



# STRATEGIC PLAN

Revised February 2021

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This plan was originally created in 2018 and revised in February 2021.

## BACKGROUND

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The Wascana & Upper Qu'Appelle Watersheds Association Taking Responsibility, Inc. (WUQWATR) has its origins during 2002 when the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority, now the Water Security Agency (WSA), was created as a provincial response to drinking water contamination in North Battleford, Saskatchewan and Walkerton, Ontario. The focus of the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority was on source water protection through community-based watershed and aquifer planning.

The Saskatchewan Watershed Authority worked in collaboration with representatives of the Wascana and Upper Qu'Appelle watersheds to develop a source water protection plan. These representatives formed four Watershed Advisory Committees that included representatives from rural and urban municipalities, conservation area authorities, irrigation districts and stewardship groups. There are no First Nations communities within this watershed, although there are lands owned by First Nations. These four committees provided local input and assisted with the decision making that created the Source Water Protection plan. A technical committee was also developed to collect information, conduct analyses, inform and help ensure the plan was scientifically sound. A final component of this process was the planning team from the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority that led the committees and facilitated the development of the *Getting to the Source* Source Water Protection plan.

***"WUQWATR has had numerous successes. Some successes are difficult to recognize like the influence WUQWATR has had on provincial policy and major policy items like the 25-year Water Security Plan. WUQWATR initiated the process of management plans for the WSA structures in the province and will continue to ask for the completion of these plans."***

*- David Sloan, WUQWATR Board Chair,  
Wascana Sub-watershed Rural Member*

The outcome of the 2008 planning process was the formation of WUQWATR, a nonprofit, community-based organization to implement the plan. In Saskatchewan there are 11 watershed stewardship groups that implement source water protection plans in their respective watersheds. The Saskatchewan Association of Watersheds (SAW) was also formed in 2008 to represent the collective voice of the watershed stewardship groups and most continue to be members of the Saskatchewan Association of Watersheds.

WUQWATR has since evolved to include programming and project delivery, communication and awareness projects and the design and implementation of applied research efforts. This evolution is due to several factors. One of the driving forces behind program development has been a response to a reduction in core funding from the Water Security Agency which forced WUQWATR to seek other revenue through project funding. Government may adjust funding to third party agencies; however, a lack of consultation with WUQWATR on this issue has impacted WUQWATR's ability to conduct long term planning. One of the benefits of project-based funding is that it enabled WUQWATR to grow and develop as an organization.

The emphasis on project-based funding has been at the expense of organizational development. It is difficult to focus on internal processes when immediate funding is required to keep the organization functioning. This may have resulted in the Water Security Agency identifying the need for watershed stewardship groups to seek continual business improvements and become more effective at watershed management. WUQWATR strives to increase organizational capacity to further augment its program funding in the future.

Another significant change since the creation of WUQWATR has been the growth and development of the Saskatchewan Association of Watersheds. As this provincial organization matures, it is creating additional project funding opportunities for WUQWATR, taking on advocacy efforts at the provincial level and coordinating business development programs.

***"WUQWATR has come of age!  
More and more, residents of  
our cities, our resorts and our  
rural areas are seeing the  
value of community-tailored,  
practical stewardship and  
programs that benefit us all  
and protect our water quality."***

*- Sharon Rodenbush, WUQWATR  
Board Vice Chair, Last Mountain Lake  
Sub-watershed Associate Member*

It is therefore timely for WUQWATR to consider a new strategic plan based upon today's realities. The document was originally created in 2018 and revised in February 2021 to guide WUQWATR in its upcoming three years. Revisions have been based on Board planning efforts in March and November of 2020. The March 2020 planning session included presentations from the Ministry of Agriculture about the *Canadian Agricultural Partnership Program*, the Water Security Agency and the Saskatchewan Association of Watersheds. Final editing was conducted by a Board committee and full Board validation was obtained in February 2021.



Justine Melo, WUQWATR Programs Lead, speaks to students at McKell Wascana Conservation Park in Regina, Saskatchewan. WUQWATR staff teamed up with Nature Regina's *Get Outside! Kid's Club* program and Global Regina to help educate children about wetlands and watersheds.

*Credit: Ali Thompson, WUQWATR.*



The challenge of any organization whose members conduct strategic planning is to succinctly define the core vision and mission of the organization. Principles and values are more easily delineated. The Board and staff have unanimously developed the following section.

## VISION

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The vision describes the future with WUQWATR's best grassroots efforts that can be realistically considered and actualized. WUQWATR's vision remains unchanged:

***To ensure sustainable, healthy watersheds.***

## MISSION

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The mission includes WUQWATR's goals, principles and values as a guide for success:

***To promote and deliver sustainable watershed management.***



Justine Melo, WUQWATR Programs Lead, and Ryan Hering, ALUS program participant, discuss ALUS riparian enhancement projects at the Hering farm near Bruno, Saskatchewan. The ALUS program helps turn marginal farmlands into productive ecosystems contributing to the health of our watersheds.

*Credit: Paige Englot, ALUS Canada.*

## PRINCIPLES

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WUQWATR believes in these principles:

- Actions must balance responsibility with the best available resources.
- Mutual respect. People are fundamentally good.
- Clean water is a basic human right.
- Integrity. Be fair, honest and transparent.
- Natural ecosystems have inherent worth.
- Water is finite and crucial to life.

***"We (WUQWATR) are an influential partner in managing Saskatchewan's water resources."***

*– Barry Gunther, WUQWATR Board, Upper Qu'Appelle Sub-watershed Urban Member*



Justine Melo, WUQWATR Programs Lead, throws a veliger sampling net into Last Mountain Lake at Grandview Beach, one of eleven locations WUQWATR sampled for aquatic invasive species, like zebra and quagga mussels, during 2020.

*Credit: Ali Thompson, WUQWATR.*

## VALUES

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WUQWATR believes in these values:

- Active listening through two-way communication and information sharing.
- Adaptability. Be active and dynamic.
- Aim for consensus. Strive for understanding and acceptance.
- Ensure due diligence. Include assessing and managing risk.
- Local decision making. Consider the needs of others within the watershed and beyond.
- Nonpartisan and apolitical in judgment and operation.
- Operate in an economic, social and environmentally sustainable manner.
- Regional integration, inter-connectedness and inter-dependence.

***"Our (rural municipal) councils need an established authority on water management to be able to engage in water projects."***

*– John Langford, WUQWATR Board, Upper Qu'Appelle Sub-watershed Rural Member*

## STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, THREATS

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The Board and staff considered pertinent aspects of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats involving WUQWATR and its work. **The following bullets under each of the categories have not been listed by either timing or priority.**

### Strengths

- WUQWATR is a grassroots organization with broad diversity, comprised of volunteers and appointed persons from differing backgrounds and experience reflective of the community at large.
- WUQWATR demonstrates flexibility and creativity and is able to expand its program delivery through a changing operating environment.
- WUQWATR governance Board is engaged, nonpartisan and apolitical. Decisions are made by consensus.
- WUQWATR has an impact on provincial policy through its influence and leadership.
- WUQWATR staff are dedicated, organized and enthusiastic. Staff relate well with the Board.
- WUQWATR staff have developed strong relationships with clients through flexible program delivery.
- WUQWATR staff effectively network with WUQWATR members, other watershed stewardship groups, industry, researchers, affiliated organizations and the public.
- WUQWATR Board members devote considerable volunteer hours to lead and guide the organization and its members.
- WUQWATR is building on past successes and accomplishments.
- WUQWATR Board members continually learn about their watersheds through presentations, conferences and updates from partners and staff.

***"The diversity of personal, professional and life experiences of Board members plus their level of involvement are important in looking at why we are operational. The staff can call on any of us for experiential information. We also are able to maintain open minds, in a respectful manner, towards each other and our opinions. We are currently following good governance protocols and are open to change."***

*- Sherwin Petersen, WUQWATR Board, Lanigan/Manitou Sub-watershed Associate Member*

***"WUQWATR has the capacity to both marshal necessary funds but also augment those resources through its partnerships with other levels of governments to deal with water related issues and problems."***

*- Jim Elliott, WUQWATR Board Secretary, Wascana Sub-watershed Associate Member*



## Weaknesses

- WUQWATR's vast geographic area challenges its program delivery.
- WUQWATR exists within a structure of precarious funding due to the lack of clarity and long-term commitment from funding agencies.
- WUQWATR lacks public awareness of its mission, purpose and capabilities.
- WUQWATR is a long name and has a complicated acronym that may be an obstacle in effective branding.
- WUQWATR's staff turnover sometimes results in minimal knowledge transfer, loss of continuity and corporate memory.
- WUQWATR has no comprehensive record of current policies and procedures.
- WUQWATR, at times, creates confusion and indecision among residents and stakeholders who want clarity of WUQWATR's mission and community value.

***"To be relevant, we need to change and grow. Ultimately, we need a One Stop regional watershed agency focusing on water management which includes source water protection, drainage, agricultural program delivery and partnerships with the private sector."***

*- Rod Halyk, Urban Member, Lanigan/Manitou  
Sub-watershed Urban Member*



Mandie Jenson, WUQWATR Agri-environmental Technical Services Coordinator, conducts a native rangeland health assessment based on Beneficial Management Practices through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership Farm Stewardship Program on a participant's property in the Qu'Appelle Valley.

*Credit: Justine Melo, WUQWATR.*



## Opportunities

- WUQWATR's vast geographic area presents opportunity to expand program delivery.
- WUQWATR can offer more substantial water management expertise and information.
- WUQWATR can promote water as a more relevant and current public issue and assist in gaining government focus.
- WUQWATR can continue its focus on current issues while adapting to changes in water management and initiating new and innovative programs.
- WUQWATR, because of its geographic size and location, can advocate through its membership with the Saskatchewan Association of Watersheds.
- WUQWATR can further develop working relationships with other watersheds by sharing resources and funding for larger multi-year projects with more human resource capacity.
- WUQWATR can capitalize on the Saskatchewan Association of Watersheds funding, source its own funding or procure additional funding from industry sectors and sponsors.
- WUQWATR can expand the provision of or the access to services on a fee-for-service basis.
- WUQWATR has the capacity through social media technology to expand its public awareness/educational campaigns.
- WUQWATR could develop relationships and collaborate with smaller organizations and communities to promote WUQWATR's vision, mission and goals.
- WUQWATR has an opportunity for future work through the Upper Qu'Appelle water conveyance from Lake Diefenbaker.
- WUQWATR could encourage the Water Security Agency to continue to collaborate with WUQWATR through various project and program delivery efforts.
- WUQWATR can provide assistance as programs and technology advance.
- WUQWATR's geographic size and location is well positioned to advocate for sound water management practices with governments and key water users.

***"WUQWATR has the capabilities to help agriculture with proper water management, including permits (C&Ds) and areas set aside for water retention (reservoirs, small and large) and in doing this will have areas of sustainable managed wetlands, showing that WUQWATR is working for the future of the Upper Qu'Appelle and a healthier province!"***

*– Garth Burns, WUQWATR Board,  
Lanigan/Manitou Sub-watershed Rural Member*

## Threats

- WUQWATR's largest threat is the loss of core funding from the Water Security Agency.
- WUQWATR is subject to political and policy changes.
- WUQWATR has little ability to deal with water development demands, such as potash mines and water levels.
- WUQWATR is subject to federal/provincial governments' changes to the Canadian Agricultural Partnership Program delivery and future funding distribution.



Mandie Jenson, WUQWATR Agri-environmental Technical Services Coordinator, conducts a native rangeland health assessment based on Beneficial Management Practices through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership Farm Stewardship Program on a participant's property in the Qu'Appelle Valley.

*Credit: Ali Thompson, WUQWATR.*

- WUQWATR may be subject to funding restrictions when some current year funding reflects the previous year's performance.
- WUQWATR's assistance with programs may become redundant as technology advances and producers can complete their programming online.
- WUQWATR may be subject to competition from other fee-for-service contracts.
- WUQWATR lacks funding for potential capital purchases.
- WUQWATR is subject to arbitrary changes in Board positions based on member representation that is outside of Board control.
- WUQWATR can be negatively affected through social media misinformation.

***"WUQWATR can help many producers move forward on irrigation plans and associated drainage planning with the proposed expanded irrigation project from Lake Diefenbaker to Buffalo Pound. This will benefit the downstream users and the region economically."***

*- Sandra Bathgate, WUQWATR Board Treasurer,  
Upper Qu'Appelle Sub-watershed Associate Member*

## STRATEGIC GOALS

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### Goal 1: Increase Recognition and Acceptance

#### Action 1: Engage Municipalities and Members

WUQWATR will contact rural and urban municipalities, both members and non-members, to discuss our programs and services. Inquire about project opportunities, attend municipal meetings and encourage relationships to increase awareness of WUQWATR. Bolster the promotion of WUQWATR to associate members through various media.

#### Action 2: Engage Provincial Government

WUQWATR will contact MLAs and Ministers to promote the WUQWATR organization. The list of MLAs and Ministers will guide contact and help establish relationships and reinforce the importance of WUQWATR and watershed stewardship groups.

#### Action 3: Engage Industry

WUQWATR will collaborate with related industries, those who have a presence within the WUQWATR area, to potentially enhance our program delivery and bolster long term support for WUQWATR. We can promote the value of WUQWATR programming for industries and their clients/affiliations and develop long term, mutually beneficial partnerships with industries. This may be achieved through information-sharing and promotion of WUQWATR's purpose, programming and ability to inform and assist industries' clients on how WUQWATR can facilitate water-related challenges and opportunities.

#### Action 4: Engagement Committee

An Engagement Committee will be struck to guide and oversee WUQWATR's efforts to forge partnerships and strengthen relationships with the federal/provincial governments and with municipalities, members and industries that have a presence in the WUQWATR area.



Regina Beach on Last Mountain Lake. Residents are concerned with the low water level of Last Mountain Lake which has been impacted by drought in southern Saskatchewan in recent years. WUQWATR is working with the Water Security Agency to better understand the impact of drought on the watersheds.

*Credit: Ali Thompson, WUQWATR.*



## **Goal 2: Enhance Communications**

### **Action 1: Communication Strategy**

Develop a WUQWATR communication strategy and facilitate implementation.

### **Action 2: Explore Communication Partnerships**

WUQWATR will explore partnerships with the Saskatchewan Association of Watersheds and watershed stewardship groups that support common communication needs and share cost efficiencies.

### **Action 3: Communication Committee**

The Communication Committee will continue to guide and oversee WUQWATR's communication efforts.

## **Goal 3: Sustain and Increase Revenue**

### **Action 1: Meet Program Targets**

WUQWATR will ensure it primarily focuses on the main sources of funding for the organization by ensuring annual program targets are met. Meeting target goals will help ensure sustainable funding.

### **Action 2: Grants and Project Funding**

WUQWATR will explore and apply for appropriate grants to bolster its programming and delivery. This includes reviewing unsuccessful applications to determine past application deficiencies.

### **Action 3: Enhance Collaboration**

WUQWATR will actively seek new opportunities and enhance project delivery. This may include working collaboratively with other agencies/watershed stewardship groups that would result in larger scale projects.

### **Action 4: Funding and Partnership Opportunities**

WUQWATR will identify projects for partnership and/or funding potential to become less reliant on core funders and help ensure long term stability and success.

### **Action 5: Business Development Committee**

A Business Development Committee will be struck to devise ways to sustain or increase revenue for WUQWATR.

## **Goal 4: Continuous Organizational Improvement**

### **Action 1: Ensure Knowledge Transfer and Retention**

WUQWATR will create current Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for all roles and programs. This will ease transitions among staff members through knowledge retention, long term sustainability and improved time management.

### **Action 2: Board Engagement**

WUQWATR will establish Board recruitment and review procedures and encourage active committee participation. This will provide guidance for long term Board success.

### **Action 3: Policies**

WUQWATR will review and finalize policies and procedures. Develop new policies and procedures to ensure all reasonable or past experienced issues are addressed.

### **Action 4: Governance Committee**

A Governance Committee will be struck to guide and oversee organizational improvement.



An ALUS program participant's conserved wetland just north of Guernsey, Saskatchewan. The ALUS program offers environmental stewardship projects that benefit both the producer and nearby communities

*Credit: Justine Melo, WUQWATR.*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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Considerable time and dedication of both the staff and Board is acknowledged in the development of this planning and living document. The Board and staff have worked tirelessly to discuss, debate, draft, edit and validate the steps forward for WUQWATR. In no small way these collective efforts attest to their determination and strength in helping to ensure sustainable, healthy Upper Qu'Appelle and Wascana watersheds in Saskatchewan.