



Three-Year Strategic Plan

2020-2023

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1. Introduction

The South East Alberta Watershed Alliance (SEAWA) is one of the eleven Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils (WPACs) in Alberta. SEAWA is a multi-stakeholder, volunteer-based, not-for-profit society, incorporated in 2008 and designated as a WPAC by the Government of Alberta in 2010.

The SEAWA watershed includes the South Saskatchewan River Sub-Basin within Alberta and the closed-drainage system Pakowki Lake watershed (Figure 1). Respectively, these areas are 14,765 km² and 5,164 km², with a total area of 19,929 km². The total population is approximately 70,000 people, mostly concentrated in the urban centres of the City of Medicine Hat and the Town of Redcliff. Outside of the urban centres, land use is predominantly agriculture. The SEAWA watershed is found within the semi-arid Grassland Natural Region of Alberta and is part of the South Saskatchewan Region as identified in the Alberta's Land Use Framework.

Key local stakeholders include: City of Medicine Hat, Town of Redcliff, Cypress County, County of Forty-Mile, County of Warner, Saint Mary River Irrigation District, Medicine Hat College, and Grasslands Naturalists.

The Government of Alberta, through Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP), partners with WPACs to help achieve the three goals of the provincial policy, Water for Life - Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability. The three goals are: (1) Healthy aquatic ecosystems, (2) Reliable, quality water supplies for a sustainable economy, and (3) Safe, secure drinking water.

SEAWA's Vision: A healthy watershed that provides balance between social, environmental, and economic benefits.

SEAWA's Mission: SEAWA brings together diverse partners to educate the public, to support knowledge development, and to develop and facilitate the implementation of management plans for the sustainable use of the South Saskatchewan River Sub-Basin and the Pakowki Lake watershed.

As a WPAC, SEAWA is expected to fulfill roles identified for WPACs. These roles are: Convener and Collaborator; Monitoring and Reporting; Policy and Planning; and, Literacy and Education (Appendix 1). Not all WPACs will fulfill every role all of the time or to its full extent. Each WPAC may focus on some roles more than others based on, experience, expertise, the interest of its members, assessment of watershed stewardship needs and the needs of the government. SEAWA watershed initiatives are guided by its Mission and Vision, Water for Life, and the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan (SSRP) (Appendix 2). However, for SEAWA, the fulfilment of expected roles is highly dependent on operational and project grants and contributions.

SEAWA is governed by an elected Board of Directors with a total of 17 seats, shared among 9 membership categories (Table 1). In addition, the Past Chair is a voting member of the Board and the Executive Committee. SEAWA has four active committees: Executive/Human Resources Committee, Communications Committee, Technical Committee, and Policy Committee.

SEAWA currently has two full-time staff positions: Executive Director and a Stewardship and Communications Coordinator, in addition to a summer student(s). The Coordinator position may be filled in by an intern or an assistant depending on qualifications and operational budget. Ideally SEAWA would have three full-time positions but this varies depending on available operational and project funding.

For more information, please visit www.seawa.ca.

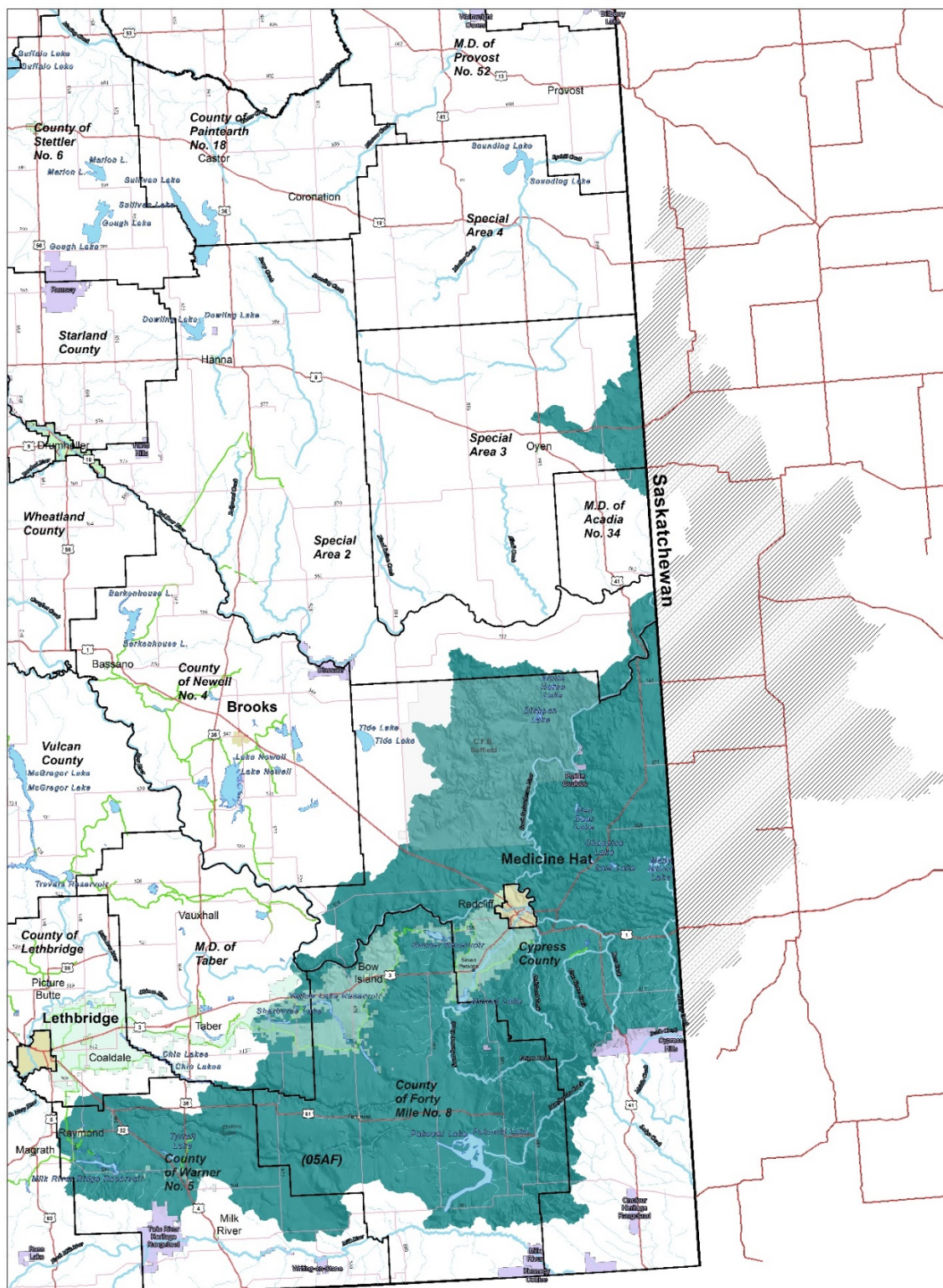


Figure 1. Map of the SEAWA Watershed

Table 1. SEAWA Board Membership Categories and Number of Seats

Membership category	No. of Seats
Land Resource Industry	
Agriculture	1
Industry	1
Licensee member	
Irrigator	1
Non-irrigator	1
Municipal government	
Urban	2
Rural	2
Outdoor Recreation & Eco-tourism	1
Environmental Non-Government Organization	1
Regulatory Members	
Provincial	2
Federal	1
Members-at-large	2
Aboriginal	1
Academic Institutions	1

2. Goals

To achieve SEAWA's Vision and Mission, the SEAWA Board established five goals for the period 2020-2023 (Table 2). These goals focus SEAWA's activities and align with WPAC roles under Water for Life.

Table 2. The SEAWA Strategic Goals

Monitoring & Reporting	
Goal 1	The SEAWA watershed is assessed and watershed knowledge is expanded.
Policy & Planning	
Goal 2	SEAWA watershed management plans are developed.
Literacy & Education	
Goal 3	The community is engaged in watershed issues through education and stewardship.
Convenor & Collaborator	
Goal 4	Relationships with SEAWA watershed stakeholders and the broader water and watershed networks are developed and improved.
Operational	
Goal 5	SEAWA attains sustainable funding and improved organizational capacity.

3. Strategies & Objectives to achieve Goals

Key objectives and strategies to achieve the SEAWA strategic goals are listed in Table 3. The strategies will inform the operational plan for the current year's activities and work plans for SEAWA's committees. The Executive Director reports on accomplishments regularly through a quarterly report to the Board of Directors (Quarters 1, 2 and 3), annually to Alberta Environment and Parks, to the SEAWA membership and the Board through the Annual Report that is presented at the Annual General Meeting, and through interim and final reports to project and wage subsidy grant funders.

Table 3. Strategies and Objectives for achieving SEAWA's Strategic Goals

Goal 1: The SEAWA watershed is assessed and watershed knowledge is expanded.	
Strategies	Objectives
1.1 Research in the SEAWA watershed is enabled and supported.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure grants from federal, provincial, and municipal governments, and other funding programs that support studies about the SEAWA watershed. Identify collaborative research projects with stakeholders. (Outline SEAWA's role and benefits; please see Appendix 3.)
1.2 Knowledge is further inventoried.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an inventory of what we know, where to find it, and who to contact.
Goal 2: Watershed management plans are developed.	
Strategies	Objectives
2.1 Resources are generated or acquired for SEAWA to work on water and watershed management planning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Search for funding sources to implement specific watershed management planning projects that are recommended in the SSRP (e.g. Source Water Protection Planning) and Water for Life (e.g. Integrated Watershed Management Plan).
2.2 Implement a successfully funded project through a hired consultant.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If a project grant application is successful, develop and send out a Request for Proposals to hire a consultant.
2.3 Opportunities for SEAWA's involvement in the implementation of the SSRP are identified.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to review SSRP for opportunities to collaborate with watershed stakeholders. Identify work that furthers SSRP implementation and helps SEAWA achieve its five goals. Respond to AEP/GOA invitation for participation, collaboration and feedback in a timely manner. Link projects (e.g. Riparian Restoration) to SSRP where applicable: Implementation Plan section 4 – Water, and section 3 – Biodiversity and Ecosystems. Please see Appendix 2.
Goal 3: The community is engaged in watershed issues through education and stewardship.	
Strategies	Objectives

3.1 Resources are generated for education and stewardship initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply for stewardship and education project grants. Please see Appendices 2 and 3.
3.2 A variety of watershed-focused educational activities and programs in the watershed are considered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare and implement a 3-year Communication Strategy; review annually and update the annual list of activities as needed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Educational messages are communicated to watershed stakeholders and the public using SEAWA communication methods, tools or media (website, social media, newsletters, videos, art shows, newspaper articles)
3.3 Educate the public about water quality, quantity, & conservation; healthy watersheds & ecosystems; watershed issues, and environmental stewardship.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support provincial education and literacy projects/programs, where applicable: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Projects and initiatives under Alberta's Water Literacy Strategy. - Incorporate Alberta Environment and Parks messaging in education and outreach initiatives as appropriate. - Educate the public about Water for Life goals. • Partner with local education outreach organizations (e.g. Praxis). • Develop and implement on-the-ground environmental stewardship projects. Through these projects, provide an opportunity to educate watershed stakeholders and municipal governments about the watershed and SEAWA. Please see Appendix 3.
3.4 SEAWA establishes itself as a trusted and reliable source for watershed information and educational resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate SEAWA watershed and regional issues (urban and rural) to stakeholders and the public. • Promote awareness of SEAWA's role in watershed assessment and management planning, and as a platform for sharing watershed issues. • Educate the public about the ongoing, and results of completed watershed studies and environmental stewardship projects.

Goal 4: Relationships with SEAWA watershed stakeholders and the broader water and watershed networks are developed and improved.

Strategies	Objectives
4.1 Maintain or improve relations with municipalities and networks who have a responsibility for water and watershed management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include municipal government contacts and elected officials in the distribution list of the SEAWA newsletter and announcements of SEAWA activities. • Strengthen links with, and seek commitment from, key stakeholders, partners, networks, and regional jurisdictional agencies. • Establish and build partnerships with agencies and industries not currently engaged. • Better engage sectors represented on the SEAWA Board of Directors and on SEAWA Committees.
4.2 Bring diverse stakeholders together.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build relationships with upstream and downstream users and environmental stewardship networks. • Continue to engage both rural and urban residents through stewardship projects, previously established activities and additional outreach events.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultivate partnership opportunities in the development and implementation of planning and stewardship projects.
4.3 Collaborate with Alberta Water Council, Watershed Stewardship Groups, GoA departments, and the broader water and watershed networks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to requests for feedback and surveys • Participate in their events and initiatives, and circulate their notifications if requested • Work with local watershed stewardship groups to deliver educational events and engage stakeholders.
Goal 5: SEAWA attains sustainable funding and improved organizational capacity.	
Strategies	Objectives
5.1 Core business administration systems are in place and serving SEAWA's needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and improve as needed core organizational, operational, and governance systems (i.e., all bylaws and policies are complete, current and approved by the Board). • Develop and implement annual operating plans & budgets, and other policy documents as needed.
5.2 Review the board composition as needed to ensure continued multi-sector anticipation to support SEAWA goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage decision-makers from a variety of different sectors to join the SEAWA Board (i.e. mayors or municipal councilors, environmental managers from industry, government managers, and leaders from non-profit organizations). • Develop a Nomination Committee to fill nominations for all empty Board seats before the AGM.
5.3 Funding for operations and staff capacity is maintained.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a strategy for achieving long-term sustainable funding in addition to AEP grant.
5.4 Volunteer recruitment is increased.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to make SEAWA work relevant to stakeholders through SEAWA's communication tools, volunteer events, and projects (Goals 1, 2, and 3).

Appendix 1 WPAC Roles under Water for Life Strategy

1. Convener and Collaborator

Convener Role: WPACs will provide an important forum where stakeholders meet to share information and identify, discuss and recommend priorities for issues and initiatives within their watershed.

Collaborator Role: WPACs will work together in partnership with stakeholders in their watershed to support or lead projects and programs to address watershed-related issues.

Expectations of WPACs:

- Maintain a consensus-based, multi-stakeholder process to support watershed management.
- Engage stakeholders to identify watershed issues and collaboration opportunities.
- Maintain a non-partisan approach for addressing issues or concerns brought forward by the community and encourage open dialogue to develop advice, direction and alternatives.
- Provide advice to decision-makers about watershed-related issues and collaborate with relevant watershed stakeholders to find solutions.
- Provide guidance and support to watershed stewardship groups, as appropriate.
- Encourage inclusiveness and broad stakeholder representation in their governance and initiatives.
- When requested, assist the government in stakeholder and public engagement related to watershed health and management initiatives, as WPAC resources allow.

Examples of WPAC Deliverables:

- WPACs involve key stakeholders and Indigenous peoples in watershed management through their governance and project work. Stakeholders vary from WPAC to WPAC, and may include municipalities, regional industries, conservation groups, academic institutions, recreation groups, and provincial and federal governments.
- WPAC board composition includes strategic thinkers and decision-makers from a variety of different sectors. Examples include mayors or municipal councilors, environmental managers from industry, government managers and leaders from non-profit organizations.
- WPACs convene and facilitate meetings about priority issues in their watershed, bringing stakeholders together to identify solutions to complex problems.
- WPACs are viewed by many as transparent and trusted stewards of their watershed.
- WPACs collaborate with local watershed stewardship groups to deliver educational events, prepare sub-watershed management plans and to pursue other priority initiatives.
- WPACs have large networks they can mobilize to identify and leverage additional funding and in-kind resources to support their projects and activities.

2. Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring Role: WPACs are a valuable source of information about regional issues and monitoring needs related to watershed health and management.

Reporting Role: WPACs will produce “state of the watershed” reports that identify watershed conditions, the local pressures facing the watershed and, data and research gaps that may need to be addressed.

Expectations of WPACs:

- Provide input to Alberta Environment and Parks regarding environmental monitoring, identification of specific issues and reporting needs for their watershed.
- Support community-based monitoring using Government of Alberta standards and methods within their watershed, with scientific support from the Government of Alberta, as appropriate.
- Assemble additional information to report on the state of the watershed, including traditional knowledge and local environmental and socio-economic information related to the state of the environment.
- Produce a state of the watershed report to help inform provincial monitoring program design and contribute regional expertise to the provincial assessment of the condition and sustainability of Alberta's water resources.
- As appropriate, produce other reports and outreach resources about the watershed to support their work and meet the needs of the Government of Alberta and WPAC stakeholders.

Examples of WPAC Deliverables:

- WPACs analyze the state of the watershed based on available data and stakeholder input and communicate the condition of the watershed through materials such as state of the watershed reports, maps, brochures and websites.
- WPACs identify data gaps and special monitoring needs related to local issues through their stakeholder members and engagement activities. This information is shared to inform government monitoring programs.
- WPACs support community-based monitoring and citizen science through innovative programs like the volunteer-based LakeWatch program.

3. Policy and Planning

Policy Role: WPACs will serve as a valuable source of knowledge and regional perspective for relevant government policy development.

Planning Role: WPACs will prepare integrated watershed management plans (IWMPs) as advice to relevant decision-makers, including the Government of Alberta, that identify issues and examine the best course of action to address them. WPACs will also promote and coordinate implementation of these plans including opportunities to integrate and adopt strategies through other planning, policy and operational products and processes.

Expectations of WPACs:

- Develop IWMPs in alignment with relevant government guidance documents, policies and plans. Where warranted, stakeholder input is incorporated in the development of these plans.
- Coordinate IWMP implementation support from jurisdictions (municipal, provincial and federal) and other stakeholders with the authority to implement plan recommendations.
- In collaboration with their stakeholders, assist in the development and implementation of water conservation, water monitoring, source water protection, wetland programs, and other similar initiatives.
- Support government regional, sub-regional and watershed-related planning, as appropriate. WPACs may lead, advise, implement or otherwise participate in components of government planning initiatives, based on government assessment of available opportunities and WPAC capacity.

Examples of WPAC Deliverables:

- WPACs produce IWMPs that complement government's regional, sub-regional and operational level planning.
- WPACs work with the decision-makers to implement recommendations in their integrated watershed management plans.
- WPACs produce other planning products, such as source water protection plans, that are well researched and consensus-based. These materials are provided to the Government of Alberta as input toward policy and planning initiatives.
- WPACs identify local issues through their stakeholder networks and relay this information to inform policy and planning needs within the region.
- WPACs provide the Government of Alberta with policy advice, based on consensus, among a wide range of regional interests.
- WPACs apply a systems-thinking approach to complex watershed issues that balance the needs of stakeholders throughout the watershed.

4. Literacy and Education

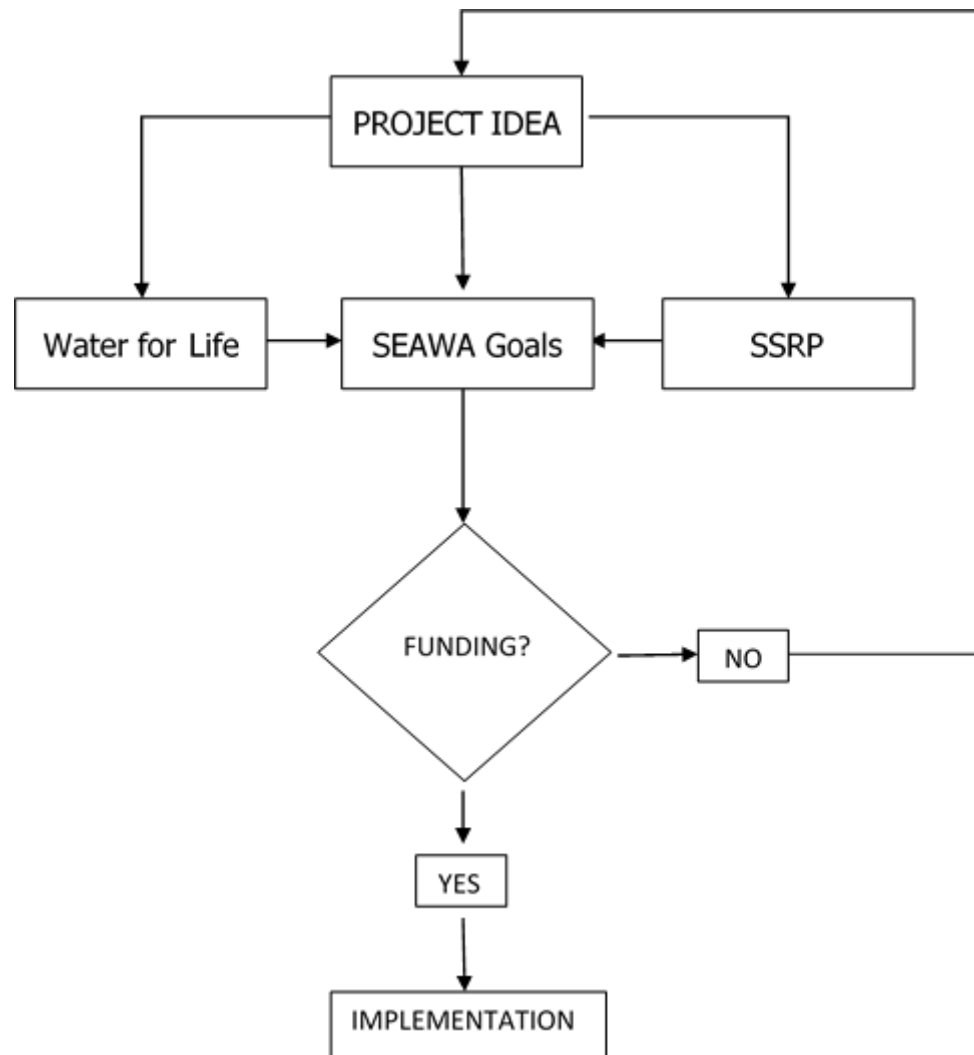
WPACs will enhance environmental literacy throughout their watersheds by developing and delivering education programs that foster land and water stewardship.

Expectations of WPACs:

- Work collaboratively with municipal, provincial and federal governments, watershed stewardship groups, industry, non-profit organizations, academia, local stakeholders, Indigenous peoples and other WPACs in the development and delivery of basin-oriented education programs.
- Serve as a reliable source of information about watershed education programs and resources offered by watershed educators in the region.
- Develop or assist in the development of basin-oriented education programming that aligns with provincial literacy outcomes and the goals of the Water for Life Strategy.
- Deliver water-related education programming to a variety of audiences in the watershed.
 - Conduct education and awareness programs such as riparian health assessments, field demonstration sites, and other stewardship activities.
 - Promote awareness and implementation of best management practices by landowners and other stakeholders in the watershed.

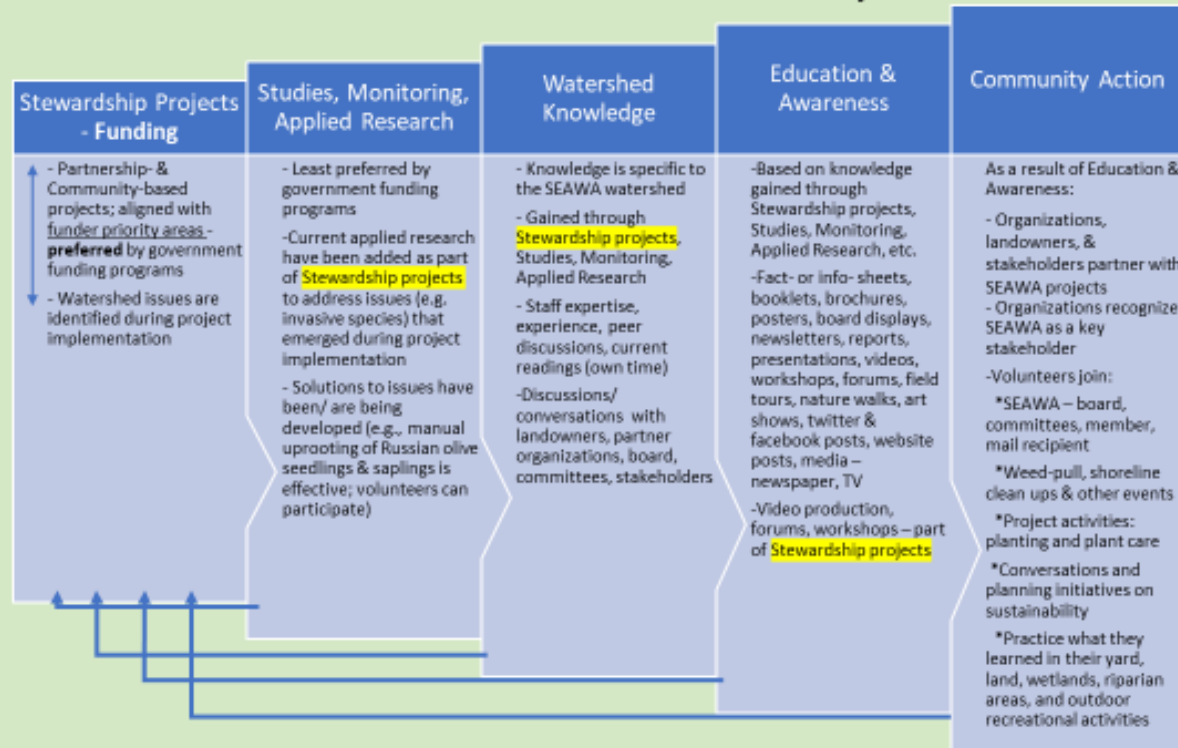
Examples of WPAC Deliverables:

- WPACs conduct watershed-scale assessments of water-focused educational activities and programs to identify gaps and opportunities to develop a targeted education and outreach program within their watershed.
- WPACs develop and implement annual outreach plans that support WPAC education goals.
- WPACs support the development and delivery (where appropriate) of projects and initiatives undertaken by the Government of Alberta to carry out Alberta's Water Literacy Strategy.
- WPACs incorporate Alberta Environment and Parks messaging in their education and outreach initiatives, where applicable.
- WPACs establish themselves as a trusted and reliable source for watershed-specific information and educational resources.



Appendix 2. SEAWA project selection process

SEAWA Model: Stewardship→Studies→Knowledge→Education&Awareness→Community Action & Back



Appendix 3. The SEAWA Model: Stewardship-Studies-Knowledge-Education-Community Action & Back