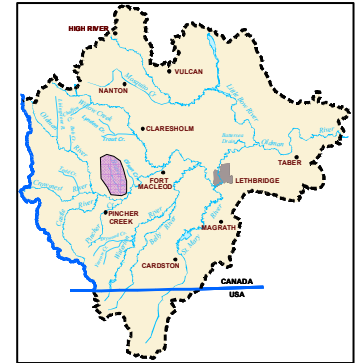


Beaver Creek Watershed Group

By Dixon Hammond



Established in 1999, the Beaver Creek Watershed Group (BCWG) is an association of farming, ranching, and recreational landowners that share historical and current use and enjoyment of Beaver Creek, located northeast of Pincher Creek and northwest of Brocket, Alberta. Through cooperative efforts, we wish to improve the integrity of Beaver Creek, particularly with respect to riparian management and water quality. Overall, the group's goal is to see this creek go from a sometimes seasonal creek to a year round watercourse. The BCWG believes that through the cooperation and education of the landowners, along with the support of the M.D. of Pincher Creek, M.D. of Willow Creek, private industry, the provincial and federal government as well as non-government groups, this is an achievable goal.



What seemed impossible nearly ten years ago has become a larger success story than ever intended. The group still holding on to its original 7 landowners has grown to include the entire Beaver Creek basin. The main reason being that it is not just the people that own water frontage that have the responsibility to maintain creek health, it takes an entire community and we all have an impact with regards to the creek.

In total BCWG has developed 30 plus off-stream watering sites, numerous fencing projects, a complete five year water quality monitoring project and annual tours and workshops each year showcasing the groups work.

The BCWG was not very active in 2008. Coordinator Dixon Hammond focused on a challenge of going back to school to become a Heavy Equipment Technician. His habit of farming runs deep in his veins but just needs a little off farm support. Despite all of that, the group held its annual tour on July 10th Shock and Awe was built to showcase a joint project between Alberta Conservation Association (ACA), the Oldman Watershed Council (OWC), Cows and Fish and the BCWG. We developed a project to tie water quality, riparian health and fish habitat and how each affects the others. With riparian health inventories, annual fish counts and our five years of water quality trends, the data was mostly in place to develop what most people should understand: whatever we do on the land, either recreationally or agriculturally, ultimately effects water quality, riparian health and fish habitat.

2009 marks a significant year as we have been around for ten years. This year will showcase all of our work, successes and failures because we learn from our mistakes. We plan to finalize our water quality data and continue developments with some of our newest members. The past ten years has given the creek time to recover in some areas. Mostly around highlighted projects however as a whole the biggest success has been the awareness in the group and community. A lot of the success of the BCWG has been built by many groups and organizations, such as Cows and Fish, Fisheries and Oceans, ACA, OWC, Alberta Agriculture, Province of Alberta, Government of Canada, PFRA, Alberta Stewardship Network and the Southwest Alberta Conservation Partnership. Most importantly the landowners themselves, they own the results and continue to see the importance of maintaining what has taken centuries to build. We are still "Driven by Nature, Powered by Producers".