Environmental Advisory Committee
2024 Winter Newsletter

TO PROMOTE EDUCATION, ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS, AND PROVIDE ADVICE FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF THE VILLAGE OF SPRING LAKE

As usual, this past September we participated in the Village's Fall Festival. Even with the rainy day, many brave residents came out to see what was offered and enjoyed all of the activites. We had three members and one volunteer who "manned" our table. It is always enjoyable meeting and discussing various environmental topics and concerns with you. This helps to give us direction as to what we should be working on when we get feedback and suggestions from you, so Thank You to those who stopped by and said hello.

The beginning of Spring of 2024 started out the same as many of our springs of late with very dry conditions and fire bans in place. We do our best to get pertinent information out to the community and to the Village administration office in regards to how to deal with certain conditions. We also utilize the community photo boards, (which is one of our initiatives) to share information and pointers to help educate residents on matters that affect everyone. During dry weather or drought conditions, the best way to look after and protect your gardens and plants is to mulch. Wether it is leaving grass cuttings on your lawn, spreading compost around tree bases or in your garden, these are approaches that will help retain water for your plants and yard. Another good approach is to use a rain barrel and harvest any amount of rain or spring snow that we may get. Using harvested water and compost that you produce yourself is also cost saving practises that any living material in your yard will love you for. Watch the community boards, the Village website and the EAC link on their web site throughout the year for information links, tips and pointers in how to deal with drought or dry conditions within our community.

This past summer, we participated in the Summer LakeKeepers program coordinated through the Alberta Lake Management Society (ALMS). This program allows volunteers to independently monitor their lakes for parameters important to ecological health. Several sampling dates occurred over the summer by three of our members and one volunteer. The results from the Summer LakeKeepers program will be shared once ALMS finishes compiling all the data. We have requested to participate in the Winter LakeKeepers program which will help provide insight into the winter conditions of our lake. Check back to the EAC link on the Village web sight for reports as they will be posted when they are available to us.

Our loon population was the same as the past many years with four nesting pairs arriving at Spring Lake in the spring of 2024. Two of the loon nesting platforms were put out, with both of them being used this year. An unusal event this year was that there was an extra loon that arrived as well, that did not have a mate. There were a few loon fights that were observed in the spring when the extra loon was being quite aggressive and trying to take over to have a mate for itself. (It is unknown whether the extra loon was a male or female). It appeared after nesting took place, one of the loons disappeared as there was only one loon looking after the nest on the platform on the west side of the lake. When a loon egg hatches, the female will call to the male to come to the nest and take the hatchling into the water while the female remains on the nest if there is a second egg. This occurred as usual this spring, however the other loon on the west side of the lake did not respond to the call of the female to look after the hatchling. This would appear that something happened to the loon that mated with the female, as the remaining loon did not look after the new born at all. It was a struggle for the mother loon, going off of the nest to feed the new hatchling and to go back onto the nest to hatch the second egg that was on the

nest, leaving the new hatchling swimming close by the platform until the mother could go back into the water again to feed the chick. As a result of this, unfortunately, the mother loon died sitting on the nest just as the second egg had hatched and the chick as well died on the nest. When the platform was brought back onto shore and the mother loon removed from the platform, the second egg she had hatched was a goose egg! A happy ending though, the extra loon that was on the west side of the lake adopted the young chick after all and looked after it and fed it until it was independent enough to look after itself. It is so interesting having the loon platforms where we are able to observe this loon behaviour. Overall this summer, out of the four nesting pairs, we had three chicks survive, but unfortunately, it appears two adult loons did not.

Along with doing the annual loon count for Birds Canada, an EAC member has been logging data in regards to lake levels for many years and reporting them to the Alberta Government. As you probably have noticed, the lake levels were very low this fall. As reported, the levels were down approximately 10 inches. This is the lowest the lake levels have ever been according to the statistics from the government. Everyone hope for lots of snow this winter and lots of rain in the spring.

Three of our members again voluteered with Rona, Parkland County, the City of Spruce Grove and the Town of Stony Plain in the one day only event at the beginning of May selling rain barrels at cost. We have been partners with these other communities and Rona since the beginning of this project which has been occuring for approximately ten years. On average, between 300 and 350 barrels are sold each year. We are happy to be a part of this initiative and partnership and encourage everyone to watch for the sale each spring. As mentioned earlier in this newsletter, it is important for the environment and your plants to harvest rain water whenever you can, and its a big bonus when you can get the rain barrels at cost.

One of the initiatives we undertook this year is to get two containers installed for the fisher people to put their old, broken and tangled fishing line in. These containers were donated to us by the Clear Your Gear organization out of Ontario. These containers should be a plus for those of you who enjoy fishing. One container is located by the Edmonton Trout Fishing Club and the other one is on the north shore on the east side of the lake. Please ensure you make use of these containers and that your old fishing line does not end up in the lake.

We have five mini Take a Book, Leave a Book libraries in our community. As it turns out, two of our members are responsible for building them, having them installed and have been looking after them. At times, these members run low on books for replenishing the libraries and have been going to book sales and purchasing books for them. If you have casual/leisure reading books you no longer want and would like to recycle to the libraries, please contact the Village Office with your name and phone number and a member will get back to you and make arrangements to pick up your spare books for our community libraries.

The Environmental Advisory Committee was started in September 2005. Over those years, we have undertaken 80 initiatives to date. Some of the initiatives are developing partnerships with other communities, taking educational courses or seminars pertinent to our community, bringing in guest speakers and offering educational information to our residents. This past spring/summer, we have had two of our original four members retire from our organization. We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks and gratitude to Rene Morrissette and Morey Madsen for the 19 years they have dedicated to our Environmental Advisory Committee. Your knowledge, experience and ideas have helped make our community what it is today.

Enjoy your winter, stay safe, stay warm and stay happy.....Your EAC Members