



ASTOTIN CREEK

RESILIENCY STUDY

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

October 2021





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Territorial Acknowledgment

Strathcona County honours the past, present and future First Peoples of this land. We acknowledge that this land has embraced and nourished the Cree, Métis, Blackfoot, amongst many others, for generations. We recognize Strathcona County is within Treaty Six Territory and the homeland of the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region Two and Four.

Strathcona County has an inherent responsibility to foster healthier relationships with Indigenous Partners. We will strive to respond to the Calls to Action as outlined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Strathcona County is close in proximity to Enoch Cree Nation (maskêkosihk), Ermineskin Cree Nation (neyaskweyahk), Louis Bull Tribe (kisipatinahk), Michel First Nation, Montana First Nation (akamihk), Papaschase First Nation, Samson Cree Nation (nipisikopahk), and Saddle Lake Cree Nation (onihcikiskwapiwinihk).

Furthermore, the geographic boundaries of Strathcona County includes parts of Regions Two and Four of the Métis Nation of Alberta, and are near the Elizabeth Métis Settlement, Fishing Lake Métis Settlement, Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement, and Kikino Métis Settlement.

*We recognize the importance of allying with First Peoples and taking steps to foster a healthier relationship. As such, we will demonstrate **manacitôwin**, the Cree word meaning respect for each other.*

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Community Engagement Summary

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Astotin Creek and its tributaries have experienced three major flooding events in the past ten years. These events have caused flooded farmland, damaged county roads and threatened homes and industrial infrastructure within the Astotin Basin.

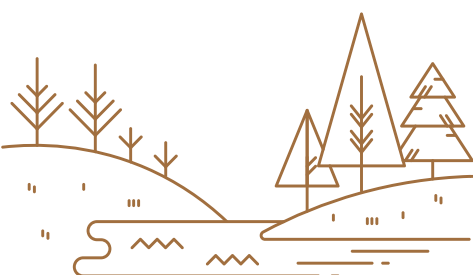
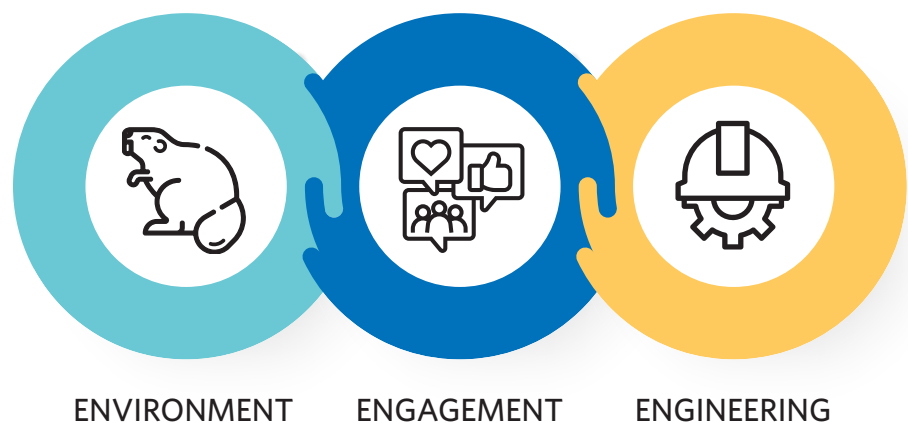
1 Project Overview

The key goals of the study are to:

- Create an action plan that will address flood, drought, and water quality issues in priority areas within the Astotin Creek basin,
- Restore and enhance ecological connectivity and function in critical areas of the Astotin Creek basin, and
- Increase capacity, knowledge, awareness and participation by industrial landowners, private landowners, and agricultural producers in activities that can restore and maintain critical areas and functions of Astotin Creek.

The study will include technical assessments, analyses, planning and development of a Resiliency Action Plan. The technical work will be accompanied by Indigenous, stakeholder, and community engagement. Three elements must be balanced when making decisions about Astotin Creek. The actions in the resiliency plan will reflect community and stakeholder input, sound engineering practices, and the need for a sustainable creek environment.

The three E's that form the project pillars are:

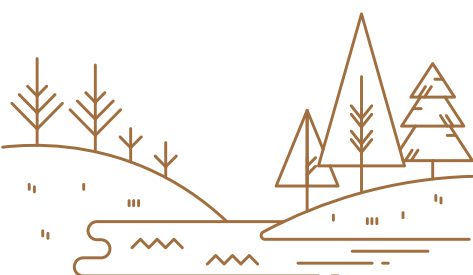


Over the course of the engagement efforts, the comparable pillars of Engineering and Environment will be a constant consideration. **The Engagement Summary is a key piece to the engagement efforts for this project as it provides a report back to the community members we have engaged with.**

This document details the engagement approaches implemented as well as theme and appropriately condense the raw feedback. The summary includes the project background and a summary of the written submissions received. This Engagement summary accounts for the engagement design, considerations, approach and efforts over the **first phase of the Astotin Creek Basin Study, including work up to September 2021.**



This Engagement summary accounts for the engagement design, considerations, approach and efforts over the first phase of the Astotin Creek Basin Study.



2 Project Background

2.1 CONTEXT, & CURRENT CONDITIONS

Key information that was collected:



Ecological Values



Hydrological Characteristics



Community & Stakeholder Interests



Climate Change Impacts



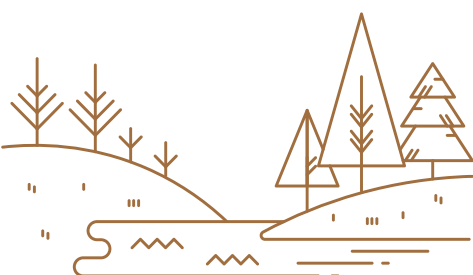
Available resources & expertise

The Astotin Creek Resiliency Study and Plan provides opportunities to not only **build public and stakeholder awareness** of the creek area, but also to increase their capacity for sustainability action with respect to the creek.

In a progressive County with a high agricultural and industrial land user base, and existing partnerships with ecological organizations through the Beaver Hills Biosphere, **balancing economic and environmental needs will be critical to a successful plan** and must be reflected in the engagement activities. The Astotin Creek watershed serves the citizens and neighbours of the County in many ways. Creating a common base of knowledge of the creek resources, conditions and uses, as well as the available resources through County and Biosphere partners will lead to meaningful conversations amongst stakeholders.

The study involves a characterization of the historical and current ecological and hydrological context of the watershed as a focus for planning through public, stakeholder, and Indigenous engagement. A fundamental understanding of the past and current conditions, and future trends of water quality and quantity, flood and drought conditions, and ecological functions of the watershed will inform development of management options, build community and other stakeholder awareness and cooperation, and ultimately, foster the support for an action plan the County can readily implement. **Key information collected includes a description of:**

- » Ecological values, and threats to those values.
- » Hydrological characteristics of the creek system, including flood dynamics, erosion potential, flow, and volume.
- » Community and other stakeholder interests and capacity to contribute to management options.
- » Forecasted impacts of climatic change specific to this region; and
- » Available resources and expertise that can contribute to future management actions.



The engagement goals for this project include:

- » Building community trust and awareness
- » Enhancing community relationships
- » Transparency
- » Developing collaborative solutions
- » Clearly connecting community input to the recommendations and decisions



2.2 ENGAGEMENT PURPOSE & OBJECTIVES

Meaningful community engagement informs sound decision-making via the interests and feedback of stakeholders and the community, as well as meeting the needs of the decision-making body.

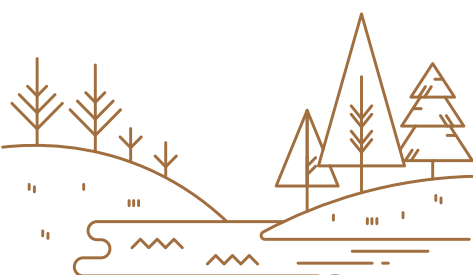
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- » Developing collaborative solutions
- » Clearly connecting community input to the recommendations and decisions.

2.3 ENGAGEMENT, GOVERNANCE AND FOUNDATIONS

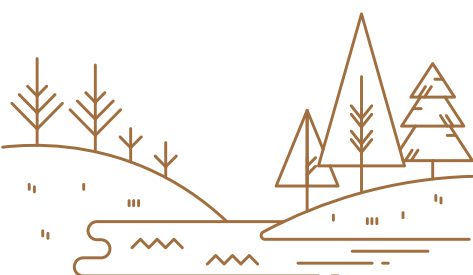
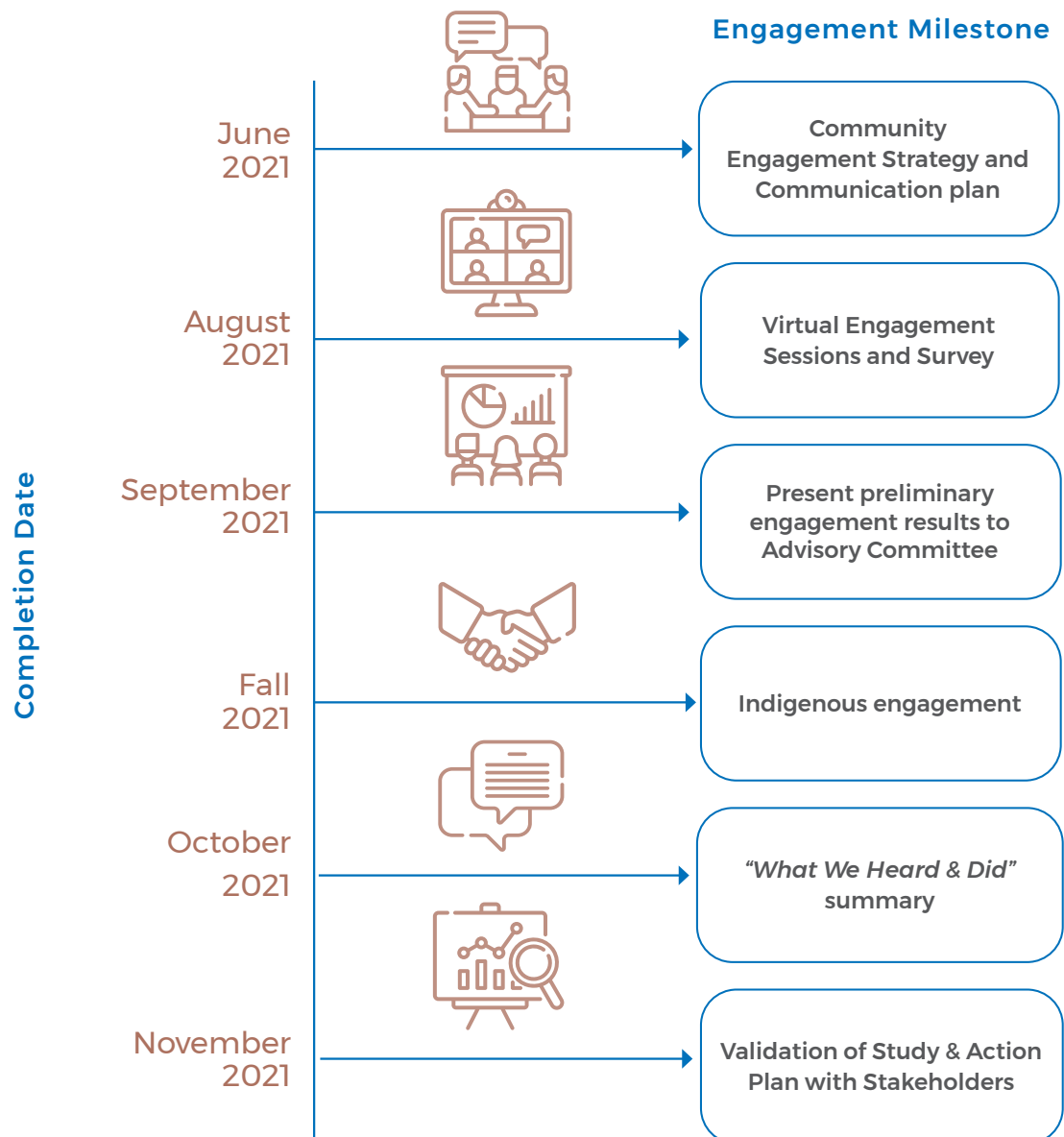
The engagement efforts for the Astotin Creek Resiliency Study reflect the following guiding policies and practices throughout the project:

- » **International Association of Public Participation's (IAP2)**
 - Core Values (www.iap2.org/page/corevalues)
 - Code of Ethics (www.iap2.org/page/ethics)
- » **Strathcona County's**
 - Public Engagement Policy,
 - Public Engagement Framework (Vision and Guiding Principles), and
 - Public Engagement Procedure.



2.4 ENGAGEMENT MILESTONES

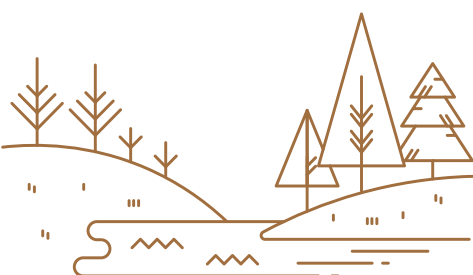
Over the course of the project, key milestones were established to provide meaningful engagement outcomes or the Engineering and Educational considerations as all three streams of project work progress in synergy with each other. These critical tasks and associated timeframes are noted below.



3 Engagement & Communication Approaches

The County is involving stakeholders in the project in many ways. The approaches used are designed to inform the community in as many ways as feasible of the project and to garner community involvement. **Copies of the various materials can be found in Appendix B.** The engagement planning considered many factors including, but not limited to, the point in the farming season, internet accessibility and individual technological capacity, project understanding, and relationships (with the County and amongst the community). The broad outreach provided multiple ways for the community to get involved as per their capacity and interests. For example, the NatureLynx and iNaturealist photo apps provided a way for citizens to submit wildlife data. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 health restrictions, in-person outreach and events were not possible. In order to compensate, key materials were mailed to the affected community members to provide all with the same and complete information. The County project manager received correspondence (email, fax, phone) related to the engagement effort.

Two virtual Public Engagement Sessions were held in August 2021



Summary of Engagement Approaches



Many factors were considered, such as the point in the farming season



In-person outreach and events were not possible due to COVID-19



Key materials were mailed to the affected community members

Engagement & Communications Approaches

Completion Date

Project Introduction Letter and email

May 2021

Road Signs – 4 locations along major rural routes in the north

May to November 2021

Public Engagement Newsletter

May & August 2021

Postcards (approximately 700 basin area residents & businesses)

June & August 2021

Scoop survey (mixed topic survey)

June 2021

Social Media

July & August 2021

Public Engagement Calendar

July 2021

NatureLynx & iNaturalist online photo apps

July & August 2021

County Living Newsletter

July 2021

Stakeholder Engagement Invite Letters & Emails (78 letters)

July 2021

Stakeholder Engagement Package mailouts (78 packages + emails)

August 2021

Project e-newsletter

August 2021

Facilitated Virtual Stakeholder Engagement sessions (afternoon & evening)

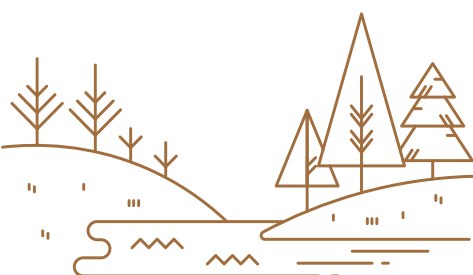
August 10, 2021

Facilitated Virtual Public Engagement session (evening)

August 11, 2021

Virtual Engagement Sessions and Survey

August 11-31, 2021



Virtual Stakeholder Engagement Sessions



Two virtual sessions
were held



The virtual sessions
used an online platform
to replicate in-person
engagement, including
a large room rendering,
display boards and large
project area map



Copies of session
materials were mailed
to 78 adjacent property
owners

Landowner Outreach

At the initial stages of the project, the County facilitated outreach to the landowners with the following objectives in mind:

- » Providing project awareness and information
- » Soliciting access for the environmental studies of the creek, and
- » Garnering “lived experience” feedback and historical knowledge

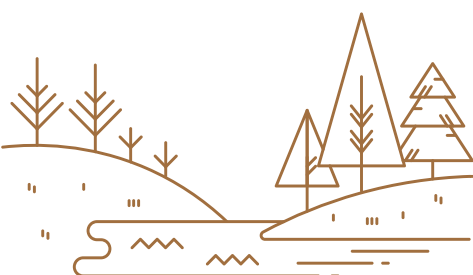
Through the outreach (calls, emails), feedback was provided for the project team’s consideration. This feedback is noted in the What Was Said summary (see appendix A) and is in alignment with feedback received through the other engagement approaches.

Facilitated Virtual Stakeholder Engagement sessions (afternoon & evening)

Two virtual engagement sessions were held for stakeholders and landowners on Tuesday, August 10, 2021. Both evening and daytime sessions were held to offer a choice of times to be as accessible as possible given participant’s varied schedules. They were facilitated by WSP staff and included technical subject matter experts as well as the County project team. The virtual sessions used an online platform that replicated an actual in-person engagement event inclusive of a large room rendering, display boards, and a large project area map. The session started with a project presentation and then a question and answer period where participants could provide their feedback and ask questions of the experts available.

A third virtual engagement session was held on Wednesday, August 11, 2021 for the public with stakeholders also invited. It offered the same presentation and format so that the public and stakeholders all shared the same information and comparable opportunities for feedback.

Copies of the session materials and a hardcopy survey were mailed to 78 adjacent property owners to provide all with the same information and to supplement the virtual sessions whether residents were able to attend or not.



Multiple methods were used to advertise for the project, the virtual sessions, and survey, including mail-outs, newsletter postings, road signs, and the project website (see the Engagement and Communications Approaches Table above). The turnout for the sessions was quite low, with just six, one, and five participants respective to the three sessions.

Survey (Online and hardcopy)

Complementing the virtual engagement sessions, a survey was provided to solicit further feedback regarding the project site's history and current concerns. This feedback helped inform the project team's technical work and helped the team to better understand the extensive "lived experience" held by the participants. The survey was available online from Wednesday, August 11 through to Tuesday, August 31, 2021. Hard copies were also provided in the project package mailout so that all adjacent landowners had the opportunity to complete it.

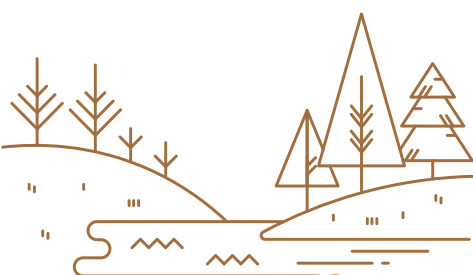
A total of 19 surveys were returned over the course of the engagement period.

3.1 WHAT WAS SAID

The WWS summary describes the process used to solicit community input and includes the raw verbatim input received (see Appendix A). This summary accurately and transparently reflects the comments provided. In the interest of privacy, only comments are recorded, not personal information. The verbatim comments are further themed in the What We Heard summary noted below.

3.2 WHAT WE HEARD

The following details the engagement approaches implemented as well as the themed and appropriately condensed the raw input (WWS).



Key Topics

Over the course of the engagement efforts, three key concerns emerged, all with a range of agreement. Additionally, it was noted that the historical flooding of the creek has had multiple impacts on the land and its use for decades. The key concerns identified are:

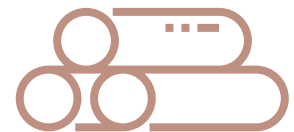
FLOODING

- » Accessibility issues
- » Flooding issues since the 1990s
- » Flooding increasing
- » Flood waters being pumped from one site to another
- » Impacts to agricultural lands
- » Flooding is natural, sometimes too extensive



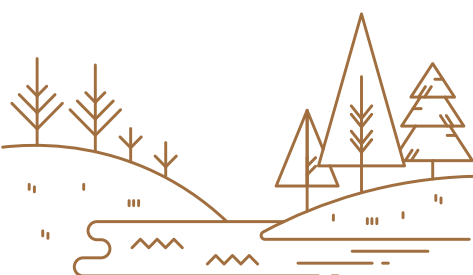
DEVELOPMENT

- » Pipeline servicing problematic
- » Condition of dams, weirs, and culverts is concerning
- » Development has impacted the creek
- » Riparian areas – width/condition



BEAVERS

- » Concerns with Beaver impacts and control (e.g. to cattle)
- » Part of nature
- » Lands being affected by beavers:
 - » *Flooding (negative)*
 - » *Providing water for cattle (positive)*
 - » *Better well water (positive)*





To complement the virtual engagement efforts, an online survey was provided to the community with a series of project related questions designed to garner historical and lived experience as well as desired future conditions. **The complete survey is included in the What Was Said summary which includes all verbatim responses.**

A sample of the responses to just a few questions is provided below.

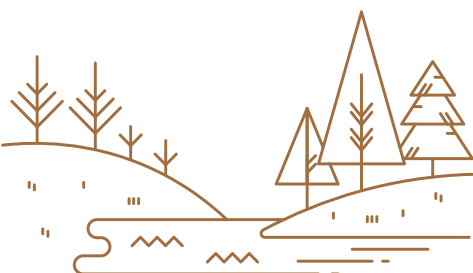
Question:

Has beaver activity on the Astotin Creek and its tributaries impacted your property?

Response: 85.7% responded – “Yes”

The number 1 priority to “maintain” and the number 1 priority to “improve” (2 separate questions) in this area (via a ranking exercise) is “Natural Creek flow path” and “Natural creek pattern and flow channel” respectively. Corresponding question comments indicated:

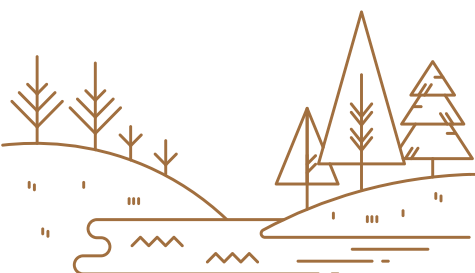
- » Clean out channel for water to flow
- » Control the water flow
- » Stop blockages to creek flowing



3.3 WHAT WE DID

The most critical of all reporting back to the affected community is describing how their input was considered and how it did, or did not, influence the final decisions and design. This is a key component to providing a transparent process. The WWD summary will close the loop on the input provided, demonstrating how it was used and why it was used in the way that it was.

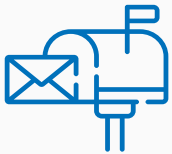
Although the community members may not agree with the project's final outcomes, **this summary aids in the building and maintaining of trust as their voices are demonstrably heard and it is made clear how project determinations were made.** A WWD summary will be provided alongside the Resiliency Action Plan, to be completed by December 2021.



The project team utilized many communication approaches to reach the public.



Road signs



Individually mailed postcards



Online tools

The full list is available in section 3.0 Engagement and Communication Approaches.

4.2 Lessons Learned

At the conclusion of each of the three virtual engagement sessions, the project team met to discuss the event, what needed to be enhanced, or maintained. A consistent concern was the limited attendance at each of the three events. We reviewed the many communication approaches used including, but not limited to: individually mailed postcards and session materials, online tools, and road signs (full list is noted in section 3.0 Engagement and Communications Approaches). The project team concurred they had exhausted all reasonable resources and information streams to promote the project and advertise the events.

The additional concern was the Tuesday evening stakeholder session which was troubled by internet issues. It was determined that both mainstream internet providers had technical issues across the Edmonton region that evening and was unavoidable. The contingency to have PDF's of the presentation and staff redundancy to provide "back-up" worked well in this situation and should be replicated going forward. Other potential contributors to the levels of participation for the Astotin Creek engagement sessions include a competing community event as well as participant "Zoom fatigue."

