

Section 1 – Executive Summary

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Acknowledgements:

This document was prepared as a planning tool for use in the development of the La Salle River Integrated Watershed Management Plan. Documents have been pooled together from multiple sources in order to provide a holistic view of the condition of the La Salle River Watershed as of 2007. This represents the first time that information about the La Salle River has been gathered together and presented to the public to raise awareness about watershed issues.

The La Salle Redboine Conservation District would like to acknowledge the efforts and support of Mr. Barry Oswald, Manager, Water Planning Branch of Manitoba Water Stewardship in assisting in the preparation of this document and assistance in developing the La Salle River Watershed Management Plan. Special thanks is also extended to all the civil servants from various Federal and Provincial departments and Non-governmental Agencies who supported the planning process by collecting and presenting watershed information to the Water Planning Advisory Team.

The Watershed Plan:

Flooding, declining water quality, soil erosion, loss of wildlife habitat, stream bank erosion, wetland drainage, lack of drought protection and increasing water demand. These are all common concerns for many watersheds in southern Manitoba.

The La Salle River is no different. A recently completed Provincial water quality study identifies that nutrient loading to the La Salle River, which many experts consider the greatest threat to water quality, has nearly doubled in the past 30 years. Spring and summer flooding of farm land and private property have increased in frequency and cost of damages.

As populations increase, so are demands for access to potable water. Development and intense use of areas near watercourses contribute to water contamination and reduce the stability of sensitive river banks. Uncontrolled drainage of fields and wetlands can increase runoff intensity and reduce base flows of streams in dryer months.

These things all occur in the La Salle River Watershed but to what extent? How concerned should we be? What can we do about it? The issues identified above are not singular unrelated problems. They cannot be fixed in isolation. They are symptoms of a larger concern and must be treated as a system. That system is the watershed!

Watersheds are defined as areas of land that captures precipitation (i.e. rain, snow melt) and funnels it to a river, lake or stream. It is a community where people, business, agriculture, government, institutions, plants, and animals are interconnected by the common water resource. The community influences the watershed and the watershed influences the community. A watershed is a complex system and to protect its health

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everyone who has a stake in the watershed may have to make trade offs, compromises and maybe even some sacrifices to keep it healthy.

A healthy watershed requires a community supported plan to protect this complex resource for current and future watershed residents. A watershed plan is a document prepared by the watershed community that describes the actions needed over time to achieve a sustainable healthy watershed. The La Salle River Watershed Management Plan is simply an organized way of looking at big picture issues and setting long and short term priorities for improving the La Salle River Watershed.

This plan will be holistic and will provide a venue where all watershed residents, local municipalities and government agencies can openly discuss watershed concerns and work together to develop long term solutions.

There are increasing pressures on the watershed due to a growing economy. A watershed plan ensures the resources in the watershed are managed in a sustainable fashion. The plan is a roadmap for the community to help plan and practice good common sense programs, and help define what is important to the community.

The watershed plan for the La Salle River will help set local priorities between need-to-do's and nice-to-do's and helps communicate to the public where the work will be done. It also demonstrates to senior governments that local people are in charge of managing their own resources. The plan also sets a way to measure future progress on meeting resource goals and objectives.

The plan will help groups like the La Salle Redboine Conservation District set programming agendas and direct limited funds to watershed priorities. Information provided by the watershed management plan should be used by area planning districts in their development plans to avoid potential conflicts with existing or future development in the watershed.

The La Salle River watershed encompasses 2,400km² of the central plains region of Manitoba. It is home to a large number of small communities including 5 rural municipalities and portions of the City of Winnipeg. The watershed is also represented by 5 planning districts, a wide variety of producer groups, Hutterite Colonies, community associations, business associations and the La Salle Redboine Conservation District.

Under the recently enable Water Protection Act, the La Salle Redboine Conservation District has been established as the Water Planning Authority (WPA) for the La Salle River Watershed. This means that the Conservation District has been assigned the responsibility of preparing and implementing a watershed plan for the La Salle River.

The plan will be completed within a two year time frame and ready to be implemented in early 2008. A full scale review of the progress of the plan will also be completed in 2013 to identify successes, failures and to introduce refinements to ensure the plan is up to date with the needs of the watershed.

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Deliverables from the Watershed Planning Process:

State of the Watershed Report - This document will pull information from several sources to quantify the current state of the La Salle River Watershed. The information contained in the report will be extensively used to evaluate the requirements of the final watershed plan.

Watershed Report Card - This simplistic report will be widely distributed throughout the watershed and will contain provincial indicators for the health of the watershed. These report cards will be completed periodically in the future and will be useful in presenting and evaluating the success and shortcomings of the watershed plan.

Source Water Protection Plan - This plan will be prepared for drinking water sources in the watershed. Using available information this plan will identify, assess and mitigate threats to domestic drinking water supplies.

Public Awareness - A heightened public awareness about the health issues and potential solutions to concerns of the La Salle River Watershed is probably the single most important deliverable from the entire process.

Integrated Watershed Management Plan – A community support road map to addressing issues of environmental concern within the watershed. This 10 year plan will be implemented and monitored for success on the landscape.