

Backgrounder

2008 Saskatchewan Lieutenant Governor Greenwing Conservation Award

*****2008 Recipient*****

Friends of Wascana Marsh (Regina)

Project: Wings Over Wascana Nature Festival

Nominator: Karen McIver, Board Member, Saskatchewan Outdoor & Environmental Education Association

The nomination for Friends of Wascana Marsh reads: "The leadership that Friends of Wascana Marsh displays in this educational project has SOEEA's utmost respect in that hundreds of people from SK become better educated about the wetland ecosystem in our province's capital city."

In conjunction with International Migratory Bird Day, the WOW Nature Festival lasts three days and features a variety of public activities intended to inform and educate students, community members and families about the value of wetland ecosystems and their benefits to waterlife, wildlife and the people of SK. Some of these activities include: international guest speakers, presentations on the importance of conserving wetlands, outdoor wetland activities and a public fundraising dinner.

Volunteers for the WOW Nature Festival range from university education students to experienced bird watchers. Volunteers lead live animal presentations, owl pellet dissection, guide nature hikes, kite flying, scavenger hunts and more. The Friends of Wascana Marsh have a vision to "strive to preserve and enhance the biodiversity of the marsh habitat and provide outdoor nature-based educational interpretive opportunities to promote ecotourism and environmental sustainability within an urban setting."

In 2008, over 200 students got to explore the Wascana Marshland learn about wetlands and wildlife during the festival. Each year, the festival seeks to reach out to inform and educate more students, community members and families. In 2008, an essay-writing competition engaged students in SK to write about the importance of conserving wetlands such as the Wascana Marsh. The WOW also practices and teaches Leave No Trace principals and participants gain a better understanding of how to treat the land, animals and water around us and how to live more responsibly in our urban wetlands.

For more information on the Friends of Wascana Marsh and the Wings Over Wascana Nature Festival, visit <http://www.wascanamarsh.ca/>

The Saskatchewan Forestry Association, (Prince Albert)

Nominator: Mr. Carmen Dodge, President of Nature Prince Albert

Project: Kristi Lake Nature Trail

***The nomination for the Saskatchewan Forestry Association (SFA) reads:
“The membership of the SFA saw a need for an outdoor learning
environment in the Prince Albert area and envisioned a nature trail as the
best venue. This project is a lasting legacy for the Saskatchewan Forestry
Association of which its members are very proud.”***

The SFA offers outdoor education through its Focus on Forest program, used by teachers across the province. The Kristi Lake Nature Trail provides the outdoor learning environment to show the diversity of different ecosystems and capture student's interest in learning about the outdoors.

With only 2 paid employees, the volunteer members spent many hours walking through the forest area and developing the interpretive plan. Volunteers built the boardwalk through the wetland bog and also developed an interpretive brochure. Member volunteers go out once a week to replenish brochures at the trail head and empty garbage containers to ensure the trail is ready for users

Approximately half of the 1.8 km Kristi Lake Nature Trail near Prince Albert tells a story about the wetland inhabitants and the value and benefits of wetland conservation. Since opening the trail in May 2008, hundreds of school students, general public and visitors to PA have enjoyed the trail. Further amenities are planned including a bench overlooking the lake and a dock platform.

For more information on the Saskatchewan Forestry Association and the Kristi Lake Nature Trail, visit www.whitebirch.ca

South East Upper Souris River Agri-Environmental Group Plan, (SE-USRAEGP) (Carlyle)

Nominator: Judy Riddell, Executive Director, Cornerstone Regional Economic Development Authority (REDA)

The nomination reads: “The group has had a very significant impact on the way that wetland and riparian areas are perceived by the landowners within the South East Upper Souris River Basin. None of these accomplishments would have been possible, if not for a group of concerned landowners willing to volunteer their time in the hope that they could have a positive impact on the health of their watershed.”

Led by a group of volunteer landowners in the Upper Souris River Watershed and in partnership with the local REDA, the SE-USRAEGP seeks to increase awareness about the importance of wetlands and riparian areas and their role in maintaining a healthy and sustainable environment.

In 2006, a group of landowners worked together with the Cornerstone REDA to form the SE-USRAEGP and develop the mandate of the group plan. This project has been led by a group of concerned landowners who have been willing to volunteer their time in the hopes of having a positive impact on the health of their watershed. The volunteer group was then able to secure funding to hire a BMP technician to help promote the importance of wetland and riparian areas and to help landowners implement management practices.

The group plan has a mandate to work with producers to improve the condition of these areas on their farms and to help landowners access federal funding for programs to improve the management of wetland and riparian areas. The group has held several events to promote the importance of wetland and riparian areas and management practices. Since 2006, the SE-USRAEGP has made presentations at over 15 events attended by over 900 landowners. As over

March '08, the 59 producers have applied for funding encompassing 218 projects and amounting to over \$1,000,000.

In addition to its efforts with local producers, the group has developed a livestock grazing demonstration site in conjunction with a local 4-H group. This project will teach the farmers of tomorrow about the importance of proper grazing management and will showcase management practices to improve wetland and riparian areas. A radio transmitter erected at the demo site enables anyone who stops to hear about the importance of proper management and its benefits to both the environment and the producer.

For more information on the South East Upper Souris River Agri-Environmental Group Plan, visit <http://www.creda.sk.ca/aegp1.htm>