



Insider

Volume VIII, Spring 2009

President's Message



Dear CEMA Friends,

It's been an exciting few years as your CEMA President. The time went by so fast and I have enjoyed the challenging, exciting and fun work that we have accomplished together.

Make no doubt about it; there were a few challenges along the road. We saw a few First Nations and Environmental groups leave the association; funding problems and on a few occasions, CEMA was plastered on the front page of the newspaper!

But as I reflect on positive, we participated in the Athabasca Tribal Council Review of CEMA, created the Aboriginal Roundtable to engage First Nations and Métis and continued the ongoing strong work of the TEK Advisory Committee. We secured funding from both levels of governments, projected and delivered timely budget. Due to the hard work of the Working Groups members and excellent Management Framework we have increased the positive public image of the Association. We recognized the challenges and we **REVITALIZED!**

Over the past few years, I want to single out the leadership provided by CEMA Vice President Judy Smith, and her deep commitment to the Association. A special thank-you to Glen Semenchuk, our Executive Director, who has worked tirelessly to make CEMA's office and working groups run so smoothly; and to Corey Hobbs, our communications director, who has worked so hard to get CEMA's news out in our own words.

I have enjoyed working with the two Management Committees, all the CEMA staff and all the CEMA members. I will always keep in touch and send up a batch of fresh cookies to an occasional General Meeting.

Randall

Our Mission Statement

Located in Fort McMurray, Alberta, CEMA is a non-profit, multi-stakeholder organization. Our mandate is to make recommendations on how to best manage cumulative impacts and protect the environment in the region.

MC Retreat

Change is in the Air!



Randall illustrates a point at the MC retreat

The CEMA Management Committee met February 4th to 6th, to chart out a proposal for the future direction of the Association - a task given to the MC at our last CEMA Members meeting. The proposal considers CEMA's vision; the replacement of the Regional Sustainable Development Strategy by the upcoming Lower Athabasca Regional Plan (by the Land Use Framework's Regional Advisory Council); the third party reviews of CEMA; the local, provincial and international attention on oil sands issues; and the recent economic downturn in the oil sands area.

The MC recommends that CEMA's focus in 2009 is to embrace change; proactive and fundamental change, so that our Association can deliver a new mandate, becoming an inclusive, vital advisor to government improving the management of cumulative environmental effects of development.

In order to deliver our new mandate – the MC has sketched out four focus areas for CEMA in 2009 - 2010:

- Deliver priority products that address cumulative effects issues.
- Review CEMA's organizational structure, and improve alignment to our new mandate.
- Influence the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan under the province's new Land Use Framework.
- Improve Communication To Support Strategic Initiatives.

What's Inside

At CEMA we are committed to achieving the goals set out by our membership at a professional level. We are pleased to provide you with our newsletters to inform you about the progress we made.

Nonetheless, we hope you enjoy this issue for Spring 2009 and we look forward to any feedback you might have.

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Annual Report



CEMA 2008 Annual Report is available online at www.cemaonline.ca or at the CEMA office. The detailed report card of the association is a chance to showcase the important achievements over the past calendar year. Other useful information in the report is the 2008 Revenue and Expenditures, details about CEMA ongoing Revitalization, a list of complete recommendations and future work, and a full update from each working group.

Perfect Numbers

The arrival last week of CEMA's final 2008 audit, proved to be perfect! No entries, no adjustments, and no changes. Keeping the CEMA MC, Staff, Working Groups, Members, and contracts in line is no small task...8.4 million dollars to be exact! The perfect accounting showcased the important work by CEMA Office Manager Christine Kenning and Bookkeeper Lynette Whelan. An excellent job right to the penny!



Lower Athabasca Regional Advisory Council

On December 19, the Government of Alberta established the first Regional Advisory Council (RAC) under Alberta's new Land-use Framework. The council will provide strategic advice to the government in the development of a land-use plan for the Lower Athabasca Region.

The 15-member Lower Athabasca RAC, which will provide its advice by the end of 2009, represents a cross-section of interests, including municipal and provincial bodies, industry, Aboriginal groups and environmental concerns. Active CEMA members: Glen Semenchuk, Peter Koning and Lanny Coulson are members of the RAC. Congrats on your appointment to this important Council. (note: picture of Peter)

CEMA Staff News

Ashley Croucher



After more than 16 months with CEMA, Ashley Croucher, CEMA Administrative Assistant has moved back to the Rock. Ashley, a native of Newfoundland returned to her hometown of Grand Falls –Windsor to return to school. But, Ashley will always have a piece of Fort McMurray with her in Sophie; her miniature Yorkshire. Best of luck at school and we will miss you!

Andrew Rex



CEMA extends a warm welcome to Andrew Rex, the new CEMA Administrative Assistant. Andrew started with CEMA in February of this year. Andrew, also from Newfoundland is not only doing a great job but is also a great protector of the CEMA staff; he stands at 6'6. Welcome to CEMA Andrew!

Mr. Semenchuk on Parliament Hill



Glen Semenchuk, CEMA Executive Director, travelled to Ottawa for meetings with representatives from the federal departments of Environment Canada, Natural Resources Canada, Fisheries and Ocean and Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency. The purpose of the trip was twofold: one, to meet with senior staff of federal departments and agencies who are CEMA members; and, secondly, to promote CEMA's accomplishments, operations and make sure the key decision makers in Ottawa have a good understanding about CEMA's important role in the oil sands region. The trip included meetings with members of all federal political parties: including Brian Jean, MP for Fort McMurray and Members of Parliament on the Standing Committee on the Environment. Glen also had meetings with the Mining Association of Canada, and senior staff of CEMA Member Canadian Parks and Wildness Society.

New SVSG Co-Chair

In January of 2009, Rob Vassov of Syncrude, joined Clayton Dubyk of Shell Albian Sands as Co-Chair of the Soils and Vegetation Sub Group (SVSG). CEMA would like to give a big thank you to Justin Straker (Fort MacKay IRC) for his dedication and enthusiasm during his time as Co-Chair of this group and his continuing commitment to many of the SVSG projects.

Technical Program Manager

Reclamation Working Group's new Technical Program Manager is Gillian Donald, who officially started in January. Gillian will be taking on this role as Veronica Chisholm moved on to new challenges at the end of December. Many thanks should go to Veronica for her great work with CEMA over the past few years. Gillian will be responsible for assisting with the Biodiversity & Wildlife Sub Group (BWSG), the Reclamation Certification Sub Group (RCSG) and the Soils and Vegetation Sub Group (SVSG).



Gillian Donald comes to CEMA with a wealth of academic and field experience. She has a Ph.D from the University of Calgary in Plant Ecophysiology, a B.Sc. in Botany from the University of Calgary and a B.Sc. in Biology from McGill University. Gillian has conducted fieldwork for research and industry throughout Alberta, in northern Saskatchewan and in the Eastern Cape and Kwa-Zulu Natal provinces of South Africa.

New CEMA Boardroom

During these challenging economic times, CEMA is doing its share to reduce costs and help keep the bottom line under control. We have created a new boardroom in space available at the Morrison Centre. A perfect meeting location for PM/MC/CC, Working Groups or for your organization to rent. The leasing of the office space will save CEMA thousands of dollars over the year in room rentals fees.



Updates On Working Groups and Sub-Groups

Surface Water Working Group (SWWG)

The SWWG is continuing its work towards developing a recommendation for the Phase II Water Management Framework due at the end of 2009. The Phase II Framework



Committee (P2FC) is preparing for a workshop in May, when they will use the information developed by the task groups to assess alternate water management frameworks.

The Socio-Economic Task Group (ETG) has initiated two projects to support the P2FC in developing the recommendation, assessing both recreational and traditional uses of the lower Athabasca River. The studies will review available information and potentially undertake additional research to determine whether or not these activities will be affected by flow changes in the lower Athabasca River.



The In-stream Flow Needs Technical Task Group (IFNTTG) also has initiated new studies to support the P2FC. A workshop will be held in April to determine habitat suitability criteria for target species in the lower Athabasca River, which will be used to assess potential impacts on fish habitat. Additional

studies include determination of dissolved oxygen levels in side channels and snyes, and a project on connectivity of perched basins in the Peace-Athabasca Delta. Work on the multi-year Fish Telemetry Study also is still ongoing.

Photos courtesy of Applied Aquatic Research

Reclamation Working Group (RWG)

RCSG

Mike Poscente of Opabine Environmental Ltd. was selected as the contractor to facilitate RCSG in a project to identify gaps and compile recommendations on the selection or creation of reclamation certification criteria where no current regulatory standard exists for oil sands mining reclamation. RCSG has completed the initial gap analysis and is in the process of developing recommendations.

BWSG

The SENES newsletters have been distributed to the participating communities, and the SENES draft report is in preparation. Paragon Soil & Environmental Consulting, Inc. submitted the draft briefing note describing soil biodiversity and providing recommendations for selection of indicators to monitor for establishment of soil biodiversity on reclaimed sites – the briefing note will be utilized in the preparation of the Biodiversity Appendix for Guidelines to Reclamation to Forest Vegetation in the Alberta Oil Sands. ARC is continuing to conduct a technical review of the current state of knowledge of establishing and monitoring biodiversity on reclaimed landscapes and will develop and update the Biodiversity Appendix for Guidelines to Reclamation to Forest Vegetation in the Alberta Oil Sands.

SVSG

The SVSG is currently working to complete the 2nd Edition of the Guidelines for Reclamation to Forest Vegetation in the Athabasca Oil Sands Region (Alberta Environment, 1998), better known as the “Revegetation Manual” which is eagerly expected in Q2 of this year. This manual will provide a comprehensive update to the first edition which has been an essential guide for operators for reclamation in the oil sands region for over 10 years.

The Best Management Practices Task Group (BMPTG) of SVSG is currently developing a Best Management Practices Guideline for Soil Salvage and Placement in the Oil Sands Region. This living document is targeted for completion by Q4 2009. The BMPTG is considering past and present soil salvage and placement practices in the region in addition to contemporary research in order to develop a guideline for operators describing the best available practices to achieve native boreal ecosystem establishment objectives.

The newly minted Hydrocarbon Task Group (HCTG) has recently begun work to address the topic of salvage of soil containing shallow hydrocarbons. The group will review and analyse past and ongoing research and provide direction to the subgroup for their consideration in addressing this issue. This phase of work is expected to be complete by September 2009.

Through the Forest Productivity Task Group (FPTG), the SVSG is currently developing a plan to address oil sands mine Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act (EPEA) approval conditions relating to Timber Product Ratings (TPR) and Forest Resource Plans (FRP) both of which are required submissions to AENV by oil sands mine operators. It is expected that the process and methods for TPR will be finalized by Q2 2009. The FPTG will then focus on developing recommendations for changes to the FRP to ensure consistency with the new TPR process.

The Reclamation Working Group is pleased to announce that it will be conducting a workshop on September 9th and 10th entitled “Biodiversity Reclamation in the Oil Sands Region: Current State and Next Steps”. The focus of the workshop will be to provide an opportunity for regional experts to get together and develop a path forward to provide recommendations for biodiversity reclamation. The agenda will include a presentation on the Alberta Research Council’s work on a Technical Review and Development of Biodiversity Appendix for Guidelines to Reclamation to Forest Vegetation in the Alberta Oil Sands.

Updates On Working Groups and Sub-Groups

Wetlands and Aquatic Sub-Group (WASG)

The Wetlands & Aquatics Sub-Group has been working on four projects over the past few months. The first is the Phase 2 of the Indigenous Wetlands Classification in the Oilsands Region. The goal of the second phase (Pilot Study) is to produce a set of community identified wetland values that will contribute to the development of an indigenous ecological wetlands classification at a regional scale. This is being achieved through a field research programme working with the elders of the Fort McKay community. Field work has begun this winter and will continue during Spring, Summer, and Fall of next year. The Pilot Study will also be used to test and refine the research approach identified in the Scoping Study so that this approach can be more readily adopted in other areas.

As well, the WASG is working with SNC Lavalin and over a dozen researchers from across North America to conduct its Wetlands Technology Transfer Project. The main goal of the Wetlands Technology Transfer is to translate knowledge and research on wetland processes and function into practical application for reclamation in the oil sands region. Researchers will share knowledge through workshops where participants will be asked to comment on pointed questions. The technology transfer document will be a synthesis of these workshops. Information generated from this

project will be incorporated into the Third Edition of the Wetlands Guide and will also serve to assist with workplan development. Another outcome will be the development of a technology transfer method, that can be used for such work in the future.

The last two projects are research projects. One is being conducted in conjunction with researchers from the University of Waterloo and is examining the role of nutrient enrichment on the development of wetlands for oil sands reclamation. Nutrient enrichment is proposed as a possible strategy to increase the rate and type of aquatic fauna and floral colonization in oil sands wetland reclamation. The other research project is being conducted with researchers from the University of Alberta and is conducting an assessment of indices of biotic integrity and performance indicators of wetland health for oil sands and natural reference wetlands. The goal is to develop a tool that can be used to assess the health and integrity of reclaimed wetlands in the oil sands region relative to natural or undisturbed wetlands in the province. This project is in its second year and includes another two years of work.

Lastly, the WASG is initiating discussions on the format and focus of the next edition of the Guideline for Wetland Establishment in Reclaimed Oil Sands Leases. As a first step, WASG is conducting internal discussions on the focus of the Third Edition of the Guideline. Details will be shared in months to come.

End Pit Lakes Sub Group (EPLSG)

EPLSG is working on three main projects over the past few months. The first is with CH2MHill on the End Pit Lakes Technical Guidance Document Review. CH2MHill is managing the review of the EPL Technical Guidance Document by experts in various disciplines relating to end pit lakes including general EPL Technology, Aquatic Ecology, Biogeochemistry, Geotechnical, Hydrology and Hydrogeology, and Lake Physics. The purpose of the technical review is to provide constructive criticism to ascertain critical knowledge gaps. In particular, there is an urgent need to structure investigations in the 2009 to 2011 period to fill these knowledge gaps. A synthesis of the reviews is expected to be drafted by the beginning of May and will include main areas of concern, and recommendations on content of future editions of the EPL Guide, and workplan items to lead into the next edition.

EPLSG is also kick-starting a project with AMEC on the development of regional geotechnical

design criteria for oil sands pit lakes. At this initial stage, the focus is on developing criteria for the primary geotechnical issue of containment and the secondary issue of safe and sustainable access to the lake. The project will also address maintenance issues related to pit lakes.

The EPLSG, through Hydroqual Laboratories Ltd., has recently completed Phase I of a project examining oxygen consumption rates at the bottom of reclamation water bodies. This phase focussed on the development of a method for measuring oxygen consumption at the bottom of ponds. The information generated from this work will be critical for the development of realistic sediment oxygen gas exchange predictions in Pit Lake models. Oxygen is a crucial factor in the degradation of naphthenic acids, a known pollutant in reclamation areas. The project is ongoing for another 2 years and involves the participation of a graduate student from the University of Windsor.

Sustainable Ecosystems Working Group (SEWG)

SEWG has embarked on a series of facilitated workshops in accordance with the recommendations from the Government of Alberta to further develop details of the Terrestrial Ecosystem Management Framework (TEMF). The work will enable further dialogue and expression of views which could be captured and provided to the North East Regional Planning Process. The format takes advantage of SEWG's multi-stakeholder composition. The outcome will provide a range of perspectives that will focus on the utility and application of linear footprint thresholds under the broad topic of "Access Management", and Management Response Trigger Systems & revisiting of NRV as

it connects to modeling and monitoring. The recommendations from the workshops are intended to assist in the full implementation of the TEMF. The anticipated completion date for the workshops and deliverable is June 2009.

Three task groups have formed to support further aspects in the TEMF. The areas of focus include In situ Footprint Assumptions, Protected Areas & Collaborative Culvert Inspection Program Evaluation.

Most recently SEWG approved the Management Scenario Combination Modeling (formerly the Indicator Status Assessment report) from Silvatech which will add to the modeling work included in the TEMF.

NO_x SO₂ (NSMWG)

The upcoming Western Canada Sulphur and Nitrogen Deposition Workshop, April 28 – 30, at the Banff Park Lodge is a collaborative workshop between Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME) Acid Rain Task Group (ARTG), Nox-SO₂ Management Working Group (NSMWG) and Terrestrial Environmental Effects Management (TEEM). This three-day workshop will highlight the present federal, provincial and regional research initiatives related to atmospheric deposition of Sulphur and Nitrogen and impacts to ecosystems; identify possible areas for future work; help establish collaborations between the ARTG, NSMWG and TEEM and increase understanding of the potential implications to the Athabasca Oil Sands Region (AOSR) of existing and planned provincial and/or federal acid deposition management initiatives. If you wish to attend, please contact Elizabeth Lee, NSMWG Project Manager.

A literature review on the methods available for direct and indirect measurement of leaf area index (LAI) was completed in late 2008. This work also included an estimate of regional LAI values using NASA satellite imagery data. The work indicated that the LAI values currently used as acid deposi-

tion model (CALPUFF) inputs may be much too high. Further work is planned in 2009 to verify this. Information from the study is being incorporated into the NSMWG's Phase 2 acid deposition modeling presently underway.

The Nitrogen Eutrophication Workshop, held in December 2-5, 2008, at Calgary, discussed implementation strategies for key components of, and recommendations from, CEMA's Interim Nitrogen (Eutrophication) Management Recommendations and Work Plan. The workshop focus discussed ways to develop region specific critical loads (CL) for Nitrogen deposition in the oil sands area. Researchers highlighted the need for the NSMWG to conduct challenge (nitrogen addition) experiments in uplands, bogs and fens, through a coordinated landscape/watershed approach. Acquiring greater knowledge of nitrogen cycling and transformations in entire ecosystems e.g. bogs, fens, uplands, and lakes are crucial to understanding if Nitrogen deposition will have long-term impacts in the Region.

TMAC Working Group (TMAC)

TMAC is putting the final touches on the Air Contaminants Management Framework (ACMF), formerly known as the Trace Air Contaminants Management Framework. The Framework's key focus has been determined as human health and provides a pro-active and flexible strategy to manage the wide range of current and future air contaminants in the Wood Buffalo Region. TMAC did not extend this ACMF to animal or vegetation health, cumulative exposure, odours or risk perception. A review and assessment of deposition and potential bioaccumulation of trace metals in the AOSR contributed to new knowledge not known at the onset of developing this Framework. The members took this information into consideration, yet determined the Framework will continue to be a work in progress, permit-

ting reviews/amendments from time to time. The ACMF is a consensus document and will be presented to the CEMA GM in June for the first reading.

A peer review of the Traditional Food Consumption Study (TFCS) is underway, which will highlight the validity of the methodology, quality of the data collection and analysis and identify information gaps, bias, and limitations. This review will overarch the Final TFCS Report and contribute to communication between aboriginal communities and their inclusion into further traditional food consumption studies.

A Vision for the Aboriginal Round Table

Promoting Positive Change

The Aboriginal Round Table (ART) task group is committed to making the big change and this can only be done through small changes through time. They understand that they are committed to working with their Culture/Traditional Knowledge as the premise of their decision making. Because of this strategy, their direction will take them to uncharted waters.

The direction takes them to the heart of the social and economic conditions of the communities. In looking at the communities, it is needles to say just how much work needs to be done in order for this change to happen. We all know what has happened to the people through the Canadian

history and our own aboriginal oral history, so the ART task group understands the amount of what that is required in order for the grass roots people to come to appreciate and understand the work of ART.

Consequently, the ART realizes that not only do they want to raise the capacity of the grass roots people but they want to raise the capacity of CEMA in recognizing and accepting their approach.

The aboriginal perspective and decision making in its origin is about respect and working together.

This may sound like a fluffy dream but then great things are realized through big dreams.

"The quality of my decisions is directly proportionate to my patience with my not knowing"

Unknown

Elders Workshop 2009

The TEK Advisory Committee held its annual Elder's Workshop on March 4th and 5th in Fort McMurray. The workshop provided the opportunity to give an update on CEMA's work over the past year and thank the Elders for their continued participation in the Association. Over 80 individuals from various communities participated. The theme "Pass it On" was suggested at last year's session. The focus was on

Elders passing down their Traditional Knowledge to their youth with the intent of promoting Traditional Environmental Knowledge within the region. In keeping with the theme, Aboriginal youth from local schools attended. Elders shared their knowledge through workshops on beading, traditional plants and the local languages- Cree & Dene. (note: lots of pictures may twp pages)

TEK

The TEKAC is currently in the planning stages of the Community Orientation Project. The project will develop and maintain effective relationships between CEMA and communities within the region, and facilitate the development of a regional Aboriginal orientation program for new residents and employees in the RMWB.



2009 CEMA Meeting Dates

General Meeting Dates:

****All GM's will be held at the Sawridge Inn, in Fort McMurray****
(Several members have expressed a desire to limit these meetings to one day, with extended times if required. All effort will be made to accommodate this).

March 25th
March 26th (AGM)
June 03rd
June 04th
September 23rd
September 24th
December 09th
December 10th

Management Committee Meetings: Fort McMurray

April 23rd
May 21st
June 18th
July 10th
September 3rd
October 21st
November 19th
December 17th

Program Manager/Co Chair/Management Committee Meetings: Fort McMurray

April 22nd
July 9th
October 20th

Special Events

Wood Buffalo Regional Science Fair – Syncrude Health & Wellness Centre
April 2nd – 4th

Fort McMurray Home and Leisure Show – MacDonald Island
May 8th – 10th

Environment Week – CEMA Family Fun Day!
June 1st – 7th

** Dates and locations are subject to change.*
A complete list of working groups meeting dates is available at
(780) 799-3947 www.cemaonline.ca

Merçi Beaucoup Mr. President



A special thank you to CEMA President, Randall Barrett for his dedicated service over the past two years, Randall did a wonderful job uniting people and representing CEMA. Randall, always a gentleman and genuinely nice guy will be missed. After sharing so much of his time with CEMA, he will now be able to share more time with his lovely wife Kirstin. CEMA says “Merçi Beaucoup” and offers you and your family best wishes in the years ahead!

MC Members



CEMA would like to offer a huge thank you to Mike Norton, Melanie Sharpe, Don Sutherland, and Stuart Nadeau for their service on the CEMA Management Committee. Each of you devoted a lot of hard work, time and personal commitment to the Association. We wish you the best in your future endeavours and looking forward to working with you on the CEMA Working Groups!



We welcome your submissions!

If you have any ideas for our publication or an article to submit for consideration, please send it in and we would be glad to include it.

The Insider is published by the Cumulative Environmental Management Association. For more information, please contact:

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