

Lake Friendly Accord and the Lake Friendly Stewards Alliance

The Challenges

Excess phosphorus and nitrogen causes an increase in the frequency and severity of algal blooms in waterways. Over the past several decades, significant increases in phosphorus and nitrogen loading to waters have been documented across North America including in Lake Winnipeg.

Algal blooms are an important issue in lakes, rivers and streams across the Lake Winnipeg basin which stretches across a million square kilometers through Canada and the United States including parts of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, North and South Dakota, Minnesota, Montana and Manitoba. Algal blooms can:

- cause taste and odour problems in drinking water;
- make shorelines and beaches unsuitable for swimming and other recreation;
- impair ecosystem health by negatively impacting aquatic life and habitat including for fish;
- impact commercial and recreational fishing potential; and
- produce toxins that can be dangerous to people, livestock, and pets.

Phosphorus and nitrogen are contributed by virtually all of our activities including point sources such as wastewater and non-point source runoff such as from agriculture, golf courses and urban and cottage areas. In addition, trends such as the loss of wetlands and riparian areas, and increased drainage, have increased the movement of phosphorus and nitrogen from land to water.

Lake Friendly Accord

Everyone needs to work together and play a role in reducing phosphorus and nitrogen loading to waterways. The concept of a Lake Friendly Accord was first [announced](#) in June 2013 as a way of coordinating action toward a common goal of improving water quality by reducing nutrients through the engagement of all. Manitoba partnered with the Mayors and Reeves of the south basin of Lake Winnipeg to build on the success of the existing “Lake Friendly” awareness program to ensure that this Accord will engage all sectors of society in action to protect our lakes and rivers. The Lake Friendly Accord is a pledge, with signatories supporting a common goal to reduce nutrient loading to waterways by working collaboratively, developing specific commitments, and reporting annually on plans, progress and actions.

The Accord will provide a framework for all stakeholders including governments and non-government agencies to identify actions that they can take to reduce nutrient loading and to improve water quality. The Accord will not duplicate but will build on existing transboundary mechanisms and agreements such as through the International Joint Commission, Red River Basin Commission and the Prairie Provinces Water Board.

The Lake Friendly Accord is gaining momentum and generating interest from a wide range of stakeholders, jurisdictions and inter-jurisdictional agencies. The Accord supports and builds on the Water Charter endorsed by Premiers in 2010. More recently, in 2013, Canada’s Western Premiers agreed to explore ways to improve the exchange of information and best practices to address water quality challenges across watersheds and specifically referenced the Manitoba-led Lake Friendly Accord. In addition, at the 68th Annual Meeting of the Midwestern Legislative Conference of the Council of State, legislators resolved to improve cross border water quality, including implementing common goals and shared targets, for better and broader management of nutrients.

Lake Friendly Stewards Alliance

To support the goal and objectives of the Lake Friendly Accord, a Lake Friendly Stewards Alliance has been established to help implement action. The Lake Friendly Stewards Alliance is co-chaired by Minister Gord Mackintosh, Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship, and Mayor Rick Gamble of the South Basin (Lake Winnipeg) Mayors and Reeves. The Alliance is a group of stakeholders who provide a forum to facilitate information sharing, enhance collaboration and coordination, improve reporting and accountability, increase efficiencies and technology transfer, enhance stewardship and economic opportunities, and celebrate nutrient reduction success stories. The Alliance membership will continue to expand, building broad representation from federal, provincial, municipal, First Nations and Métis governments, transboundary agencies, conservation districts, agriculture, business and industry, cottage associations, and environmental non-governmental organizations.

The following six Working Groups have been established under the Alliance:

- Communications and Education Working Group
- Rural Landscapes Working Group
- Community Landscapes Working Group
- Science, Research and Traditional Knowledge Working Group
- Innovation, Economic Development and Technology Application Working Group
- Governance Working Group

Working groups are developing sector specific nutrient mitigation actions and developing strategies to engage signatories to the Accord who will define their specific commitments in Annexes to the Accord. The signed

Accord, signatory specific Annexes and related action plans will be shared publicly to improve communication and inspire others to take action. Working Group Chairs are part of an Alliance Steering Committee that is providing overall direction and coordination for the Alliance. Bob Sandford, the EPCOR Chair of the Canadian Partnership Initiative in support of United Nations “Water for Life” Decade is the Ambassador for the Alliance.

The list of stakeholders invited to participate in the Lake Friendly Stewards Alliance is growing – these are many of our invitees as of March 2014.

Municipal Governments

- South Basin Mayors and Reeves
- City of Winnipeg
- Association of Manitoba Municipalities
- Partnership of the Manitoba Capital Regions

Aboriginal Government and Stakeholders

- Southern Chiefs’ Organization
- Manitoba Métis Federation
- Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
- First Nations governments

Federal Government

- Environment Canada
- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada

Commercial Fishers

- Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation
- Manitoba Wildlife Federation
- Lake Winnipeg Fishers Co-Management Board

Agricultural Sector

- Keystone Agricultural Producers
- Canadian Fertilizer Institute
- Manitoba Pork Council
- Manitoba Beef Producers
- Prairie Improvement Network
- Manitoba Livestock Manure Management Initiative Inc.

Research / Education Partners

- Lake Winnipeg Research Consortium
- University of Manitoba
- University of Winnipeg
- Red River College
- United Nations Water For Life
- International Institute of Sustainable Development
- Engineering Consultants
- Landscape Architects – Scatliff, Miller and Murray

Environmental Agencies and Stakeholder Organizations

- UNESCO - Water for Life
- Manitoba Conservation Districts Association
- Lake Winnipeg Foundation
- Red River Basin Commission
- Rivers West
- Ducks Unlimited
- Native Plant Solutions
- International Institute for Sustainable Development
- Manitoba Eco-Network
- Manitoba Association of Cottage Owners
- Manitoba Water Council
- Sail Manitoba
- Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society
- Nature Conservancy of Canada
- Center for Indigenous Environmental Resources
- Lake Friendly
- Fort Whyte Alive
- Lake of the Woods Water Sustainability Foundation
- Grindstone Cottage Owners Association
- Manitoba Cottage Owners Association

Business/Economic Leaders

- Economic Development Winnipeg
- Manitoba Environmental Industries Association
- Winnipeg Chambers of Commerce
- Manitoba Chambers of Commerce
- Third Quarter

Province of Manitoba

- Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship
- Manitoba Federal-Provincial and International Relations
- Manitoba Municipal Government
- Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation
- Manitoba Agriculture Food and Rural Development
- Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation
- Manitoba Hydro
- Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs

Reducing nutrient loading and improving water quality is a tremendous challenge that is common to many jurisdictions and watersheds. There are efficiencies and opportunities to be gained by sharing expertise, research, innovation, and ideas for engaging stakeholders and the general public. We can overcome this challenge together through a commitment to the Lake Friendly Accord.

To read the to learn more about the commitments that are being made and to find out what you can do, contact Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship at 1-204-945-6959 or visit www.manitoba.ca/lakefriendlyaccord.

