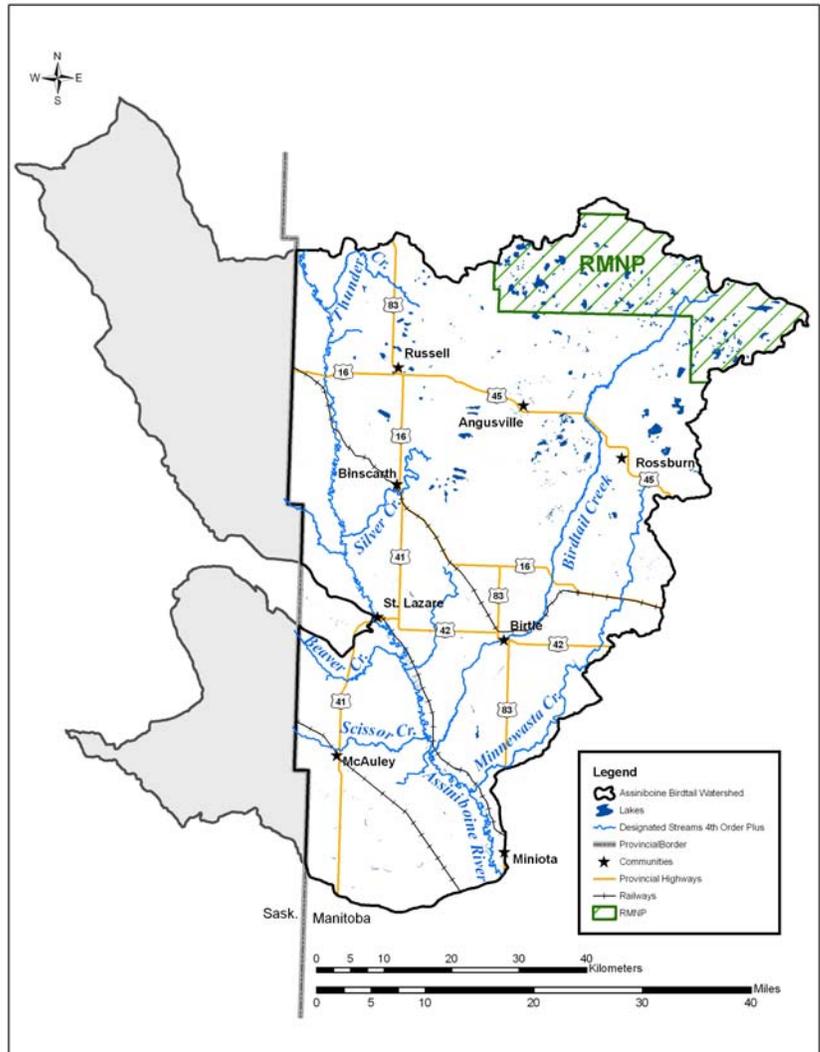


## Assiniboine Birdtail Watershed (05ME) – Public Concerns

In January 2006 the Lake of the Prairies (LPCD) & Upper Assiniboine River Conservation District (UARCD) were jointly designated as the Watershed Planning Authority (WPA) for watershed 05ME (Figure 1) by the Province of Manitoba. This watershed plan was initiated as part of a larger planning initiative for the Assiniboine River which also included the Shell River-05MD, Arrow-Oak-05MG, and Little Saskatchewan River-05MF. Following the collection of data and the compilation of a State of the Watershed (SOW) Report, a Project Management Team (PMT) was created specifically for each of the four watersheds in order to provide more local input and guidance on planning for each of the individual watersheds.



The next step in the development of the IWMP was to hold public forums to explore the water concerns of local residents and other stakeholders within the watershed. The issues identified at these public forums will provide direction to the Assiniboine-Birdtail PMT on the direction and focus of the Integrated Watershed Management Plan. Seven meetings were held across the watershed with the goal of engaging residents and soliciting a range of public issues. The meetings were held in November 2008 at: Birtle, St. Lazare, Rosburn, Angusville, McAuley, Binscarth, and Russell.

At each of the public meetings the attendees were asked to provide their top three concerns related to water within the Birdtail-Assiniboine watershed. Attendees were also asked to contribute ideas on how their issues could be resolved and, if the issue was successfully resolved what that success would look like in 25 years. Participants at each of these public open houses were also asked to form groups, discuss the issues in the



watershed and form a collective list of issues and solutions for the watershed. This was done to allow for discussions on issues and to obtain more general concerns within the watershed as opposed to very site specific issues garnered through individual responses. All of the individual and group responses were collected and compiled in a digital format, word for word, by members of the PMT. The complete list of public and group concerns is available on the Assiniboine IWMP website at [www.uarcd.ca/IWMP](http://www.uarcd.ca/IWMP).

In order to analyze the individual and group responses, the public responses were categorized into a primary issue category (e.g. surface water quality), a sub-category if enough information was provided (e.g. Nutrients), and a target location if provided (e.g. Silver Creek). This methodology required some subjectivity in the categorization process but concerted efforts were made to capture the essence of the issues. In the event that several concerns were addressed in one issue statement, the first issue mentioned was taken as the category, or the issue for which solutions were provided was taken as the dominant concern.

The following is a summary of what 30 watershed residents told us.

### ***Main Categorization of Issues***

Top priority issues – Individual responses (n=30):

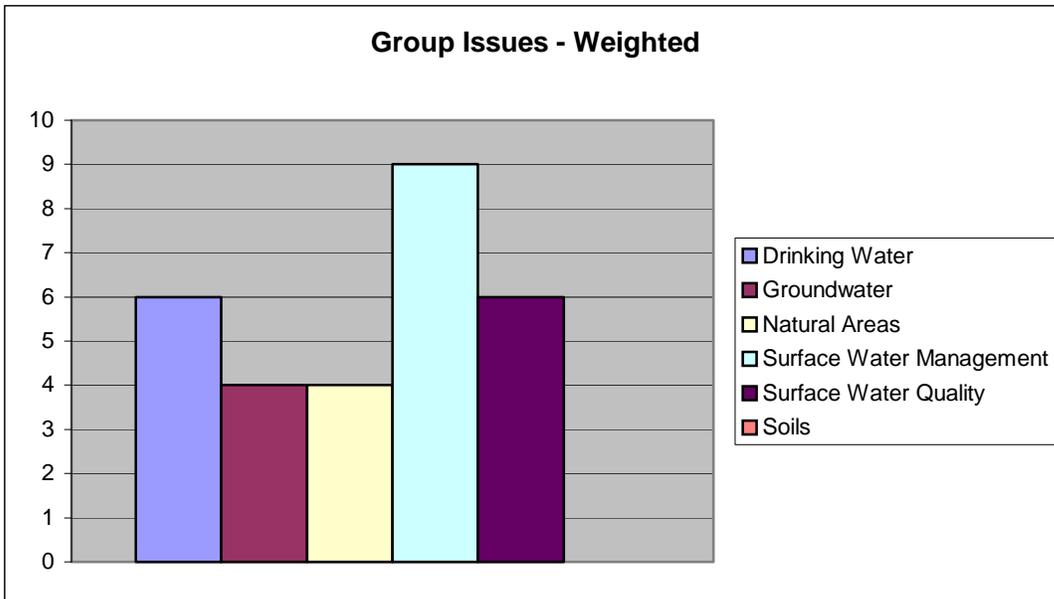
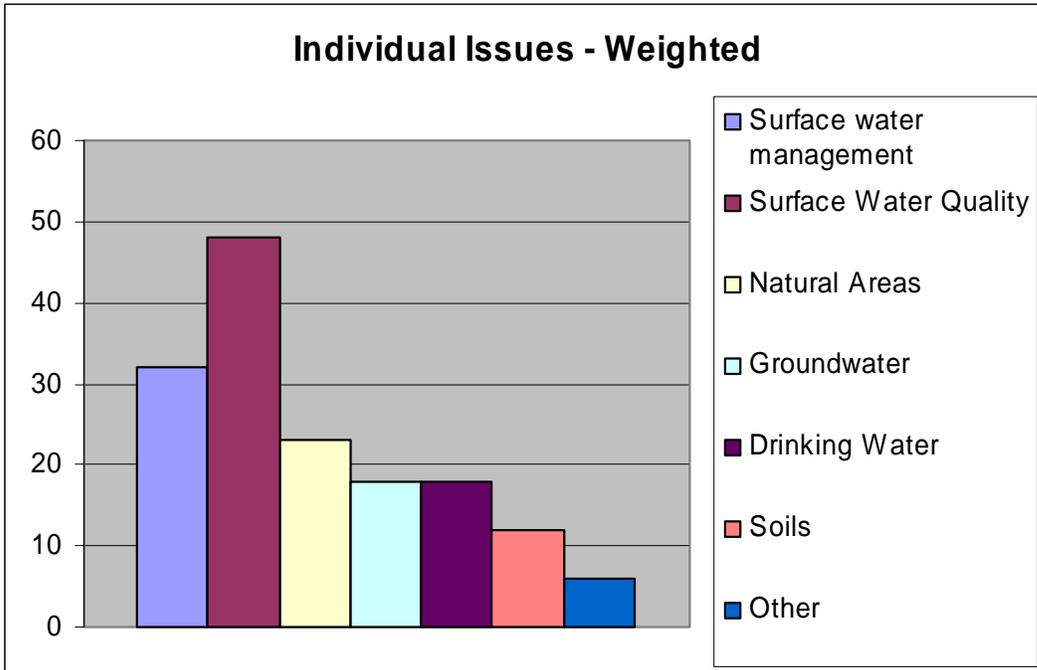
- 7 people, representing 23% of respondents, cited surface water management (i.e. drainage) as their number one concern
- 11 people, representing 37% of respondents, cited surface water quality as their number one concern
- 4 people, representing 13% of respondents, cited ground water as their number one concern
- 4 people, representing 13% of respondents, cited natural areas (i.e. wetlands, riparian zones and wildlife) as their number one concern
- 2 people, representing about 7% of respondents, cited drinking water as their number one concern
- 2 people, representing about 7% of respondents, cited soils as their number one concern

Top priority issues – Group responses (n=5):

- 3 groups, representing 44% of responses, cited surface water management as their number one concern
- 1 groups, representing 20% of responses, cited natural areas as their number one concern
- 1 groups, representing 20% of responses, cited surface water quality as their number one concern

In order to better incorporate all of the public input and priorities, a weighting system was used which provides more relative importance (weight) to first and second priority issues (i.e. 1<sup>st</sup> priority = 3 points, 2<sup>nd</sup> priority = 2 points, 3<sup>rd</sup> priority = 1 points). Figure 1 shows

the results from the individual input based on this weighting system and Figure 2 shows the results from the group input based on the same weighting system.





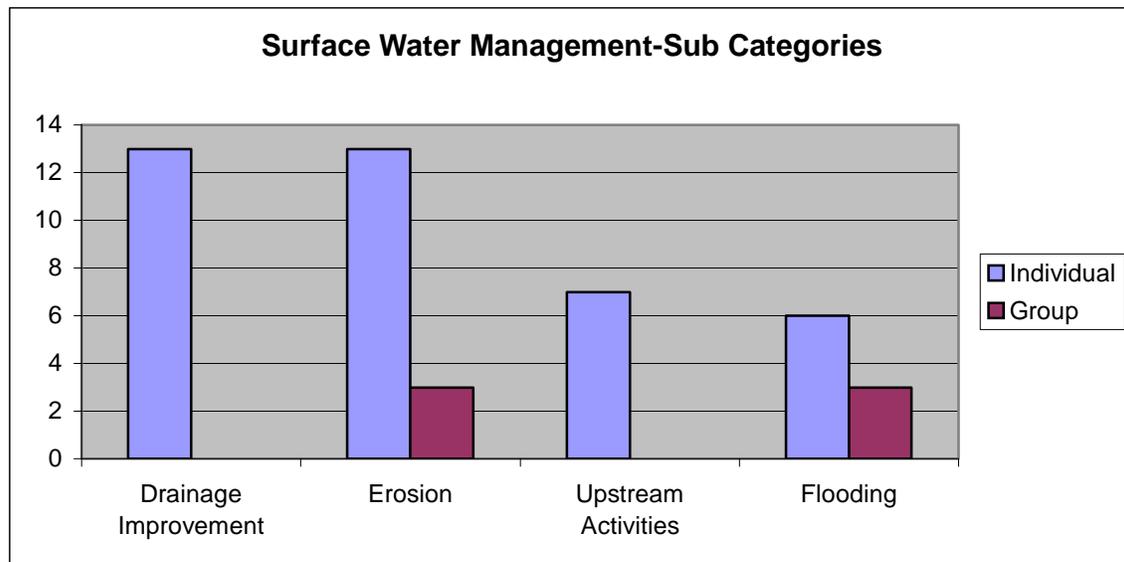
The results from the individual and group results are similar, clearly placing Surface Water Management as the most important issue to local residents. The top 5 local priorities were surface water quality, surface water management, threats to natural areas and ground water, and drinking water; these 5 issues received 89% of the weighted support from individuals and 100% of the weighted support from groups.

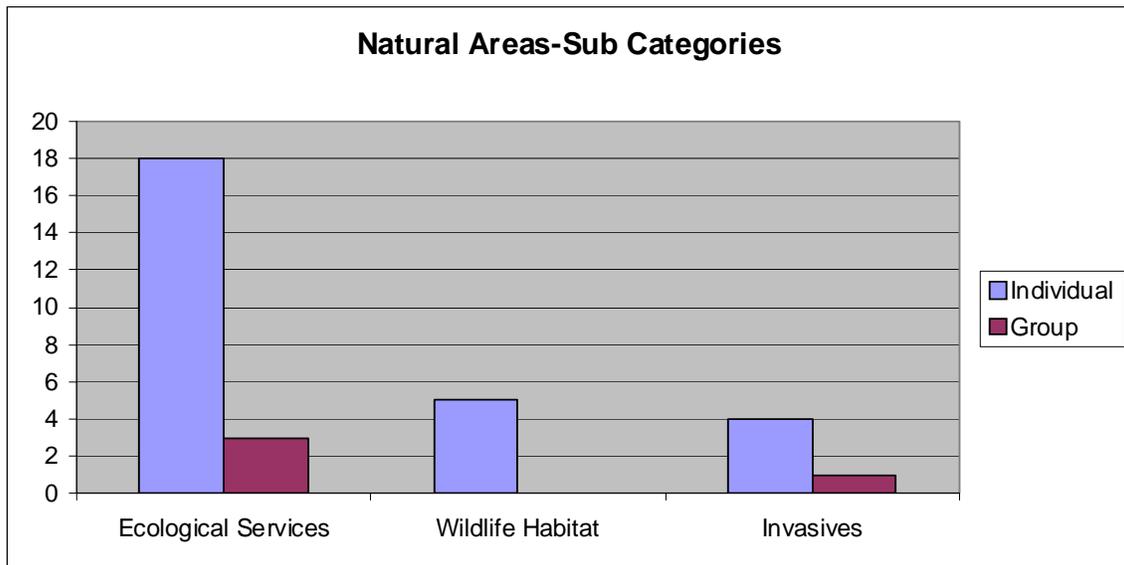
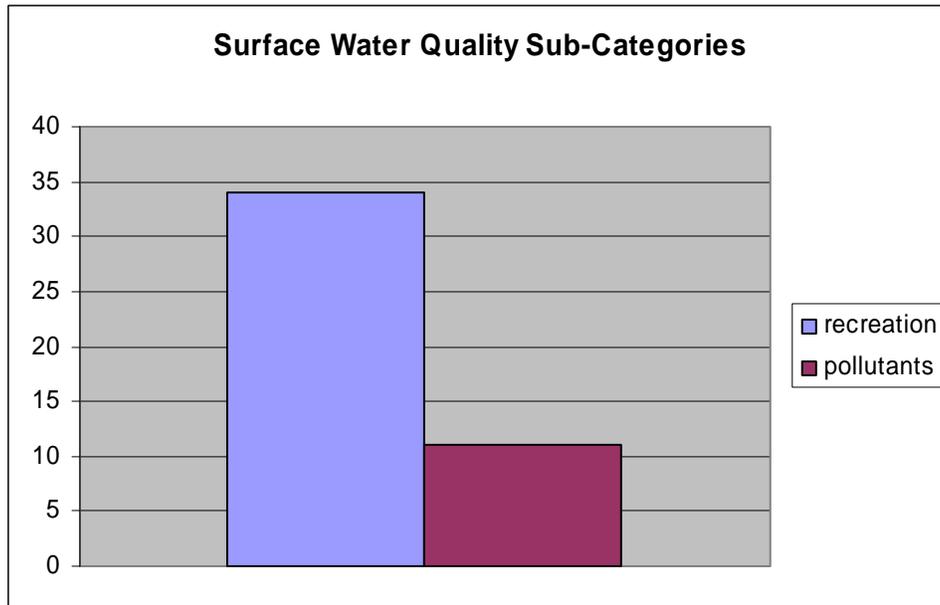
**Public Priorities:**

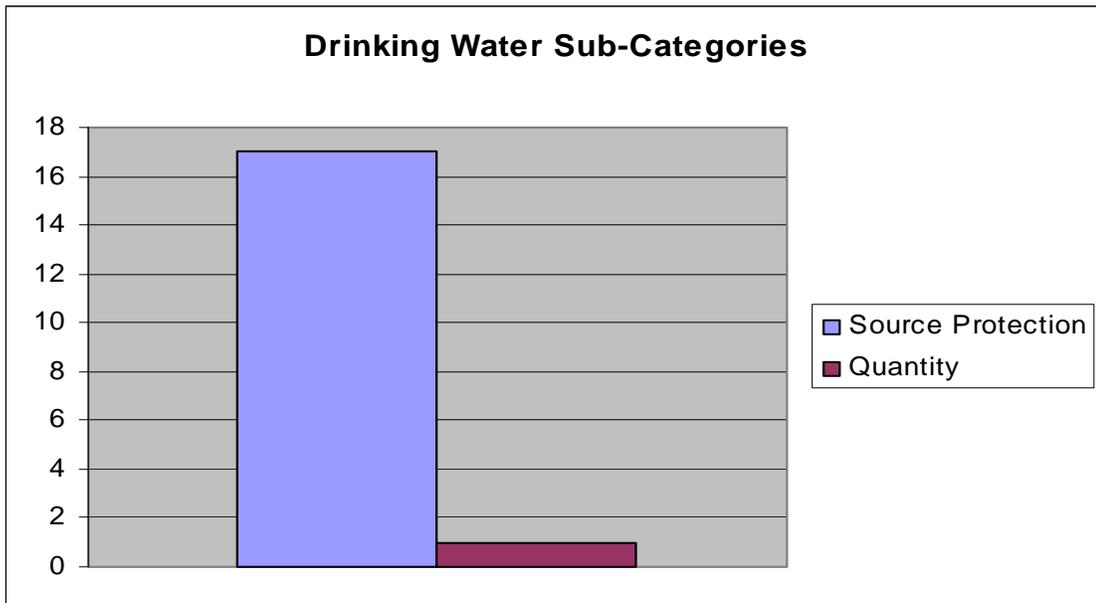
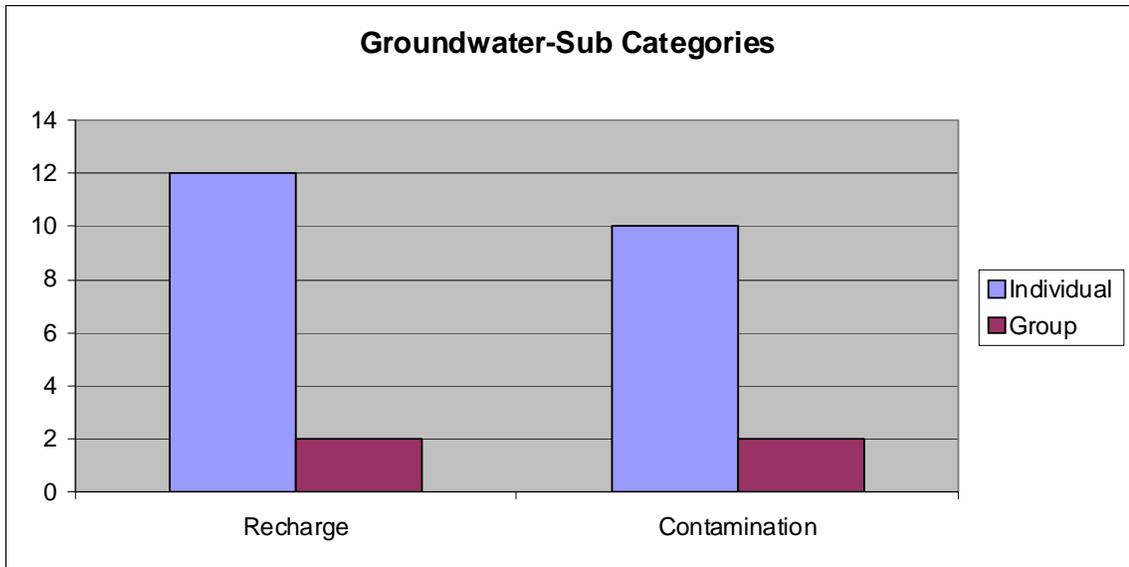
- 1. Surface water quality**
- 2. Surface water management**
- 3. Natural Areas**
- 4. Ground water**
- 5. Drinking water**

***Sub-Categorization of Issues***

In order to provide more specific direction for the integrated watershed management plan the four highest priority areas of concern were further broken down into sub-categories. These sub-categories are outlined here in order to allow for a better understanding of the nature of the concerns and will, therefore, assist in the design of better and more relevant solutions. A glossary, explaining each of the sub-categories can be found at the end of this document.









## ***Target Locations***

### **Surface Water Management**

Specific target areas identified through our public engagement exercise were the Birdtail river, Assiniboine river and the Shell mouth dam itself was noted as a potential source of mis-managed surface water. More generally, un-managed upstream surface water is often blamed for erosion and loss of productivity due to flooding

### **Surface Water Quality**

Surface water quality was mentioned by the public for a host of reasons, many relating to the degradation of recreational waters within the watershed, namely Silver beach Lake, Lake of the Prairie and the Assiniboine River itself.

### **Natural Areas**

Specific locations were not the focus of this topic with the exception of public road allowances. The majority of the reference to natural areas was in the context of natural area type, such as wetlands and riparian areas.

### **Groundwater Quality**

The local concerns surrounding ground water are connected to surface water management. Many times wetland loss was cited as a reduction in aquifer recharge. Other originate with the lack of current data available from the province and knowledge

## ***Summary***

This document was prepared for the benefit of the PMT, all watershed stakeholders, and the public at large in order to provide an overview of the concerns voiced by residents of the Birdtail-Assiniboine watershed. The 4 top issues of concern in the Birdtail-Assiniboine watershed, as identified by the public, are: Surface water management , surface water quality, threats to natural areas as well as the vulnerability of ground water. The breakdown and analysis of the public input will be used by the PMT, in conjunction with the technical and scientific input, in the preparation of the Assiniboine-Birdtail IWMP.

## ***Glossary***

### **Main Categories**

Main categories were established based on the statements provided to the PMT by the public. The PMT used the following definitions when categorizing comments into main categories.



Surface water quality – The health of any water body on the surface of the land including water runoff, creeks, rivers, wetlands and lakes.

Surface water quantity – The volume of water in areas of pooled surface water.

Surface water management – The control of surface water, primarily runoff, through the drainage network.

Groundwater quality – The health of water found under the Earth's surface. Mainly refers to drinking water sourced from aquifers.

Ground water quantity – The volume of water that is typically accessible from aquifers.

Natural areas – A generic term referring to wetlands, riparian areas, woodlands, wildlife habitat and parks. This term does not necessarily refer to water but may refer to areas that are typically seen as beneficial to water quality.

Education and Partnerships – This category refers to a lack of public knowledge and/or a need for relationships amongst stakeholder groups.

Soil – The impact of soil on waterways and lakes which primarily refers to soil and shoreline erosion.

### **Sub-Categories**

Sub-categories were established based on the statements provided to the PMT by the public. The PMT used the following definitions when categorizing comments into sub-categories.

Chemicals – Primarily refers to agricultural chemicals including herbicides, pesticides and insecticides

Drain Maintenance – The general up-keep and cleaning of drains to allow swift flow of water

Effluent – The waste derived from domesticated animals

Flooding – Excess water found on the land for extended periods of time

Infrastructure – Large public work operations such as the installation of a sewage treatment plant

Nutrients – Primarily refers to the agricultural use of fertilizers such as nitrogen and phosphorous

Recreation – Human activities done for pleasure such as boating, swimming, fishing and the use of ATVs

Sewage – The waste derived from humans

Urban Development – The expansion of communities due to urban growth and/or sprawl

Water Retention – An area of land designated to be a water holding area, this can include but is not limited to wetlands