

State of the Environment



*2014
Supplemental Report*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Vision Statements	1
Land Use in Lacombe County	2
<i>Highlights in the Agricultural Sector.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Highlights in the Planning Sector</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Highlights in the Operations Sector.....</i>	<i>5</i>
Environmental Conditions	5
<i>Water Quantity.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Water Quality</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Riparian Data</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Waste</i>	<i>8</i>
Lacombe County Program and Policy Highlights	9
<i>2013 Internal Environment Policy.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>2013 Environmental Improvement Grant Program.....</i>	<i>9</i>

The State of the Environment 2014 Supplemental Report in Lacombe County

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

Lacombe County Senior Management Team, Operations Department, Planning Department, Dion Burlock (Agricultural Fieldman), Charmaine Tootell (Planning Receptionist), Phil Lodermeier (Manager of Operations), Bill Cade (Public Works Supervisor), Brandon Maier (Assistant Public Works Supervisor), Blayne West (Environmental Coordinator), and Cajun Paradis (Acting Environmental Coordinator).

To obtain additional copies of the report:

On the web:

The State of the Environment in Lacombe
County and the 2014 Supplemental Report
are available on our website
www.lacombecounty.com

Paper copies:

Please contact Lacombe County directly at 403-782-6601

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The very first Lacombe County State of the Environment report (SOE) 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 year period a full updated SOE will be written.

Lacombe County is making gains in environmental management, while maintaining our focus on internal operations. Most actions in the first few years are concentrating on setting up the framework for the system. This supplemental report is meant to exemplify the hard work that is being undertaken by the Lacombe County staff and Councillors and in turn we hope to inspire residents to take a proactive approach to reducing their footprint on the environment.

There are many opportunities for improvement of which we are aware and we welcome both positive and constructive feedback from our community members. Without your diligent eyes on the ground we may miss important changes that can and should be happening in the County.

Lacombe County is dedicated to working towards the 20 year vision set by the residents, staff and Councillors of Lacombe County.

VISION STATEMENTS

- Improved habitat including better water quality within the County;
- Establish a sense of identity that is focused on agriculture; and
- Create a thorough, balanced and transparent system for making decisions about development.



LAND USE IN LACOMBE COUNTY

Sustainable and planned development is important for a strong economy and a growing County. It is equally as important to take into consideration the effects development may have on the environment.

Lacombe County is a rural county with the largest land use being agricultural, comprising 82% of the County's area. The remaining 18% is divided amongst urban development and ecological lands. As such, one of the priorities is to ensure the County places emphasis on the agricultural sector and its importance, while balancing the needs of the environment, the social sector of recreation and the economic needs of growth. To help exemplify changes in land use over the past year the following data is being presented:

HIGHLIGHTS IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

- Initial planning has begun on the Agriculture Plan. The highlight of the planning process to date is the community engagement workshops. These were held in March 2014 to seek input from community members in order to inform the direction and focus of the Plan.
- No change in data presented from 2013 report regarding cultivation intensity, wind erosion risk or manure production.
- Lacombe County empowered by provincial legislation continues to administer the Alberta Weed Control Act. The Act is written to protect agricultural and natural lands from prohibited noxious and noxious weeds. For the past decade the County has concentrated its efforts on the control of five noxious weeds: Canada Thistle, Common Tansy, Leafy Spurge, Scentless Chamomile and Yellow Toadflax. Weeds listed as prohibited noxious under the Act must be controlled. Himalayan Balsam recently added as a prohibited noxious under the Act, has been discovered along Gull Lake and control efforts have been undertaken for its control. Environmental conditions contribute to the ebb and flow of weed populations and the extremely wet conditions experienced the last two growing seasons have contributed to increased populations of Canada Thistle located on rangelands and natural areas.



HIGHLIGHTS IN THE PLANNING SECTOR

- Long term 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.
- Since 2008 Lacombe County has updated or developed 6 IDPs with neighboring municipalities, 8 ASPs and 2 Recreational Plans. There are 5 remaining plans to be completed.
- Table 3 provides more detail on Lacombe County's Long Range Planning Program for 2014-2016.

TABLE 1
DEVELOPMENT PERMIT APPLICATIONS IN LACOMBE COUNTY, 2013

Description	Approved - New Developments	Approved - Expansion, Renewal or Replacement Structure Developments	Refused
Residential	65	50	-
Industrial	15	11	-
Commercial	33	15	-
Recreational	3	5	-
Gravel Pits	2	7	-
Communication Towers	3	1	-
TOTAL	121	89	-

* Table 1 does not include development permit applications for setback relaxations or accessory storage structures.

TABLE 2
SUBDIVISION APPLICATIONS IN LACOMBE COUNTY, 2013

Description	Approved	Refused
Fragmented Parcel	6	3
First Parcel Out Residential	22	-
Agricultural	1	-
Industrial	4	-
Boundary Adjustment	3	-
Residential	1	1
Public Use	2	-
Municipal Reserve Relocation	1	-
Road Allowance Relocation	1	-
TOTAL	41	4

TABLE 3
LONG RANGE PLANNING PROGRAM, 2014-2016

Topic	2014	2015	2016
New Planning Studies	None Scheduled	Gull Lake Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan	None Scheduled
Updated Planning Studies	Lacombe Intermunicipal Development Plan Review	Lacombe Intermunicipal Development Plan Review (carryover from 2014)	Municipal Development Plan Land Use Bylaw



HIGHLIGHTS IN THE OPERATIONS SECTOR

- Gravel Pit Reclamation and Wetland Compensation Program

A concept plan for the wetland creation on the Crooker Gravel Pit was created in the summer of 2013. The result will be a wetland bank to compensate for wetland disturbance on road construction projects.

- Internal environmental education has raised awareness of the requirements for bridge and culvert repairs and the necessary approvals and mandated compensation requirements. Work flows have been created to ensure environmental compliance.



ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

WATER QUANTITY

- The water levels in Buffalo Lake, Sylvan Lake and Gull Lake are monitored every year. The data is collected and collated by Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development. This information was not included in the first SOE report. Figure 1, 2 and 3 include comparison data of lake levels in 2012 and 2013.
- Buffalo Lake fluctuated from 780.808 metres in 2012 to 780.755 metres in 2013.
- Sylvan Lake fluctuated from 936.904 metres in 2012 to 936.849 metres in 2013.
- Gull Lake fluctuated from 899.185 metres in 2012 to 899.238 metres in 2013.
- No pumping of water from the Blindman River into Gull Lake occurred this year. At Gull Lake the water level needs to drop well below the full supply level of the lake, to a water level of 898.93 metres, before pumping is triggered. The full supply level of Gull Lake is 899.16 metres. During the summer of 2013 Gull Lake maintained an average level of 899.33 metres.



FIGURE 1
WATER LEVELS BUFFALO LAKE 2012 -2013

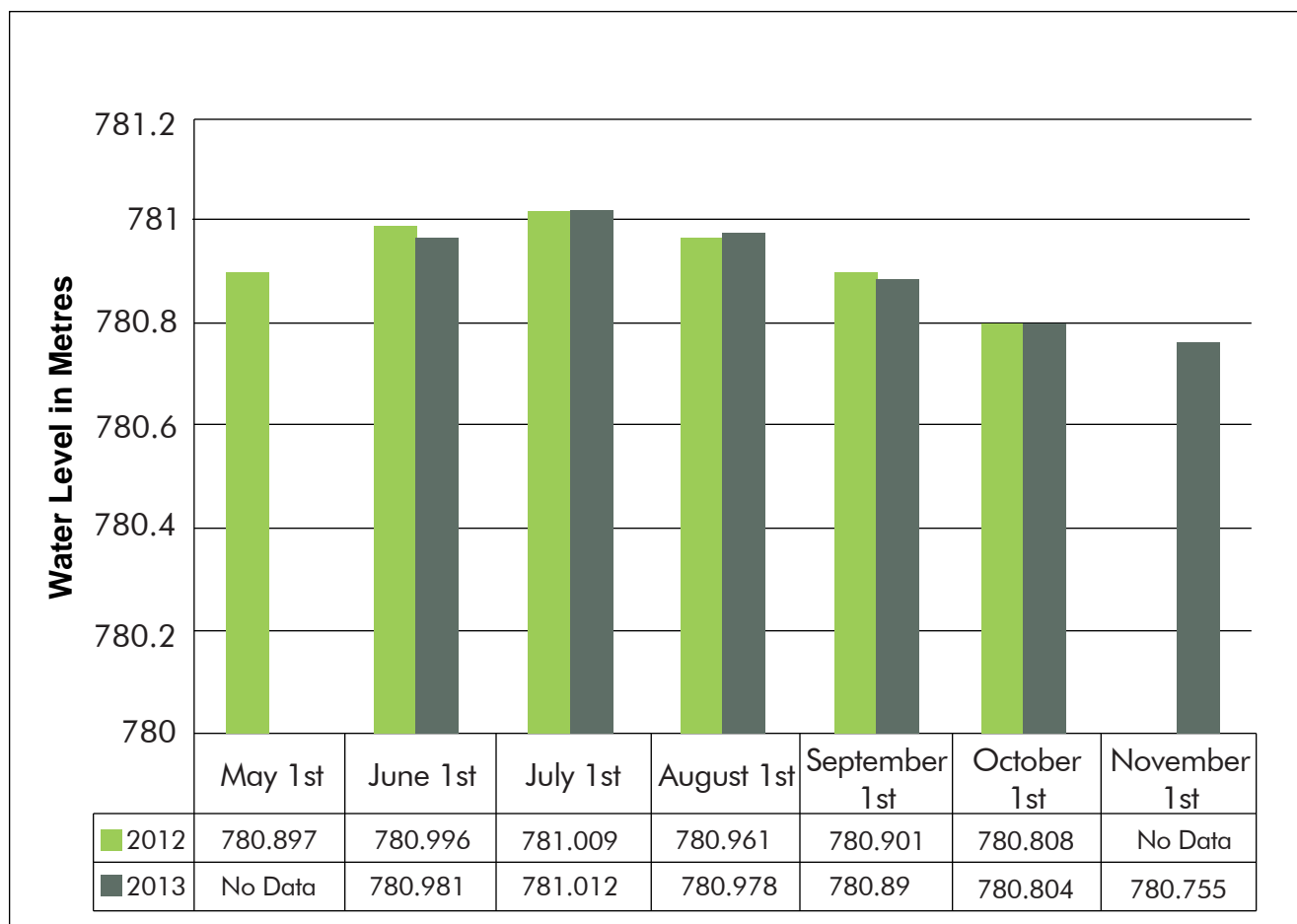


FIGURE 2
WATER LEVELS SYLVAN LAKE 2012 -2013

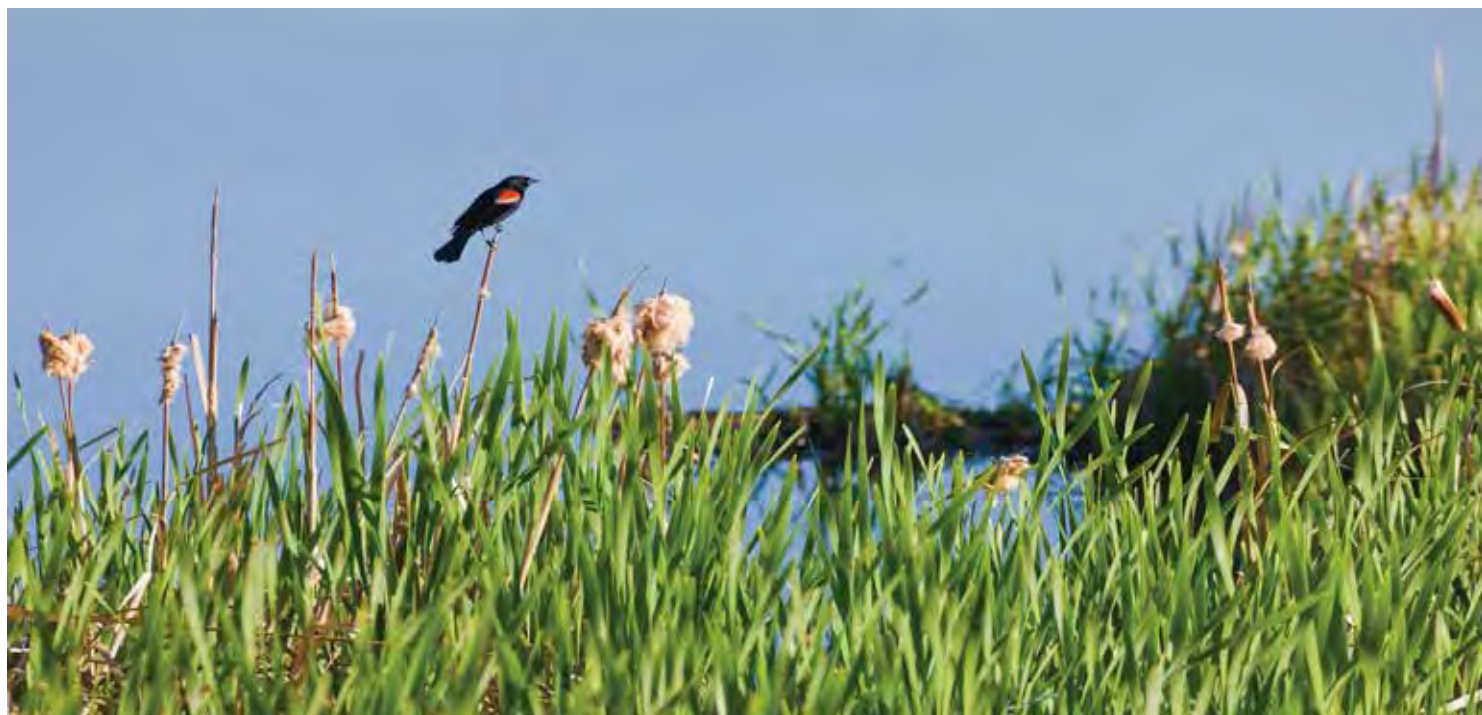
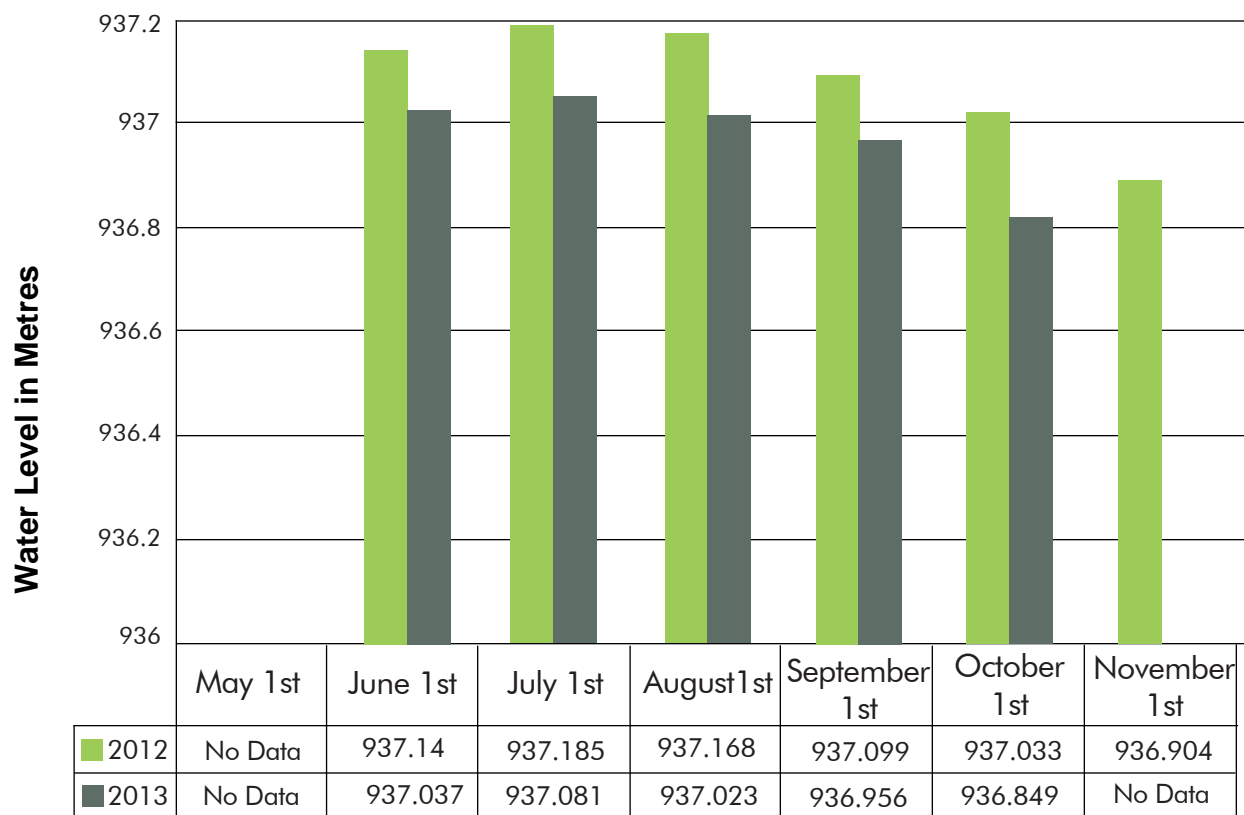
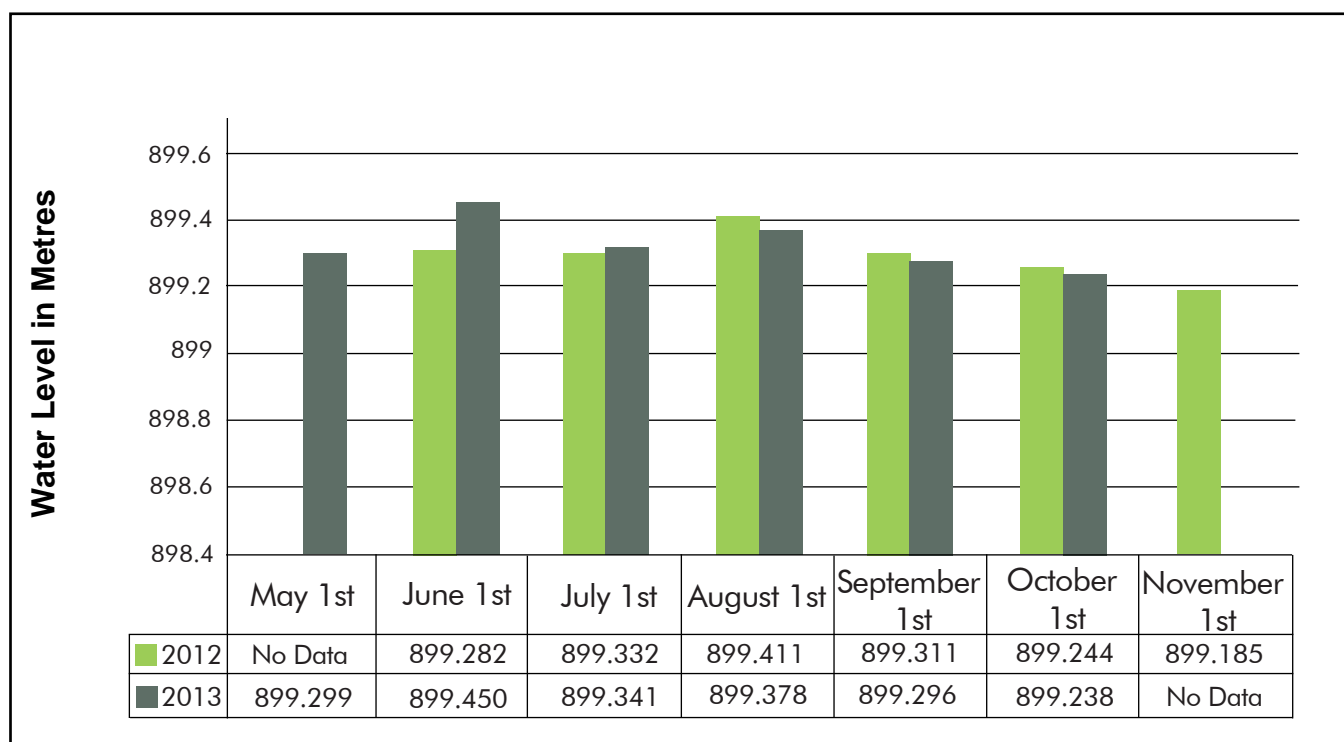


FIGURE 3
WATER LEVELS GULL LAKE 2012-2013



WATER QUALITY

- Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development collects water quality data every 2 to 3 years. The last data collected within the Lacombe County area was in 2011. No new data is available to report on.

RIPARIAN DATA

- No new data is available in Lacombe County.

WASTE

- No new data available at this time.



LACOMBE COUNTY PROGRAM AND POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

2013 INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT POLICY

- Lacombe County is committed to a healthy environment for current and future generations. In order to achieve this goal the County is focusing their efforts on monitoring and improving internal County operations in order to conserve, protect and enhance the environment in balance with social and economic needs.

The Lacombe County Environmental Policy was adopted by Council in 2013.

2013 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM

- Lacombe County is committed to supporting local community organizations to develop and implement projects which benefit the community through improving the environment. The grant program will run for a 3-year trial and will provide financial support to interested community groups primarily located within Lacombe County.

Lacombe County will implement the grant program in spring of 2014.



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