



# State of the Environment

*2017 Supplemental Report*

LACOMBE  
COUNTY

[www.lacombecounty.com](http://www.lacombecounty.com)





# THE STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT 2017 SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT

Lacombe County would like to acknowledge the contributions of the following people in preparing this report on the state of the environment:

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- Dion Burlock, Agricultural Fieldman
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- Cajun Paradis, Planner/Development Officer
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- Nicole Plewis, Communications Coordinator
- Alberta Lake Management Society (ALMS)
- Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute (ABMI)
- Sylvan Lake Management Society (SLMS)
- Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP)

To obtain additional copies of the report:

On the web:

- The 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016 State of the Environment in Lacombe County Supplemental Reports are available on our website:  
[www.lacombecounty.com](http://www.lacombecounty.com)

Paper copies:

- Please contact Lacombe County directly at 403-782-6601

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Lacombe Lake

# INTRODUCTION

The State of the Environment (SOE) report is an important tool for Lacombe County as it provides a snapshot of the current conditions of the environment and the stresses that impact it. This report examines the state of the environment in Lacombe County through a scientific and socio-economic planning structure. The first SOE report was released in the winter of 2013 with the promise of annual updates tracking changes over the next five years. At the end of the five years, a fully updated SOE will be written. The purpose of this 2017 Supplemental Report is to provide updated information that is now available since the release of the initial SOE report during the winter of 2013 and the supplemental reports that followed in 2014, 2015, and 2016.

Lacombe County is making progress in environmental management, while also balancing social and economic needs. The first few years of the SOE were focused on setting up the framework for the system, whereas this supplementary report is intended to exemplify the hard work that is being undertaken by Lacombe County staff and Councillors. It is therefore anticipated that this will inspire residents to take a proactive approach to reducing their footprint on the environment.

It is hoped that this document will help support Lacombe County's Environmental Management Plan which provides a broad strategic direction of where the County would like to be in the next 5, 10, 20 years.

To help exemplify changes over the last year the following data is being presented:

- Department Updates
- Lacombe County Program and Policy Highlights
- Partnership Accomplishments; and
- Environmental Conditions



JJ Collett Natural Area

# DEPARTMENT UPDATES

## Highlights in the Agricultural Sector

### Agricultural Guide

In recent years, Lacombe County has experienced a considerable amount of change and growth. Lacombe County Council is committed to ensuring agriculture continues to be an integral part of and contributor to the fabric of Lacombe County's economic, social and environmental existence. In 2016, Lacombe County released the Agricultural Guide, which identifies and supports a long-term vision for agriculture in the County. Six priority areas were identified through comprehensive stakeholder engagement processes:

- Development and Land Use
- Water and Environmental Management
- Infrastructure
- Weeds, Pests and Disease Management
- Municipal Relations
- Communications

The goal of the water and environmental management priority area is to ensure the rural landscape and character of Lacombe County is protected, and environmentally sensitive and scenic natural areas are preserved.

### Weed Control

The Alberta Weed Control Act has continued to be administered in Lacombe County. The Act is intended to protect agricultural lands from prohibited noxious weeds causing economic impacts to the area's producers. It also protects natural ecological areas from invasive species. Six noxious weeds continue to be the concentration of Lacombe County's efforts including: Yellow Toadflax, Scentless Chamomile, Leafy Spurge, Common Tansy, Tall Buttercup and Canadian Thistle.

Greater Celandine, an introduced species from Europe and Western Asia, was discovered near Gull Lake in

2016. Greater Celandine currently has no official status under the Alberta Weed Control Act. All parts of the plant are toxic to humans and broken stems exude an orange-yellow sap.

Table 1  
Prohibited Noxious Weeds

Prohibited Noxious Weeds	Total Weed Cases in 2016
Yellow Toadflax	117
Scentless Chamomile	85
Leafy Spurge	71
Common Tansy	45
Tall Buttercup	31

Clubroot is a serious soil-borne disease of canola and other crops. It is caused by a microscopic, soil-borne plant pathogen called *Plasmodiophora brassicae*. Most varieties of canola, mustard and cole crop vegetables currently being grown in Alberta are highly susceptible to Clubroot. This disease is capable of significantly reducing yield and quality, and may destroy a crop if infestation levels are high. In Alberta, Clubroot is being spread mainly through soil infested with resting spores. Infested soil can be carried from field to field by farm machinery, wind and water erosion. In spring 2007, Clubroot was added as a declared pest to Alberta's Agricultural Pest Act. This Act is the legislative authority for the enforcement of control measures for declared pests in Alberta. By the end of 2016, Clubroot was present in 32 municipalities in Alberta, mainly in central Alberta. To help understand what you can do to protect against Clubroot please visit the Agriculture section of the Lacombe County website.

Table 2  
Clubroot Inspections

Clubroot Inspections	Total Clubroot Inspections in 2016
Total Clubroot Inspections	78
Confirmed Clubroot Locations	10



# Highlights in the Environmental & Protective Services Sector

## Communal Sewage System at Sylvan Lake

Lacombe County has completed the Communal Servicing Project at Sylvan Lake, which connected the communities of Blissful Beach, Kuusamo Krest, Yuill, and Palm Bay. A total of 69 lots are now serviceable and homeowners have until October 30, 2020 to connect to this system. Currently, eight lots have connected to the system.

A set of holding tanks and low-pressure piping makes up each system and allows homeowners to connect their current sewage systems simply by the addition of a low-pressure grinder pump and tank where needed. The operation of this system is governed by a County Bylaw and the project was funded by a Federal Building Canada Fund Grant, Lacombe County and the residents affected by this project.



Sylvan Lake lighthouse



Sylvan Lake

# Highlights in the Operations Sector

## Wetland Review for Road Construction

In 2016, Lacombe County hired a consulting company to complete wetland evaluations on road construction projects to determine how wetlands could be affected and how we could avoid, mitigate or compensate for wetland impact due to road construction. Biophysical and wetland assessments were conducted on 24 wetlands and six stream crossings on five road segments slated for construction in 2017. The environmental assessments outlined environmental sensitivities on each road alignment, and recommended mitigation measures to reduce potential impacts.



Road construction

## Crooker Pit Reclamation and Wetland Compensation Project

In 2016, reclamation continued at Crooker Pit to transform the once gravel pit into a natural habitat and wetland. The site was seeded with a mixture of native upland and lowland prairie grass species. Trembling aspen and white spruce were also planted along the south and east boundary of the wetland.



Crooker Wetland

## Remote Shops

Remote shops for the east side and west side of Lacombe County were completed in 2016. General growth in the west side of Lacombe County near the Sylvan Lake area have created additional demands on the Operations department. The east remote shop, around the area of Tees, has not seen the same development pressure as the western portion of Lacombe County but does have numerous paved roads in the area along with an extensive gravel road system. The remote shops will reduce travel time for snowplows and other equipment substantially, and will allow for better servicing and maintenance of equipment without hauling equipment back to Lacombe. This has substantially reduce the amount of greenhouse gases produced by County equipment. The shops also have solar power to supplement power requirements.



Remote Shop



# Highlights in the Operations Sector

## Anderson Park

Located on the east side of Gull Lake, Anderson Park is a unique recreation area that includes a playground, a junior paleontology dig site, musical play instruments, a basketball court, beach volleyball, walking trails, a disc golf course, a gazebo and pollinator gardens. The property is 26 acres and was donated by Jack Anderson to the County for the space to be used for recreational and natural amenities.



Paleontology Pit at Anderson Park

## Sandy Point Beach

Located on the west side of Gull Lake, Sandy Point offers nearly 6.5 acres of lakeside recreational area. The development concept for Sandy Point RV Resort required the developer and municipality to work closely together to provide public amenities that will be left for the County to maintain. The beach, parking lot and playground equipment were funded and constructed by the developers, but Lacombe County will continue the maintenance on them as well.



Sandy Point Beach

## Mary & Cliff Soper Natural Area

The land for the Mary & Cliff Soper Natural Area was donated by the Soper's in early 2017. Cliff, a Lacombe County Councillor from 2001-2013, was passionate about the environment and about creating natural spaces for residents and visitors to enjoy. The gifted land is approximately 25 acres, and is located east of Blackfalds. It will remain in its natural state and it will be open to the public for passive recreational purposes. Lacombe County has constructed a parking area for the Mary & Cliff Soper Natural Area leading to trails for everyone to enjoy.



Soper Natural Area



## Highlights in the Planning Sector

### Subdivision and Development Activity

- Considered 200 Development Permit applications, and 32 subdivision applications in 2016.
- Created approximately 27 residential lots, 77 recreational lots, and 15 agricultural parcels in the County.
- Endorsed the subdivision of Phase 1 of Wilson's Beach Estates, which includes 27 residential lake area lots on the east side of Gull Lake. The development was rezoned in 2010, therefore is not reflected in the land use changes below.
- Endorsed the subdivision of Phase 2 of Sandy Point RV Resort, which included 77 recreational vehicle resort lots. Phase 2 of the development was rezoned in 2014, therefore is not reflected in the land use changes below.
- Development activity within the County's commercial and industrial parks continues to diversify the County's economic profile and provide a strong tax base.



Rural subdivision

Table 3  
Land Use Changes from Agriculture  
in Lacombe County, 2015 - 2016

Description	Total Acres in 2015	Total Acres in 2016
Residential	399.11	78.30
Industrial	-	-
Commercial	14.90	-
Recreational	167.28	-
Sand and Gravel Pits	188.85	56.30

# 15 agricultural parcels created

## Reserves

Lacombe County promotes the development of a healthy environment and healthy workplace through the dedication of municipal and environmental reserves in multi-lot developments. The Municipal Reserve space allows for the development of trail systems, park areas and other public amenities.

Table 4 and 5 provides more detail on the total acres of reserves in 2014, 2015, and 2016.

Table 4  
Environmental Reserves in Lacombe County

Year	Number of Properties	Total Acres
2014	29	158.87
2015	29	158.87
2016	29	158.87

Table 5  
Municipal Reserves in Lacombe County

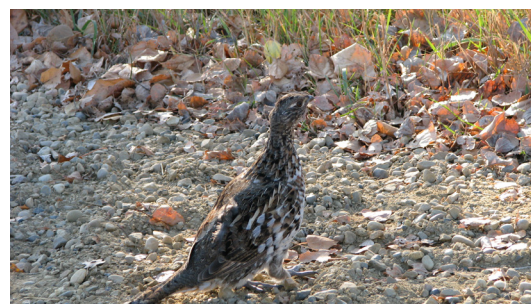
Year	Number of Properties	Total Acres
2014	59	191.91
2015	61	202.43
2016	61	202.43



County Environmental Reserve, Gull Lake



Tree Swallow



Grouse

## Long Range Planning

Long range planning is in full swing. Plans such as Intermunicipal Development Plans (IDPs) and Area Structure Plans (ASPs) guide future growth and development within Lacombe County. Table 6 provides more detail on Lacombe County's Long Range Planning Program for 2016-2018. Highlights from 2016 include:

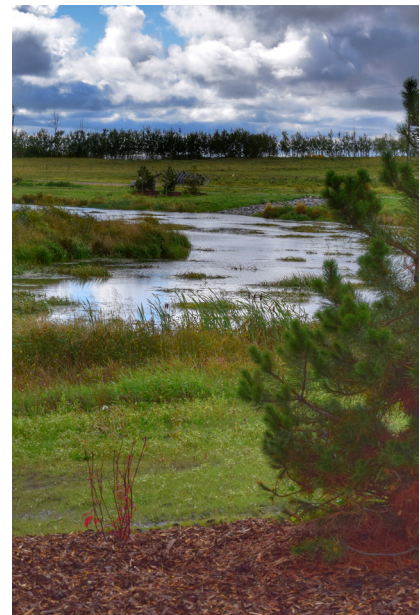
- The City of Lacombe/Lacombe County Intermunicipal Development Plan continues to be in the process of being updated. The IDP outlines the future use of lands adjacent to the City of Lacombe. A draft of the Lacombe Intermunicipal Development Plan (IDP) was completed in 2016 and adopted in 2017.
- In 2017, Lacombe County Council adopted the revised Municipal Development Plan (MDP) and Land Use Bylaw (LUB).

The MDP is a long-term planning document that sets out a vision for the future development of the County. The MDP provides a comprehensive long term land use policy framework within which current and projected growth and development may take place over a 10-year period. It contains policies on land use, transportation, utilities, recreation, economic development, community services, the environment, quality of life and intermunicipal planning and cooperation.

The LUB is the regulatory document which outlines specific rules and regulations for the development of land and buildings within the different districts of the County. Every property in the County is zoned under a specific land use district.

During the review of the MDP and LUB there are numerous rounds of public consultation to engage the community's vision for future growth in Lacombe County. Highlights of these rounds of consultation include:

- **Foundations & Directions (February/March 2016)** - Round 1 of the consultation process was a vision building exercise. Seven (7) workshops were held across the County. The purpose of the workshops was to engage residents and stakeholders in discussions about their vision for the future of Lacombe County and to identify areas of concern with land use, which may have arisen over the last decade. Two hundred and fifty-six members of the community attended these public meeting workshops and a further 286 surveys were completed either online or at the meetings.



South Aspelund wetlands





Sylvan Lake Residential

During these meetings, a vision building exercise was done, to build consensus at each table to determine their top three objectives from the existing MDP or to choose three new objectives that would best guide the development and growth of Lacombe County over the next decade. This activity allowed the public to determine if the existing MDP objectives were still relevant for the vision for the County and build consensus on what was important as a community. The previous MDP had nine objectives which were reduced to six in the draft MDP.

The first round of MDP consultations also included planning education workshops in local elementary schools. As part of these sessions, students were introduced to planning, where they designed and presented their own Lacombe County land use zoning maps as part of their local government module. Their input mirrored the views of the general community.

- **Issue Analysis & Growth Strategy (June 2016)** - Round 2 of the consultation process was to present policy choices for the community to decide on. Three meetings were held across the County to present policy options to the public which were formulated based on the feedback from the first round of consultation. There was a total attendance of 97 people, and 130 additional people voted via survey.
- These meetings incorporated the use of Audience Instant Response Technology whereby those who attended the meetings were asked to vote on a number of policy options via voting remotes. The technology also allowed those in attendance to see the feedback in real time.

Table 6  
Long Range Planning Program, 2016 - 2018

Topic	2016	2017	2018
Carryover Studies	City of Lacombe/Lacombe County Intermunicipal Development Plan  Lacombe County Municipal Development Plan and Land Use Bylaw	City of Lacombe/Lacombe County Intermunicipal Development Plan  Lacombe County Municipal Development Plan and Land Use Bylaw	None Selected
Updated Planning Studies	None Scheduled	Gull Lake Parks, Recreation and Open Space plan	Milton/Morningside Area Structure Plan  Sylvan Lake Intermunicipal Development Plan  Intermunicipal Collaboration

# LACOMBE COUNTY PROGRAM AND POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

## Environmental Policy

Lacombe County's Environmental Policy states that Lacombe County is committed to a healthy environment for current and future generations. The Environmental Policy is intended to unify Lacombe County's vision in order to guide the actions of the County, the staff, the Councillors and the consultants that work for us to ensure the environment is conserved, protected and enhanced as well as in balance with social and economic needs.

The Environmental Policy has been enacted by Lacombe County by a number of education and extension programs as listed below.

## Environmental Improvement Grant Program

Lacombe County is committed to supporting local community organizations to develop and implement projects, which benefit the community by improving the environment.

Through the 2016 program, Lacombe County supported four community organizations with environmental projects.

- Ellis Bird Farm received \$2,000 through the grant program. Their 2016 project involved re-routing a small section of their existing trail system to accommodate a beaver lodge for education purposes.
- École Lacombe Junior High School Gardening Class and Club received \$2,000 through the grant program. Their 2016 project involved the improvement and expansion of their existing garden program.
- Pheasants Forever received \$2,000 through the grant program. Their 2016 project involved planting trees on marginal, zero till land to enhance and improve habitat for upland game birds.
- Red Deer River Watershed Alliance Society received \$2,000 through the grant program. Their 2016 project involved the development and piloting of X-Stream Science, a citizen science program developed for high school students to learn about water quality monitoring techniques and data analysis.



Ellis Bird Farm project - beaver lodge

## PARTNERSHIP ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### Sylvan Lake Management Committee

#### Take it Off Program

The Take it Off Program was formed by the Sylvan Lake Management Committee, which consists of eight municipalities around Sylvan Lake including Lacombe County. The program is voluntary, in which fish huts are registered and are assigned a number, which is put on the ice huts. The registry is intended to reduce the number of fish huts left on Sylvan Lake after the March 31st deadline to remove them. Ice huts that were being left on the lake have the potential to cause serious environmental and health issues. The remaining debris included wood, gasoline and plastic and metal supplies. This unwanted debris had the potential to cause boating and swimming hazards and detrimental contamination to fish and waterfowl habitat. The program has been running for six years now and has seen the number of abandoned fish huts on the lake drop from 25 in 2011 to 0 in 2016. The long-term goal of this program is to have mandatory fish hut registry provincially wide.



Ice huts on Sylvan Lake

### Ponoka County, Summer Village of Gull Lake, and Summer Village of Parkland Beach

#### Take it Off Program



Ice huts on Gull Lake

The Take it Off Program was launched on Gull Lake in 2017 through the partnership of Lacombe County, Ponoka County, the Summer Village of Gull Lake, and the Summer Village of Parkland Beach. Similar to the Sylvan Lake *Take It Off Program*, this program is voluntary and fish huts are registered and assigned a number. It is also intended to reduce the number of fish huts left on Gull Lake after the removal deadline of March 31st. The program had a successful first year, with zero ice huts being left on Gull Lake.



## PARTNERSHIP ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS)

ALUS Canada is a national not-for-profit organization that supports the delivery of the ALUS – Alternative Land Use Services – program across the country. Active in six provinces to date, the ALUS program provides a financial incentive for producing valuable ecological services on Canadian farmland. Specifically, ALUS helps farmers and ranchers restore wetlands, plant windbreaks, install riparian buffers, manage sustainable drainage systems, create pollinator habitat and establish other ecologically beneficial projects on their properties. ALUS provides per-acre annual payments to ALUS participants to recognize their dedication to managing and maintaining all ALUS projects on their land.

In 2017, Lacombe County partnered with ALUS Canada making it the 22nd ALUS community in Canada and the 10th in Alberta. Recognizing the value of the agriculture industry in the economic, social, and historical fabric of local communities, yet also understanding that agricultural activities have an impact on land and water resources, ALUS Lacombe County will establish innovative projects that produce ecosystem services, such as cleaner air, cleaner water, and more biodiversity, to benefit the environment and everyone in the community. Currently, ALUS Lacombe County has five projects enrolled in the program, covering a total of 97 acres.

ALUS Lacombe County has four specific Priority Areas, which include:

1. Riparian Zone Conservation & Enhancement Along Waterways
2. Create Eco-Buffers & Improve Traditional Shelterbelts
3. Lake Water Quality Conservation & Enhancement
4. Wetland Conservation & Enhancement

ALUS Lacombe County is overseen by a Partnership Advisory Committee (PAC) comprised of local agriculture producers and landowners. The role of the PAC is to review and approve agricultural producer and landowner delivered projects and provide recommendations to Lacombe County Council in regards to agriculture conservation programming within Lacombe County. The ALUS Lacombe County PAC members are Ian Clark, Marilyn Sharp, Dean Hjelte, Jason Lenz, and Barb



Riparian area



Solar powered livestock watering system

# ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

## Water Quality

Buffalo Lake, Gull Lake, Lacombe Lake, and Sylvan Lake were monitored in 2016 by LakeWatch, a volunteer-based water quality monitoring program offered through the Alberta Lake Management Society (ALMS). LakeWatch reports can be used to educate lake users and guide water restoration and management efforts. Full reports on the water quality of Lacombe County's Lakes can be found on the ALMS website.

## Water Quality

### Gull Lake

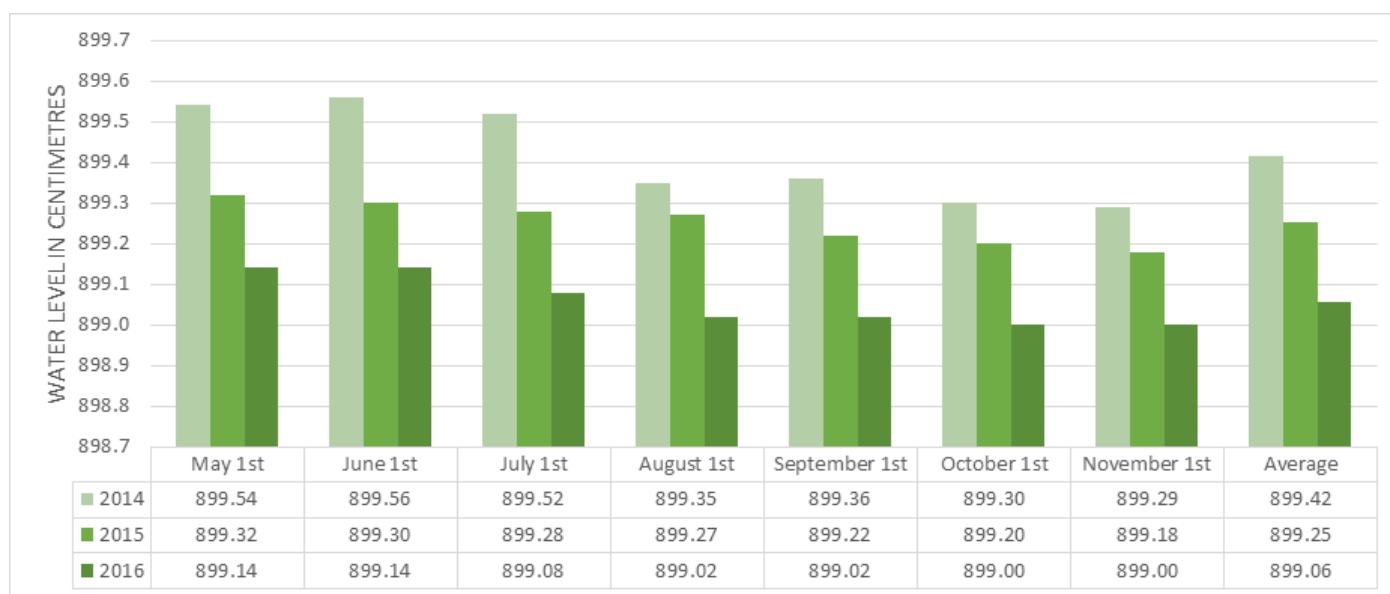
Gull Lake fluctuated from 899.25 centimetres in 2015 to 899.06 centimetres in 2016.

No pumping of water from the Blindman River into Gull Lake occurred in Gull Lake in 2016. Water levels need to drop to well below the full supply level of the lake to a water level of 898.93m before pumping is triggered. The average level of water maintained in Gull Lake in 2016 was 899.06.



Ducks at the lake

**Figure 1**  
Water Levels Gull Lake, 2014-2016



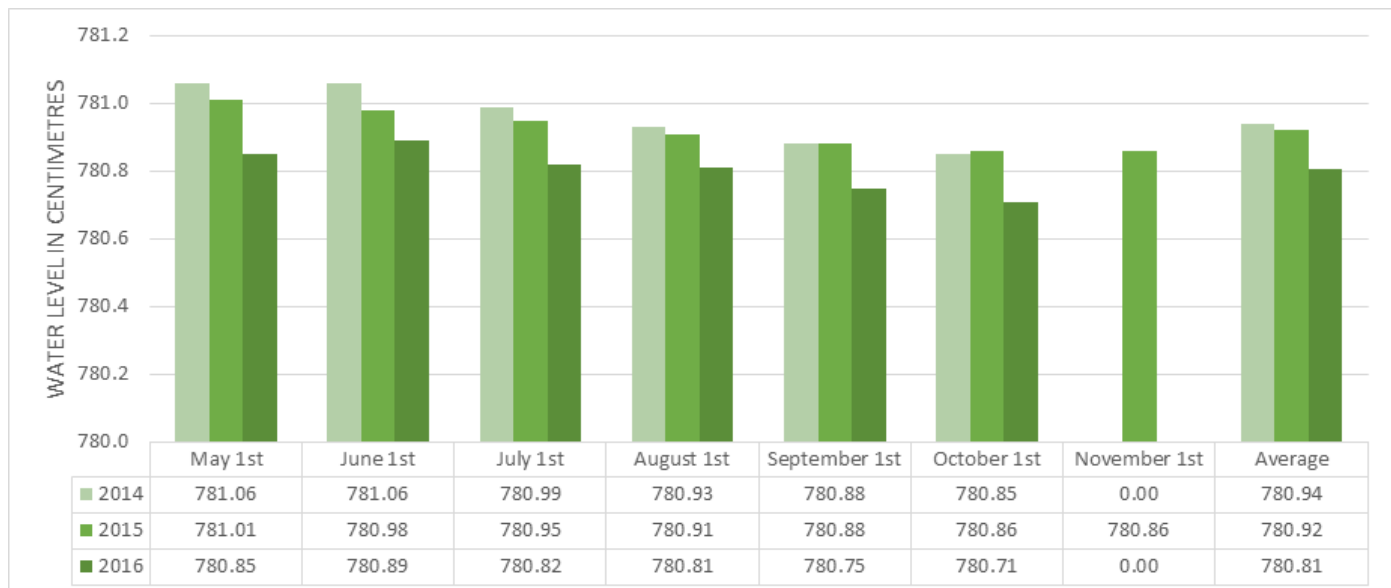
# ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

## Buffalo Lake

Buffalo Lake fluctuated from 780.92 centimetres in 2015 to 780.81 centimetres in 2016.

No pumping occurred in Buffalo Lake in 2016 due to an average water level of 780.81 being maintained in 2016. In order for pumping to occur the water level would have to drop well below the full level of the lake to 780.60m.

**Figure 2**  
Water Levels Buffalo Lake, 2014-2016



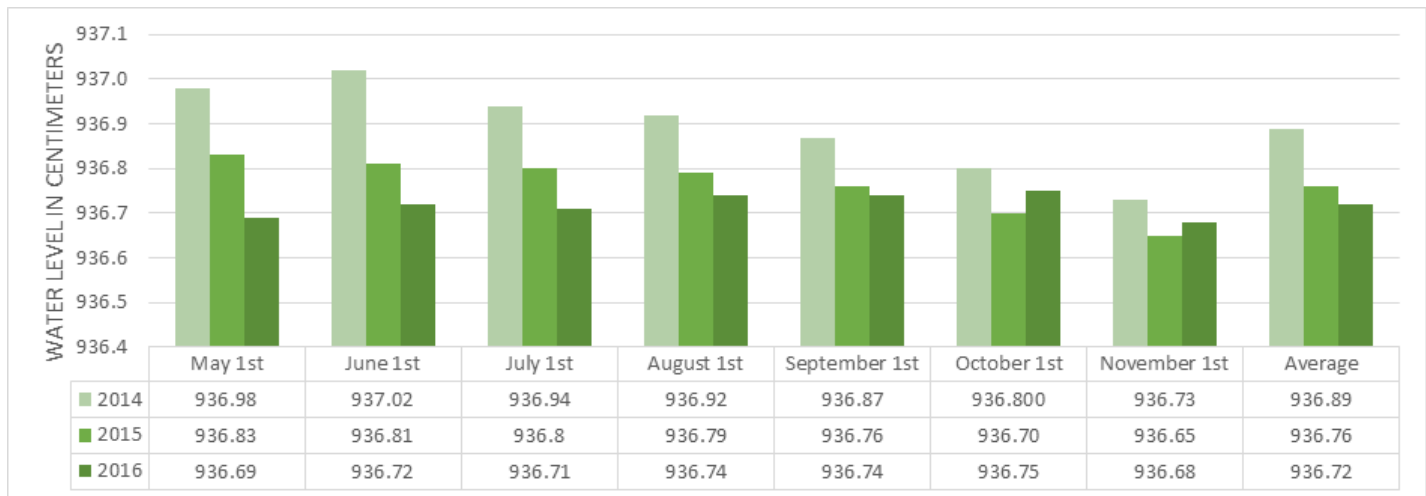
Buffalo Lake Beach



## Sylvan Lake

Sylvan Lake fluctuated from 936.76 centimeters in 2015 to 936.72 centimeters in 2016.

**Figure 3**  
Water Levels Sylvan Lake, 2014-2016



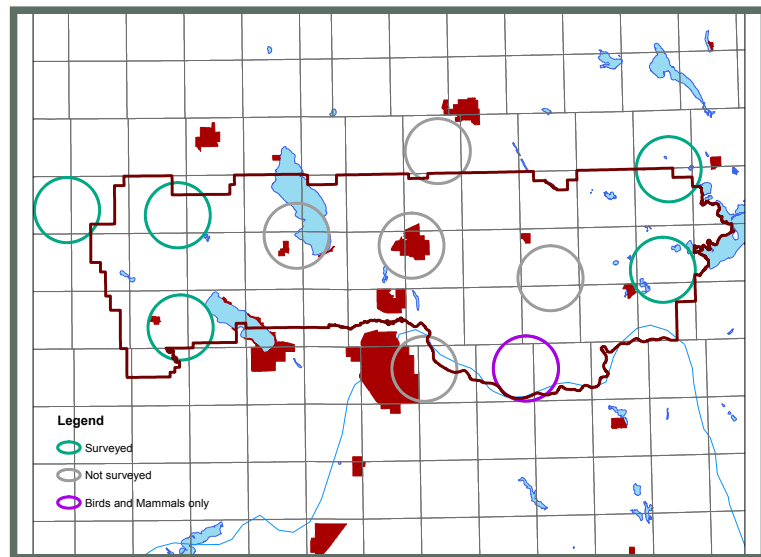
Sylvan Lake Residential

## Biodiversity Survey

The Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute (ABMI) is an arm's-length, not-for-profit scientific organization. The business of the ABMI is to monitor and report on the status (current condition) and trends of Alberta's species, habitat, and human footprint. The goal of the ABMI is to provide relevant scientific information on the state of Alberta's biodiversity to support natural resource and land use decision making in the province.

The ABMI reports on a range of biodiversity indicators that act as a guide for establishing biodiversity-related management goals and tracking performance against those goals. The ABMI generates value-neutral, independent, publicly accessible data, and presents knowledge derived from the data in a value-neutral format.

**Figure 4**  
Biodiversity Survey Sites



To date, ABMI has recorded data for over 1,656 sites across Alberta. In 2016, one site in Lacombe County was surveyed for birds and mammals only.

Common vascular plant species included: Common Yarrow, Canada Anemone, Veiny Meadow Rue, Canadian White Violet, Western Snowberry, and Prickly Wild Rose.

Common bird species included: Baltimore Oriole, Blackcapped Chickadee, Killdeer, Redwinged Blackbird, Wilsons Snipe, and Savannah Sparrow.

# Human Impacts

## Waste Generation and Disposal

The Lacombe Regional Solid Waste Commission (LRSWC) is responsible for the management of solid waste within the boundaries of Lacombe County. The Commission consists of the following member municipalities:

1. Lacombe County
2. Alix
3. Lacombe
4. Eckville
5. Clive
6. Bentley
7. Mirror

Table 7 illustrates the overall waste generation for the LRSWC area over the years of 2011-2016.

Waste that is quantified under the “compactor” disposal column is household waste. This waste is compacted into containers and transferred from the Prentiss Landfill site to the Dried Meat Lake waste facility.

The waste column labeled “landfill” is for dry rubble materials disposed at the Prentiss Landfill site.

Table 7  
Waste Generated by LRSWC, 2011-2016

Disposal	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Compactor	9,814	9,284	9,964	9,844	9,743	9,856
Landfill	9,815	10,890	12,984	10,387	No Data	9,839

\*Weight is represented in Tonnes

In addition to the overall amount of waste to landfill the authority also tracks the amount of recyclables generated (Table 8). The data collected and depicted below is for the entire commission and is not necessarily only Lacombe County. The waste is also collected co-mingled and as such data regarding the amount of cardboard, plastic and paper is not separated out.

Table 8  
Recyclables Generated by LRSWC, 2011-2016

Recyclable Item	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Metal	500.79	469.46	452.14	412.44	382.92	421.88
Cardboard, plastic & paper co-mingled	1332.97	1352.2	900.18	No Data	No Data	987.98

\*Weight is represented in Tonnes





# STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

## Evaluation Form



Thank you for your interest in the State of the Environment 2017 Supplemental Report for Lacombe County. To help ensure continuous improvement in our publications and communications with the community we are looking for your feedback.

Please take a few minutes and provide us feedback on the SOE. Please scan and email or post the feedback form back to Jennifer Berry, Environmental Coordinator at Lacombe County.

Email: [jberry@lacombecounty.com](mailto:jberry@lacombecounty.com)

Post: Attention: Jennifer Berry

Lacombe County

RR3 , Lacombe AB

T4L 2N3

Please rate the two statements below on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being strongly disagree and 10 being strongly agree.

1. The layout for the State of the Environment 2017 Supplemental Report for Lacombe County was well thought out and easy to read.

Please circle your answer:

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

2. The information presented in the State of the Environment 2017 Supplemental Report for Lacombe County was clear and understandable.

Please circle your answer:

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

Tear Here

3. Was there any information missing from the State of the Environment report that you would have like to have seen reported on?

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4. Did you learn anything new from the State of the Environment report? If yes, what are some examples?

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5. What do you think Lacombe County should do with the information presented in the report?

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6. How did you hear about the State of the Environment Report?

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR FEEDBACK

Tear Here









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