groups and other stakeholders to help meet project objectives and to obtain feedback on the progress and outcomes of the project
- Support producers in developing Environmental Farm Plan for their operations
- Host Project Steering Committee meetings to review and communicate the project results
- Respond to information requests from the media and other interested groups
- Provide oral and poster presentations at conferences and workshops

