

February 2015



**EAGLE CREEK
WATERSHED GROUP**

**Eagle Creek Watershed Group Inc.
Watershed Technician: Glenn Barclay PAg
Ph: (306) 831-6009
Email: eaglecreekwatershed@hotmail.com
Office: 122 Main Street Biggar**

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EAGLE CREEK WATERSHED NEWS



If you are receiving this newsletter, you are part of the Eagle Creek Watershed and are impacted by and have an effect on this, our watershed. You will see on pages 2 and 3 that our technician, Glenn Barclay, studied the creek this past summer and found its overall health to be quite good. That is reassuring, however, he only looked at the creek and the riparian area nearby.

There are 21 RM's in west central Saskatchewan that are part of the overall watershed. What is its health like and what are some of the important issues? There are three important players living in the watershed; agriculture, industry and communities. All three function as a result of this healthy watershed and depend on its future health.

How are we doing as stewards of our watershed? Are there things we can do to improve its health going forward? More and more we are living in a regulated environment. Regulations generally become more restrictive as a result of some catastrophe. Yes, we have a healthy watershed and luckily we have the freedom of few regulations on how we enjoy our livelihood. So, let's not screw this up for future generations. Everyone of us has a responsibility to be proper stewards, our children depend on it!

Kevin Olson, President Eagle Creek Watershed Group Inc.



Cargill Cares Helps Fund a Survey of Eagle Creek

by Glenn Barclay PAg

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This past summer a survey was done of the Eagle Creek to collect information on the health of the creek. "Cargill Cares", through Prairie Malt Limited in Biggar, supplied a generous grant in the Focus Area of the Environment to help collect this information.

The actual origin of the Eagle Creek occurs somewhere around Unity.

FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS SURVEY, DATA WAS COLLECTED FROM THE SOUTH END OF OPUNTIA LAKE ALL THE WAY TO THE NORTH SASKATCHEWAN RIVER.

Objectives of the Survey were to collect data and observations on the following;

- 1) Check creek bank integrity. How much erosion was taking place?
- 2) Invasive weeds; Were there prohibited or noxious weeds present and to what extent?
- 3) Impact of cattle on the creek either by grazing or confined livestock operations close to the creek.
- 4) Impact of annual crop production on the creek.
- 5) Recreation, industrial or non-agricultural use impacts on the creek.
- 6) Wildlife habitat; aquatic and terrestrial.
- 7) Waterfowl habitat.

Accurate flow rates and measurable water quality information were not collected as the Saskatchewan Water Security Agency collects this information.

The creek flowed through 148 sections of land in this survey. The breakdown is as follows;

RM 318 – 21 sections,
RM 288 – 15 sections,
RM 287 – 9 sections,
RM 317 – 19 sections,
RM 316 – 27 sections,
RM 346 – 36 sections
RM 376 – 21 sections.

For 67 sections I was not able to get to the creek to make any observations or take photos. A "stop" in this survey is where I made observations and took pictures of the creek bed or the vegetation close to the creek. At some stops only one picture was taken. At other stops multiple pictures were taken. There were 81 "stops"

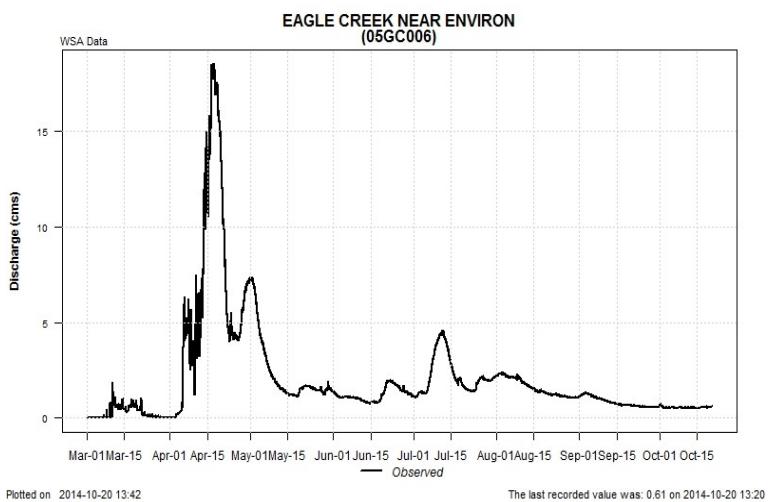
Observations:

- There are some areas where cattle are causing erosion but the percentage of the overall Creek bed where this is occurring is extremely small. Rushes will move in rapidly to stabilize the bank. As the creek gets closer to the North Saskatchewan River there is some slumping of the creek bank. This is causing problems with some grid roads and a few yards.
- Weeds - I observed none of the highly invasive ones we are concerned about. This does not mean there are none of these weeds out there. I may have missed some bad spots. If you manage land close to the Eagle Creek what weeds have you noticed? Contact me at 306-831-6009 with your observations.
- The number of cattle grazing next to the creek has generally decreased over the past few years due to the declining number of producers with cattle herds. There are no large scale feedlots bordering the creek.

- Annual cropping close to the creek bank occurs only in a few areas - so it affects a very small percentage of the overall creek bank. In most instances there is a wide area of non cultivation (a buffer strip) before you get to the water. The potential spill sites for an agricultural chemical is a very small percentage of the overall creek length.
- Man made impact on the creek is low. There are a few party spots but considering the overall length of the surveyed creek bed they are few and far between. There are two spots where there are pipeline crossings under the creek. The number of gravel pits in RM's 316 & 317 were a surprise (seven in total).
- I think for many people the number of wildlife species that use the Eagle Creek system would be surprising. There is a thriving jackfish population this year. There is an abundance of waterfowl, ducks, geese, pelicans and of course eagles which all use the Eagle Creek. Mammals such as deer, moose, muskrats, foxes and beaver can also be found.

The following chart was supplied by The Saskatchewan Watershed Management Agency. Creek flow follows the basic pattern of an early spring flow followed by a decrease in flow with a few spikes in flow due to rainfall events over the summer. As a contrast in 2002 (a drought year) there was NO recorded flow from May 5th to June 11th!

2014 Flow to Oct 20th



The data collected this summer is a snapshot of what the creek was like in 2014. The data and the 350 photos can be used in the future to monitor changes at various locations along the creek's ecosystem.



Interested in advertising in the Eagle Creek Newsletter? Phone Glenn at 306-831-6009

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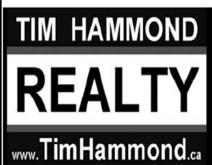
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Glenn Barclay PAg
122 Main Street Biggar

Phone:
306-831-6009

E-mail:
eaglecreekwatershed@hotmail.com



**EAGLE CREEK
WATERSHED GROUP**

**INVASIVE SPECIES CAN BE MORE THAN
JUST WEEDS ...**

It is not just weeds (such as purple loosestrife) that can adversely affect an aquatic ecosystem. Zebra (left) and Quagga mussels (right), can become a problem. The fully grown adult is shown in the picture (quaggas are slightly larger than zebra mussels). Fish such as Carp and round gobies can also invade an aquatic system.

If you want more information call Glenn at 306-831-6009



**Zebra and Quagga Muscles – A threat to the Eagle Creek?
By Glenn Barclay PAg**

These mussels, originally from the Black Sea area in Europe, first showed up in 1986 in Lake Erie. They are now in all the Great Lakes as well as creeks, rivers and lakes throughout the Eastern United States. In 2013 zebra mussels first showed up in Lake Winnipeg. These mussels will disrupt the food chain, harming some species and assisting other species' survival. Their large numbers would also affect water flow. When they become established anything solid like turbines, propellers on boats and rocks could have hundreds of thousands of these mollusks on their surface. Check out the internet for pictures of what infestations can look like!

These mussels could attach themselves to watercraft, trailers and related equipment. A boat used in Lake Winnipeg could easily transfer this invasive species west to water bodies in Saskatchewan. If you have never heard about this mussel you could inadvertently spread the problem.

Before returning home from out of the province, or if you have someone visiting you from Manitoba, make sure to ;

CLEAN - Inspect the motor, drain holes and the hull of your craft to detect any suspicious objects. Disinfect tow ropes. Inspect the deck, bilge and live tanks. Disinfect fishing gear by submerging it in chlorinated water. Wash, scrub or rinse using hot water away from storm drains, ditches and waterways.

DRAIN - On land before leaving the boat launch area, drain all on-board water from the motor, livewells, bilge, ballast tanks, etc. Flush with hot tap water away from storm drains, ditches, etc.

DRY - Dry your craft for several days (depending on climactic conditions).

READ MORE ABOUT AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES - KEEP INFORMED !!