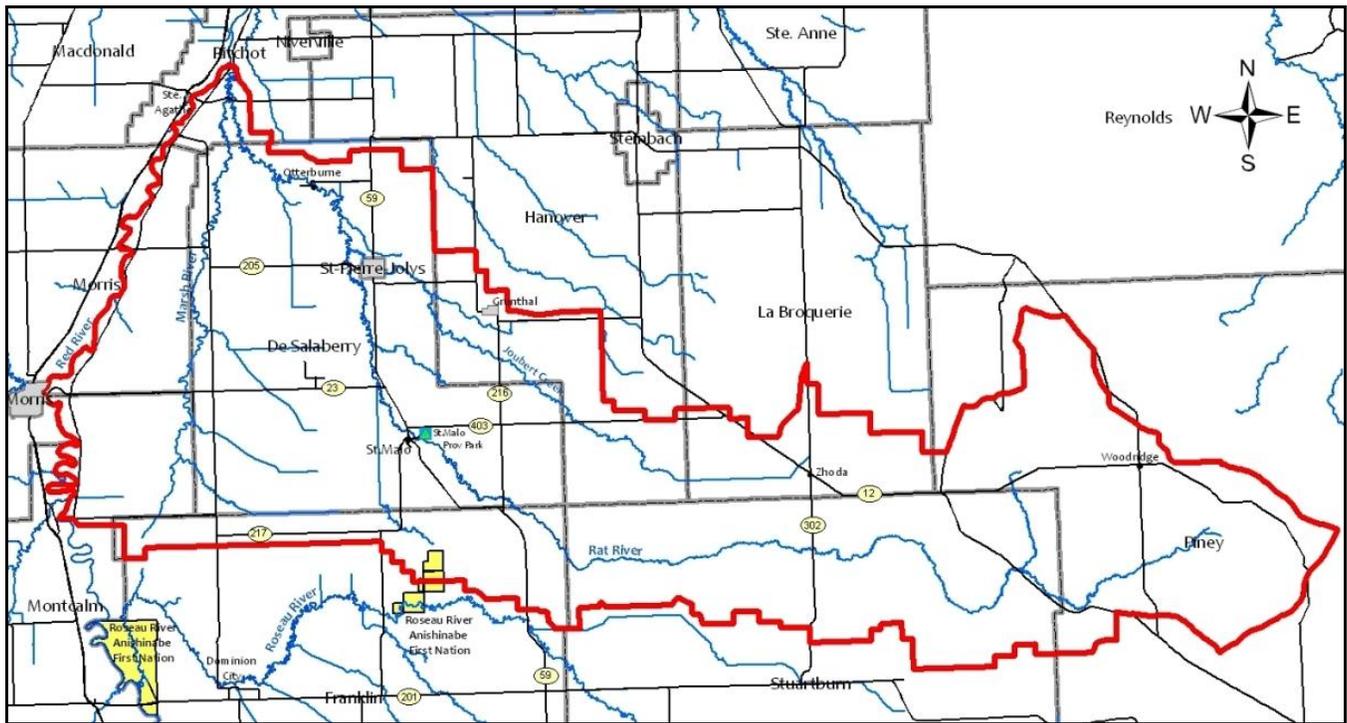


Summary of Public Input to the Rat-Marsh River Integrated Watershed Management Plan

January 2011

INTRODUCTION:

In March 2009, the Seine-Rat River Conservation District signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Manitoba Water Stewardship to become the Water Planning Authority for the Rat-Marsh River watershed. This designation granted them with the authority and responsibility for developing an integrated watershed management plan (IWMP) for the Rat-Marsh River watershed.



RAT-MARSH RIVER WATERSHED

The Board of the Seine-Rat River Conservation District (SRRCD) formed a Project Management Team (PMT) to guide the development of the plan. The membership of the PMT is:

- Gerry Maynard - RM of De Salaberry
- Jim Swidersky - RM of Stuartburn
- Cornie Goertzen - SRRCD Board
- Kristy-Layne Carr – SRRCD
- Jeff Renton - SRRCD
- Patrick Watson - Manitoba Water Stewardship

PUBLIC INPUT:

One of the first tasks for the PMT was to obtain public input on watershed values, issues and concerns. The PMT held five public meetings throughout the watershed. The meeting dates, locations and number of participants were as follows:

Date	Location	Participants
October 7	Zhoda Community Hall	30
October 14	St. Malo-Chalet Malouin	14
October 21	Otterburne Curling Club	15
November 4	St. Malo Hockey Rink	10
November 18	Woodridge Community Hall	12
	Total	81 ⁱ

At each of the meetings, participants were asked to complete a worksheet to describe: what they value in their watershed, what the threats to those values are, and actions or solutions to minimize or eliminate the threats. Participants were also asked to label or highlight areas of concern, interest or importance on the watershed maps. In addition to the input collected at the public meetings, the PMT also obtained public input from discussions held with cottagers around St. Malo Lake and comments submitted via the comments card posted on the SRRCD website.

RESULTS:

The following table is a summary of the information obtained from the 59 participant worksheets completed at the five public meetings, the group results from the Woodridge meeting, and related additional input and comments received. (Note: this is not a prioritized list)

WATERSHED VALUES CATEGORY	THREATS / ISSUES	SOLUTIONS
Groundwater as our source of drinking water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Unsealed abandoned wells ○ Gasoline storage areas and accidental spills ○ Illegal dumping ○ Irresponsible land use ○ Intensive livestock operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Responsible land stewardship ○ Better enforcement of existing regulations ○ Public education ○ Source water protection plans ○ Water quality monitoring ○ Emergency response plans
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Non-potable saline water east of St. Malo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Water conservation ○ Water quality monitoring
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Land use at critical recharge areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identify recharge areas and ensure that they are protected
Rural lifestyle and outdoor recreational opportunities like hunting, fishing, off-road vehicles, and camping	Activities that degrade water quality such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Agricultural and wastewater inputs to waterways ○ Septic fields ○ Nutrient inputs causing issues with excessive plant growth, unpleasant algae, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ More inspections and greater enforcement of wastewater management ○ Restrict location of septic field away from waterways ○ Responsible land stewardship – what you put on, or do to, the land, affects the water

ⁱ The 81 people that participated at the public meetings represents less than one percent of the population of the watershed which is approximately 10,000.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Reduced access to the river and St. Malo Lake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Remove blockages from access to public places o Municipality should purchase or lease land as opportunities come up
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Logging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Smaller sized logging cut blocks, tree planting, selective logging
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Garbage left on ice from ice fishing at St. Malo Lake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Responsible behaviour o Appreciation and respect for area
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Beavers cutting down trees o Beavers digging into river banks and causing riverbank erosion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Protect trees or remove beavers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Invasive species, new weeds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Public education
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Dam at St. Malo Lake restricts fish passage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Fish ladder at St. Malo Lake
Farming and making a living off the land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Flooding – wet conditions o Poor drainage, culverts too small o Poor maintenance of existing drains o Marsh River is clogged with sediment plugs, bullrushes, beaver dams and low level crossings o Losing soil from overland flooding (Red River Valley) o Numerous breaks in the riverbanks of the Rat River which allows overland flooding o Ducks Unlimited wetlands project at Rosa o Degraded water quality o Flood protection efforts on west side of Red River could negatively affect east side 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Restore river banks to keep the water within its banks o Upstream water retention projects o Planned approach to improve surface water management o Maintenance and/or reconstruction of St. Malo Canal, Ste. Elizabeth Drain, and Angle Drain o Make sure the river flows. Clean dams, remove man-made obstructions and replace low level crossing with culverts o Do a big job of river cleaning during the dry cycles o Hire work crews to do maintenance work on rivers o Start drainage work at bottom of watershed and work upstream o Municipal cooperation – working together
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Beavers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Control beavers to prevent drainage restrictions o Beaver bounty program – increase compensation for trappers, destroy dams, year round hunting season – no licences required o Beaver-stops on culverts
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Land removed from agricultural production by Nature Conservancy and Tall Grass Prairie o Inflated land purchase prices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Place limits on how much land can be secured for conservation o Develop working relationship with conservation organizations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Drainage of marginal land 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Don't allow all drainage projects

Our creeks and rivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Activities that degrade water quality areas such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Improper wastewater management ○ Hog operations – manure ○ Land clearing for manure spreading ○ Livestock open access to creeks ○ Farm fertilizers and chemicals ○ Drainage ○ Overland flooding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ More stringent inspections and enforcement of regulations ○ Hand out more meaningful fines for offenders ○ Manure spreading needs to be better observed and controlled ○ Fertilizer should be banned near creeks ○ Don't allow septic fields to be in close proximity to waters edge ○ Responsible land stewardship
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Riparian management: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Riverbank erosion ○ Clearing bush and/or cultivating right up to the waters edge ○ Livestock open access through riparian areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Slow the river down - upstream water retention ○ Municipal cooperation and communications on issues ○ Encourage the establishment of managed buffer areas along waterways ○ Offer incentive programs for off-site watering systems
Economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Degraded water quality - pollution ○ Flooding (residential, farmland, golf course) ○ Illegal drainage and diversions ○ Degraded riparian areas and riverbank erosion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Efforts to improve water quality ○ Upstream water retention ○ Planned approach to improve surface water management ○ Drainage enforcement ○ Encourage the establishment of managed buffer areas along waterways
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Land availability (crown) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Release more crown land to RM of Piney ○ Provincial levy to RM of Piney – for crown land
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Time and expense of adhering to new water regulations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Change legislation and regulations to reflect problem areas
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lack of incentives for land development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○
Fresh air	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hog barns ○ Herbicide spraying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Enforcement ○ Responsible land stewardship ○ Public education
Natural areas / landscape / biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Habitat loss ○ Human activity ○ Invasive species ○ Degraded water quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Land conservation and protection ○ Public education ○ Efforts to improve water quality

All of the input submitted in the participant worksheets was copied verbatim into a document entitled "Public Input to the Rat-Marsh River Integrated Watershed Management Plan". The document is available on the SRRCD website (www.srrcd.ca). Copies of the additional public input submissions are available at the SRRCD office.

Comments related to observed changes in the Rat-Marsh River watershed:

- Years ago the Rat River was lower and cleaner than today. Weed growth is evident throughout the river in Rosa.
- Flooding in the past five years has caused unreal erosion on good farming land. We have close to 20 acres where topsoil has vanished and hardpan exists. I am one of many who have this problem.
- Prior to the Ducks Unlimited wetlands cell being built, farmers used to get hay cutting permits and cut hay along the Rat River southeast of Rosa (now there is over five feet of water there).
- Due to all the flooding of farmlands, many farmers are giving up and Nature Conservancy is buying more and more farmland in the RM of Stuartburn.
- Water comes at a higher rate and faster now than it used to. We are seeing flooding in areas twice a year, where there was no record of flooding.
- Fishing used to be really good before St. Malo dam.
- I want my land to remain my land and not become part of the Rat (oh yah, too late!).
- People used to be able to walk along the Rat and St. Malo Lake and today more and more landowners are blocking the shore with fences and verbal abuse.
- If we don't soon get some water relief there will be no farmers left in our area! We old guys learned how to live with water, but no young people will farm in mud like I did.
- There is no more destroying of beaver dams that the Forestry used to do.
- I'm paying taxes on useless land.
- I have been flooded every year for the last 10 years or so.
- Years of neglect has resulted in much loss of farmland. Let's stop this; we don't want to lose more.
- We need to stop wasting our natural resources and protect them for our future generations.

NEXT STEPS:

Throughout the public input process, the Project Management Team recorded an extensive list of questions that need to be answered. This list of questions will be divided up and included in the letters of request to certain stakeholder organizations or technical representatives on the Watershed Team. The Watershed Team is a select group comprised of representatives from organizations with background knowledge and/or specialization in groundwater, surface water, water quality, agriculture, land-use planning, and local conditions. The Watershed Team meetings will occur in March 2011. The focus of the Watershed Team meetings will be to further discuss the watershed issues and proposed solutions, interpret the watershed characterization technical reports, discuss watershed zones, and get answers to each of the questions.

Note: *If you have questions related to this summary document or would like to know how you or the organization(s) you are part of can participate in the further development of the plan, please feel free to contact Patrick Watson at 945-4648 or Patrick.Watson@gov.mb.ca*