



The INSIDER

IN THIS ISSUE: Nitrogen Study Site Visit • Environment Week School Visits • AGM Highlights • Update on CEMA's future

Snaps from 15th Annual Elders' Workshop



The Aboriginal Coordinating Committee (ACC) of CEMA hosted its 15th Annual Elders' Workshop on Aug 13 at Métis Local 1935 in Fort McMurray.

The ACC has 14 First Nation and Métis communities as members from throughout the Lower Athabasca Region. Members of CEMA's executive, staff and working group chairs also attended.

The agenda included a review of the newly drafted Traditional Knowledge Framework to guide the inclusion of traditional knowledge in environmental decision making in northeastern Alberta and a discussion on the future of CEMA.

Photos, from left: Bill Loutitt of Métis Local 1935, Ann Dort MacLean, TKWG co-chair, and Jumbo Fraser of Métis Local 125, speak to the gathering about the need for CEMA to have a future. Steve Tuttle and Mike Poscente, RWG co-chairs, give one of their presentations to the Elders. A group shot of all those who attended this year's event.

More photos of the event are posted on CEMA's Facebook page. <http://on.fb.me/1h9JgTG>. To view a video that was made of some of the Elders speaking about the importance of CEMA, visit our Facebook page, <http://on.fb.me/1NDNbWMM>.



Simulated rain helping determine nitrogen critical load

Determining the critical load of nitrogen on jack pine stands, bogs and fens before negative impacts occur has been the focus of a five-year project funded by CEMA through its Air Working Group (AWG).



Members of CEMA's Aboriginal Coordinating Committee were joined by CEMA staff in July for a visit to the study site for bogs and fens just south of Mariana Lake, a little over an hour south of Fort McMurray. The research at this site has been looking at what happens when nitrogen found in oil sands emissions results in elevated levels of nitrogen in the air or falls in rain or snow onto fens and bogs away from the oil sands areas. The site has been separated into plots where researchers make it 'rain' to gauge the results of absorbing 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25 kilograms of nitrogen per hectare per year. These rates were chosen because they cover the range of nitrogen deposition that the region could see.

Fertilization of forests and peatlands is a potential impact of oil sands' nitrogen emissions. Oil sands-related nitrogen emissions are projected to increase significantly in the future. Before this happens, David Spink, an environmental engineer who is the CEMA project lead says we need to understand at what nitrogen deposition rates effects on vegetation start to occur and what those effects are.



Photo captions from top left, clockwise: Kei Wieder with Kelly MacMillan show Arsene Bernaille and Darrin Bourque changes in some moss. Josh Abel shows his group some changes in the leafy vegetation. A group shot of the researchers including David Spink, an environmental engineer who is the CEMA, far left, and AWG co-chair John Dennis, second from left.

He notes that project results to date clearly show the potential for effects, some of which are likely undesirable and believes the final study results will be very important in helping to establish limits on regional nitrogen deposition.

He adds cumulative environmental effects management is about ensuring that the ecosystems that are important to regional land users and aboriginal communities are protected, and that is the goal behind this project.

So far, we are seeing some fairly dramatic responses to the nitrogen addition, both in the bog and in the fen, adds Kel Wieder, a biology professor at Villanova University, Pennsylvania, and a key study researcher. His team is joined by researchers from Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

In particular, we're seeing greater shrub growth as nitrogen is added. We're seeing greater abundance of some of the sedges and nitrogen effects on the relative growth of the different moss species that are so important to the formation of peat and to the health of the natural ecosystem.



After his visit to the site, Jumbo Fraser, a Métis Local 125 Elder, said it was interesting to see how the plots were set up to show the impacts of different nitrogen levels. He said he was very surprised at the impacts and found it to be an eye-opener when you see the different levels and their impacts. He sees this as valuable research that needs to be shared.

Wieder anticipates recommendations to guide responsible nitrogen emission management in the region in the near future.

He said the rather dramatic growth of shrubs in response to added nitrogen is something we need to keep an eye on.

When you have growth of shrubs, they start to shade out the mosses and those mosses may not do so well. It's those mosses that are key to the continued function of bogs and fens so we need to keep an eye on what's happening with the shrubs and what's happening to the mosses in beneath them as moss decline would be a negative effect; one we would not like to see.



TK Framework update

A Traditional Knowledge Framework (TK Framework) is being developed for northeast Alberta by members of the Traditional Knowledge Working Group and project contractor The Firelight Group.

The framework will provide guidance and standards for meaningful inclusion of traditional knowledge holders in regional planning, regulatory processes and environmental assessment, and monitoring and follow-up.

The TK framework will build on the experience of aboriginal communities in the region and beyond. By this September, the TK Framework should be ready for each of the aboriginal communities, industry and NGO representatives involved to ratify the document for presentation to, and approval by, the CEMA Board for submission to the Government of Alberta.

The TK Framework has been developed over a 18-month period beginning in July 2014. The process has included four rounds of face-to-face meetings, each culminating in larger community workshops. These in-person sessions will be held with First Nations and Métis communities located in northeast Alberta. Other aboriginal communities, as well as industry, government and NGOs have had the opportunity to provide input and comments in each round.

If adopted by the provincial government, the TK Framework could improve protection of aboriginal values, environmental outcomes, regulatory certainty and public trust in decisions that affect the region.

Group updates highlighted CEMA's AGM



It was a day of updates in March as CEMA hosted its AGM at the Sawridge Inn. The AGM featured updates from CEMA's working groups plus a report from the Firelight Group on the progress of the Traditional Knowledge Framework Document and a financial update by Tom Gee. The guest speaker was Mayor Melissa Blake, pictured with former executive director Glen Semenchuk, bottom right, who presented her a gift of CEMA's Storybook Crystal.

Efforts continue to secure CEMA's future

As many of you know, the future of CEMA remains undecided.

What is known is that on June 11, 2015, CEMA received a letter from Alberta Environment and Parks Deputy Minister Bill Werry informing CEMA that it would receive the remainder of its \$5 million in funding for the rest of 2015. The letter also outlined that beginning in 2016, the oil sands industry will no longer be mandated by the Provincial Government to fund CEMA and the Government of Alberta will not be providing funding to CEMA.

This loss of funding means CEMA is likely facing closure at the end of 2015. In fact, there is a member vote scheduled for Sept. 24 on whether to dissolve CEMA. Some have been advocating for CEMA's closure, maintaining that the organization has met its mandate. However, a review of CEMA's Regional Sustainable Development Strategy will demonstrate that many important issues remain incomplete.

In an effort to keep CEMA a viable and sustainable organization, efforts by some members of its Board of Directors and Secretariat are underway to find alternate research funding while maintaining industry participation, operational and structural options, and possible partnerships.

Meanwhile, leaders from CEMA's Aboriginal Coordinating Committee 14 member communities have been writing letters of support for CEMA to Premier Rachel Notley, Alberta Environment and Parks Minister Shannon Phillips and Aboriginal Relations Minister Kathleen Ganley.

WWG work helps create water policy

In March, CEMA members heard then Alberta Environment Minister Kyle Fawcett announce the Surface Water Quantity Management Framework.

Months of work by CEMA's Water Working Group was responsible for the final recommendation presented to the Alberta Government.



by the Alberta Government as environmental policy.

The Framework establishes stringent water use requirements for both current and future oil sands mining operators. Currently, this industry uses 1% of water from the Athabasca River annually.

Those recommendations played a key role in the creation of that Surface Water Quantity Management Framework adopted

To check out the press release, which also has a link to the audio recording of the announcement, visit <http://bit.ly/1Fk05Ur>



Members of the inaugural CEMA Rocs, from left, Bryan Fayant, Lynette Whelan, Nestor Manalo and Carol Christian, pose with the Curl for Kids mascot during the fund-raiser to benefit the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Wood Buffalo.



For Environment Week this year. May 31 to June 6, members of CEMA's Secretariat, Carol Christian, Bryan Fayant and Nestor Manalo, embarked on a road trip and visited Grades 5 to 8 at the Elizabeth Métis Settlement School and Kindergarten to Grade 9 students at Conklin Community School. There we taught students the need for forest fires to break the resin in lodgepole pine cones to release the seeds, make ice cream using recyclables and kid power, and how to build birdhouses which is not as easy as you'd think. We had a great time with the students and know they also had fun as we now have a handmade thank you card from the younger Conklin students - who really loved the ice cream - hanging on the office wall.



Studying the cumulative effects in the Lower Athabasca Region for 15 years
 Cumulative Environmental Management Association
 214-99114 Morrison Ave.
 Fort McMurray, AB.
 T9H 4A4
 PH: 780-799-3081

info@cemaonline.ca
 www.cemaonline.ca
 @CEMAcomms
 FAX: 780-714-3081