

Municipal District of Bonnyville Media Release

2018 Flood Mitigation Report

July 10, 2018 – After a wet two years, there are a number of areas throughout the Municipal District of Bonnyville experiencing flooding.

Staff from Transportation and Utilities, as well as Agriculture and Waste, have spent the past few months trying to keep people's properties dry.

It all started in the summer of 2017, with excessive rain falling across the region. Lake levels rose, rushing water washed out roads, crops were lost and homes flooded. The rain prompted a request from M.D. Council to Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) to remove the weir in Moose Lake as a way to lower water levels. The final decision on the weir will be made by the Alberta government.

This year, another winter of heavy snow, and a spring that saw storms with massive amounts of rain, have not helped matters. The water table throughout the region is still high – making drainage almost impossible in some areas.

Water tables in other parts of the province are also high, and flooding is an ongoing issue. Here is a rundown of the flooding issues around the M.D., and what is being done to try to fix them.

Country Lane and Country Side Estates, rural Cold Lake: In mid-April, a fast melting snowpack, coupled with thawing temperatures during the day and freezing temperatures up to -20 C at night led to extensive flooding. The thaw-freeze cycle kept one of the pipes in the stormwater management system blocked, which stopped water from draining out of the subdivision, effectively backing up the entire drainage system.

What's being done: Engineers have created a plan that will open up an overflow ditch that had been previously covered, see several culverts installed that will help divert the water, and screens put across culverts in the stormwater management ponds so staff can clear matted organic materials (broken reeds, grass, etc.) efficiently.

Crane Lake: There were washouts and a large water cut going through the Crane Lake West Campground. There were numerous erosion problems affecting residents.

What we did: The M.D. added ditches with coconut matting and rocks to help lessen erosion and protect the riparian area. Coconut matting allows water to flow, while at the same time protecting the land. It also allows for grass to grow, which will help stop erosion.

Crawford Estates, rural Cold Lake: This subdivision is located across the road from the Grand Centre Golf Course and on the shores of Crawford (Pinsky) Lake. The lake has been experiencing high water levels, and some residents now have the lake literally in their backyard. Crawford Lake is a fish-bearing lake, and as such, there are strict rules in place by AEP to protect the fish population.

What's being done: The M.D. is currently pumping water out of the lake, thanks to a water diversion license issued to the municipality by AEP. The water is being transported to Township Road 630 (Ski Hill Road), to be used during the reconstruction project.

Moose Lake: As previously mentioned, Moose Lake's water levels were extremely high in 2017. With another snow-heavy winter, and rainy spring, the water levels are still high and are negatively affecting the residents of Hillside Estates and Birch Grove Subdivision.

Birch Grove: On May 23, 2018, T & U staff started hauling water out of Birch Grove with trucks. The flooding here was caused by a quick snow melt and high-water table.

What's being done: Originally the M.D. had installed a culvert to divert the water through a ditch into the lake. However, AEP issued a Notice of Non-Compliance and Water Act Enforcement Order No. WA-EO-04/LAR. S.E. Design and Consulting Inc. is currently engineering a new plan for water diversion, which will have to be approved by AEP before it is put in place.

Hillside Estates: The storm ponds here started overflowing during the snow melt. The water table is extremely high, which is preventing the water from being soaked up into the ground.

What's being done: The M.D. has been pumping water out of the area for the past month. In turn, the water has been getting used for the M.D.'s dust suppressant program and anywhere crews are doing base gravel on roads. S.E. Design is also looking at Hillside Estates to engineer a solution and come up with a flood mitigation plan for three Moose Lake subdivisions – Birch Grove, Hillside and Willow Ridge.

It's not just residential areas suffering from flooding issues. There are also numerous roads that having been affected.

Twp. Rd. 622, west of Goodridge: This road experienced a severe washout.

What we did: Installed larger culverts. Flooding issues have been resolved.

Range Road 435, south of Highway 28: Water has been flowing over this road and a Ducks Unlimited weir since January, even in negative temperatures.

What we did: T & U staff installed three large (1,000 mm) culverts under the road, which has allowed the area to dry.

Wolf Lake Road: Running water washed out a portion of the road. Between industry traffic and campers travelling to the M.D.'s Wolf Lake Campground, it is a high-traffic road.

What being done: A temporary bridge has been installed. A larger culvert will need to be installed to divert the water and prevent another washout from happening. The M.D., with funding from Industry Partners, are currently reconstructing the Wolf Lake Road, and Director Darcy Zelisko is investigating if this fix can be added to the current project.

Rge. Rd. 430 and Twp. Rd. 640: This road allowance is surrounded by two sloughs, which have no outlet. It is regularly flooded.

What's being done: T & U crews are currently raising the grade at this location. T & U is working with our neighbours on drainage improvements at this intersection.

Sometimes flooding is caused by pests – namely beavers.

Director of Agriculture and Waste, Matt Janz said the wet weather is to blame for the increase in beavers, and therefore for the increase in flooding beavers cause.

“Beavers will have larger families, sometimes multiple families when it's wet because they have better access to water and food,” he explained. “When things are dry, beaver families are definitely smaller.”

Janz said Ag & Waste staff are having some difficulty in keeping up with the flooding the busy beavers have caused. However, he urges residents to call 780-826-3951 and report the flooding – even if it's a repeat dam, so that staff can stay on top of the problems and track the areas that are being affected.

The 2017-2018 beaver season was the third year the M.D. hired private trappers to help get rid of the wood-eating rodents in high-problem areas. This season, trappers caught 588 beavers from Oct. 1 to May 15 – the recognized trapping season for beavers.

“We hired the trappers because we knew the wet weather was going to cause problems,” Janz said. “Because of this program, there are less flooding concerns for us to deal with.”

While the beaver trapping season has come to an end, Janz said farmers can still trap the pests on their private land to help alleviate the trouble they are causing.

For more information, contact Janz at 780-826-3951.

If you spot a flooding problem after hours, please call our 24-hour hotline at 780-812-5000.

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For more information, contact:

Darcy Zelisko, Director of Transportation and Utilities – 780-826-3951

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