



**MANITOBA WATERSHED  
DISTRICTS PROGRAM  
2019-20 ANNUAL REPORT**



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**MINISTER**  
**OF AGRICULTURE AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT**  
Legislative Building  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, CANADA  
R3C 0V8

Her Honour the Honourable Janice C. Filmon, C.M., O.M.  
Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba  
Room 235  
Legislative Building  
Winnipeg MB R3C 0V8

As Minister of Agriculture and Resource Development, I have the privilege of presenting the Annual Report of Manitoba's Watershed Districts Program for the year ending March 31, 2020, including audited financial statements for the same period.

The fiscal year 2019 – 20 was a year of change and new opportunities for the Program. On January 1, 2020, The Watershed Districts Act was proclaimed, establishing 14 watershed districts from 18 conservation districts; a shift toward true watershed-based water management in our province. Aligning district boundaries to watersheds combined with a corresponding name change to watershed districts was a step toward true watershed-based water management. Exciting new provisions in The Watershed Districts Act also enable watershed districts to form new and formal partnerships with others in their shared watersheds including Indigenous communities.

This year the Province of Manitoba also announced Growing Outcomes in Watersheds (GROW). GROW is a made-in-Manitoba approach that recognizes farmers' work to retain, restore or enhance natural areas for the benefit of all Manitobans. With additional funding provided by the Conservation Trust, GROW Trust and the Wetlands GROW Trust, watershed districts will play a key role in delivering GROW in local watersheds.

Manitoba is a proud supporter of the Watershed Districts Program and the work done by watershed districts to improve watershed health and resilience, improve water quality, enhance surface water management, safeguard drinking water sources and protect sensitive wildlife and aquatic habitat.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

Blaine Pedersen





# THE MANITOBA WATERSHED DISTRICTS PROGRAM

## WATERSHED DISTRICTS IN MANITOBA

Manitoba's Watershed Districts Program enhances healthy and sustainable watersheds through land and water stewardship programs and partnerships. With funding from the Manitoba government and municipalities, locally-appointed watershed district boards make planning and management decisions to improve watershed health across most of municipal Manitoba.

## VISION

The Watershed Districts Program will strive to create healthy watersheds to support watershed residents, the environment, and the economy for the present and the future.

## MANDATE

Watershed districts lead watershed management planning and play a key role in plan implementation. Through a shared governance model and citizen engagement, watershed districts deliver local solutions to complex issues - contributing to healthier, more resilient watersheds.

## PRINCIPLES

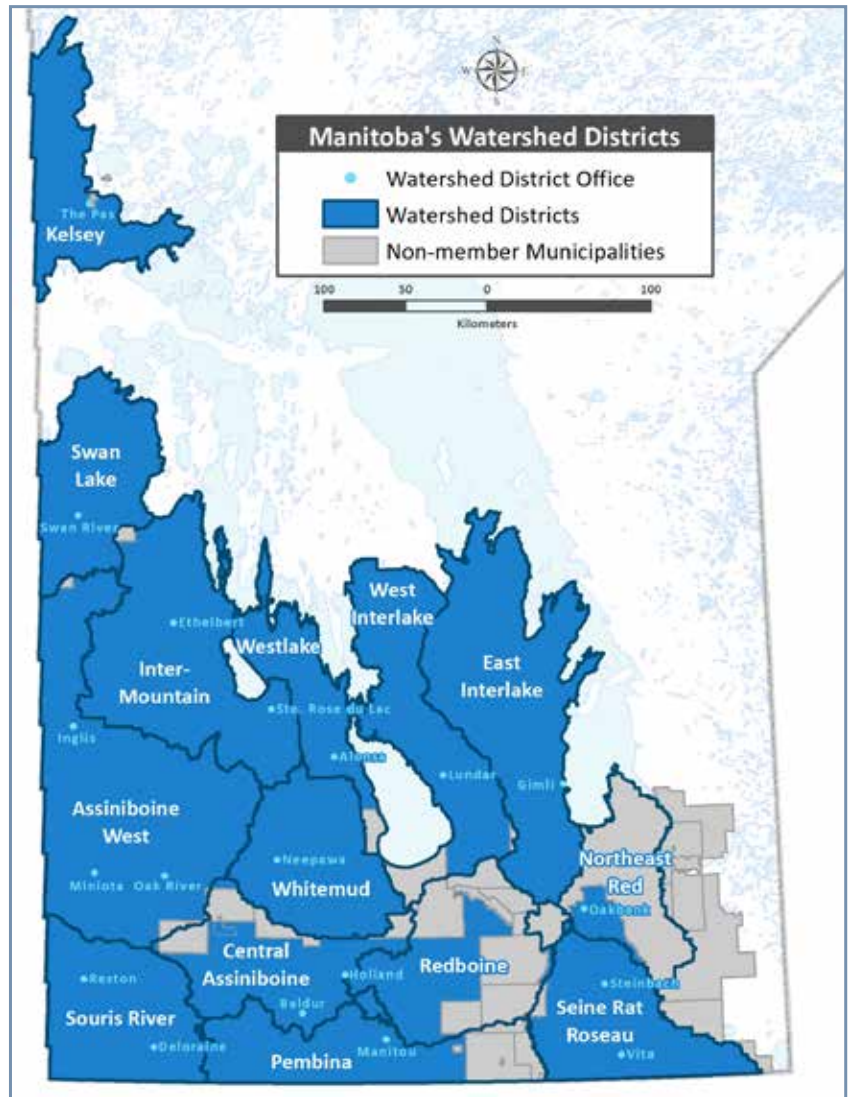
The Watershed Districts Program:

- functions as a partnership between levels of government and engages local citizens
- is cost-shared by provincial and municipal government partners
- is incentive-based and non regulatory
- relies on local decision-making through local boards with support from technical experts to solve local issues
- uses watershed management planning to guide decision-making and programming



# WATERSHED DISTRICTS IN MANITOBA

On January 1, 2020 The Watershed Districts Act was proclaimed, transitioning the previous 18 conservation districts to 14 watershed districts, aligning their boundaries with watersheds and changing district names to reflect these new boundaries. New provisions in The Watershed Districts Act included enabling watershed districts to enter into agreements with non-municipal entities, including Indigenous communities, and to appoint up to two non-municipal members-at-large to their boards. These new provisions build on the historical land and water management success of the long standing program while modernizing aspects to continue its success into the future. The core of the program remains the same: local, grassroots-decision making to improve watershed health across municipal Manitoba.



## PROGRAM SPENDING BY ACTIVITY

Watershed district programming reflects provincial and local priorities. Watershed districts design programming to meet goals, objectives and actions identified in their watershed management plans. Although programming and project types vary between individual watershed districts, programming generally falls within five main categories:

**Surface Water Management**

**63%**

Includes water retention, erosion control, grassed waterways, wetland restoration and drain maintenance

**Habitat Conservation and Enhancement**

**15%**

Includes conservation agreements, habitat leases, tree planting and aquatic restoration

**Nutrient Reduction and Water Quality**

**13%**

Includes exclusion fencing, alternative watering systems and riparian buffer strips

**Drinking Water Protection**

**5%**

Includes abandoned well sealing and wellhead remediation

**Watershed Awareness and Education**

**4%**

Includes research partnerships, water festivals, producer workshops, tours and presentations

# PROGRAM FUNDING

## Provincial Grant:

**\$5,312,000**

Through the Conservation Districts and Watershed Assistance Grant 12-4E, the Manitoba government provides an annual grant to each watershed district to implement integrated watershed management plans in their local watersheds.

## Municipal Levies:

**\$1,770,667**

Participating municipalities match provincial grant contributions at a 3 to 1 ratio, meaning municipalities provide \$1 for every \$3 the province contributes. Municipalities appoint representatives to watershed district boards to implement projects and programming relevant to their local watersheds.

## Additional Funding:

**\$3,428,133**

Federal \$1,238,608  
 Additional municipal \$481,020  
 Additional provincial \$255,224  
 Non-governmental \$1,453,281

Additional funding is obtained from a variety of sources, including environmental organizations, industry, and government programs.

**TOTAL PROGRAM FUNDING: \$10,510,800**

## PROVINCIAL GRANT DISTRIBUTION TO WATERSHED DISTRICTS

Watershed District	Provincial Grant	Watershed District	Provincial Grant
Assiniboine West	\$670,000	Redboine	\$200,000
Central Assiniboine	\$316,000	Seine Rat Roseau	\$378,000
East Interlake	\$300,000	Souris River	\$506,500
Inter-Mountain	\$699,000	Swan Lake	\$225,000
Kelsey	\$155,000	West Interlake	\$200,000
Northeast Red	\$310,000	Westlake	\$293,000
Pembina Valley	\$359,500	Whitemud	\$700,000
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$5,312,000</b>



# PROGRAM OUTCOMES



## ENHANCED WATERSHED PLANNING

- Develops a shared vision and coordinated action for watersheds
- Provides funding for targeted, on-the-ground action to address local and provincial priorities
- Builds local capacity for cooperation, improved communication and local knowledge sharing
- Builds and strengthens local, provincial and federal partnerships



**23**

watershed management plans being implemented

**4**

watershed plans in development

**1**

watershed plan in renewal



## REDUCED IMPACTS OF FLOODING

- Improves watershed resiliency to adapt to a changing climate
- Targets and prioritizes water retention and peak flow reduction projects
- Identifies and co-ordinates surface water projects on a watershed basis
- Prevents and mitigates flood events
- Builds soil health and water retention capacity of soils
- Manages waterway networks to reduce flooding impacts, while considering the environment



**38**

water storage projects with 1,028 decametres (833 acre-feet) of storage created

**224 km**

of drains maintained or reconstructed

**206**

crossings replaced or repaired



## IMPROVED LAND AND WATER MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Conserves and restores aquatic, riparian and prairie habitat
- Protects and enhances ecological goods and services
- Fosters linkages between land development planning and watershed planning
- Promotes sustainable land management



**104 ha**

(257 acres) of land protected through conservation agreements

**5 ha**

of aquatic habitat rehabilitated

**110,481**

trees planted

**63 km**

of shelterbelts established

# HEALTHIER, MORE RESILIENT WATERSHEDS • STRONG RURAL COMMUNITIES SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION



## IMPROVED WATER QUALITY

- Implements projects to improve water quality and reduce nutrient loading
- Increases local capacity to monitor and understand trends in water quality
- Improves soil health and reduces the need for over-application of nutrients on agricultural lands
- Fosters collaboration between technical professionals and local land managers to improve water quality



## PROTECTION OF DRINKING WATER

- Conducts source water protection planning for public drinking water systems
- Provides recommendations and implements actions to improve local drinking water quality
- Fosters collaboration between technical professionals and local people to monitor groundwater quality, assess groundwater issues and implement projects aimed at protecting local groundwater sources



## PROSPEROUS RURAL DEVELOPMENT

- Provides direct injection of government funding into rural communities, increasing local ability to leverage additional sources of external funding
- Supports rural employment and local businesses
- Educates youth and local land managers
- Manages waterway infrastructure to support a productive agricultural landscape and rural development



**136**

surface water quality sites tested

**13**

erosion control structures established

**14**

grassed waterways created

**26**

streambank stabilization projects completed



**1,292**

private wells tested

**182**

abandoned wells sealed



**2,890**

students attended water festivals

**108**

tours and demonstrations with 933 attendees

**45**

full-time and 40 part-time and seasonal staff employed

# 2019-20 PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Activity	Projects	Sites	Storage (dam <sup>3</sup> )	km	Hectare	Head of Cattle	Trees	Attendees
<b>Surface Water Management</b>								
Beaver incentives	491							
Beaver management		16						
Beaver dam removal		142						
Infrastructure brushing/mowing	250			1,358				
Infrastructure crossing maintenance	185							
Infrastructure crossing replacements / major repairs	21							
Infrastructure drain maintenance	98			194				
Infrastructure drain reconstruction	10			30				
Infrastructure inventory	15	5,700						
Drainage licences reviewed	75							
Aerial surveys	26			139				
Erosion control structures	13	13						
Gated culverts	3		1					
Grassed waterway	14				48			
Gully stabilization	5				6			
Hydraulic assessments	56	47						
Streambank stabilization	26				39			
Surface water flow and retention assessment	98							
Urban rain gardens		8						
Water retention (<50 dam <sup>3</sup> )	38		1,028					
Water retention (>50 dam <sup>3</sup> )	0		0					
Water retention project maintenance	36							
Weirs	1							
<b>Nutrient Reduction and Water Quality</b>								
Constructed wetlands	1							
Forage buffer strips	11				44			
Livestock - alternative watering systems	39					7,366		
Livestock confinement relocation	1					150		
Livestock crossings	14					1,350		
Livestock exclusion fencing	45			62		3,435		
Livestock pasture pipeline	16			8		2,900		
Livestock rotational grazing	4				489	430		
Livestock portable windbreaks	1				150			
Soil health - forage seed	62				2,128			
Soil health - polycrop trials		8			124			
Soil health - salinity seed	18				87			
Soil health - soil testing		16						
Surface water testing		127						
Surface water testing - ARD partnership		9						
Runoff control (farmyard, acreage)		1						



Activity	Projects	Sites	Storage (dam <sup>3</sup> )	km	Hectare	Head of Cattle	Trees	Attendees
<b>Drinking Water Protection</b>								
Abandoned well sealing	182							
Dormant well protection		12						
Drinking water testing		1,292						
Well establishment	12							
Well head remediation		3						
Well inventory		0						
Well shock chlorination		38						
<b>Habitat Conservation and Enhancement</b>								
Aquatic habitat creation	1				5			
Conservation agreements	7				104			
Conservation corridors	456				2,177			
Fish - lake aeration		3						
Fish - rearing ponds	1							
Fish - stocking	2							
Habitat lease	25	330			869			
Nature trails	24			65				
Property maintenance	32							
Riparian and aquatic assessments	3	18		40				
Trees - community tree nursery	2						2,000	
Trees - field and property shelterbelts				63			24,460	
Trees - tree planting	168						13,255	
Trees - seedlings provided	1,095						72,766	
<b>Watershed Awareness and Education</b>								
Banquets and watershed functions	23							1,418
Benthic monitoring	2	7						
Best management practices research	8	17						
Brochures	27	13,903						
Composters	40							
Demonstration and tours	34							560
Eco-tourism	7							
Geographic information system and aerial photos	563							
Project or interpretive signs	39							
Project tours	74							373
Rain barrels	198							
Strategic planning	6							
Video/documentary	6							
Water festivals	11							2,890
Water use conservation activities	2							
Water use conservation planning	2							
Website and social media	43							
Youth education	133							5,623

# CUMULATIVE PROGRAM OUTCOMES



Watershed districts have built 173 water retention projects since 2015 with 5,102 decameters (4,135 acre-feet) of water storage capacity. This is equivalent to almost double the water storage capacity of the Vermilion Reservoir, which supplies the City of Dauphin's drinking water.

To improve water flow and reduce flooding, four watershed districts with a waterway infrastructure management mandate have replaced or repaired 961 culvert and bridge crossings since 2015.



Since 2015, watershed districts have installed over 221 km of riparian fencing and 197 off-site watering systems to exclude 56,614 cattle from riparian areas, improving water quality and riparian habitat.

Over the last 10 years, watershed districts have planted close to one million trees. Today these trees sequester over 3,000 tonnes of carbon per year. This is the equivalent of taking 750 cars off of Manitoba's roads every year.



Over the last five years, watershed districts have sealed 1,069 abandoned wells and conducted 4,910 drinking water tests to safeguard private drinking water sources.

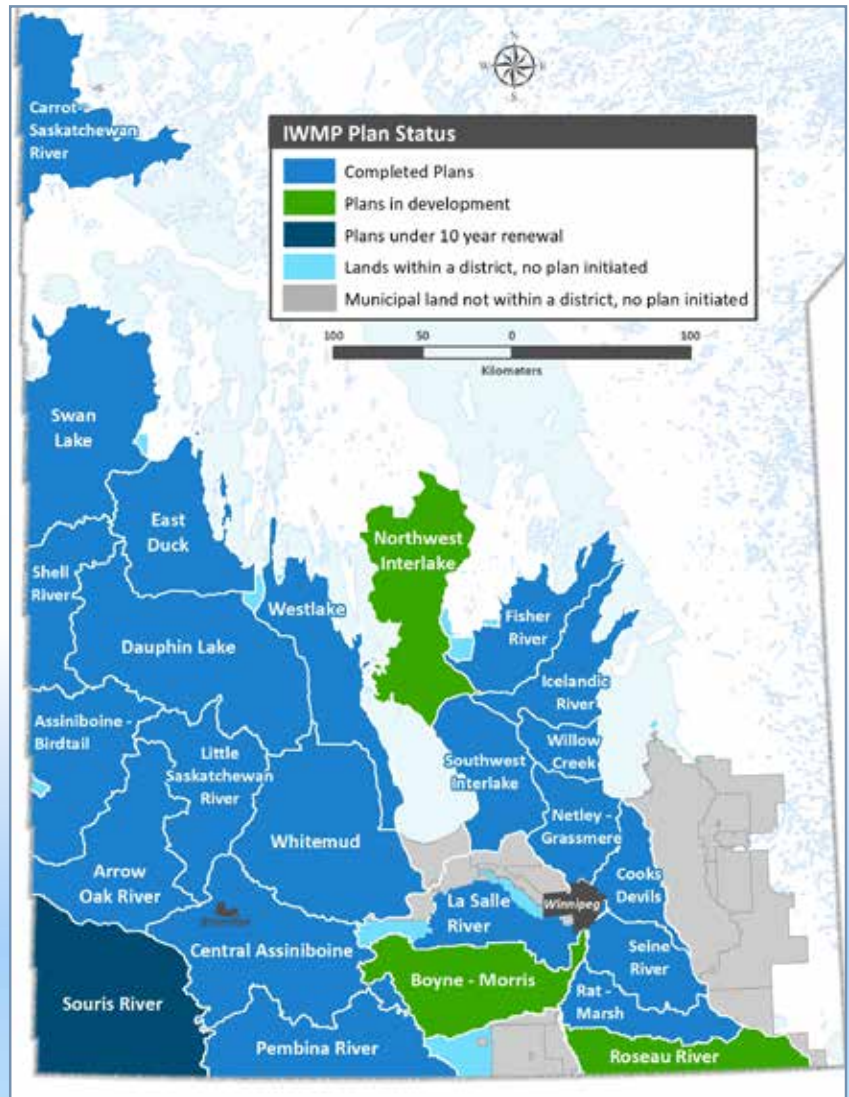
In the past five years, watershed districts have held 142 producer workshops and 314 project tours, educating more than 6,500 participants on healthy soil and water management practices.



# WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Watershed management plans provide a decision-making framework for the protection, restoration and management of water, aquatic ecosystems, and drinking water sources. The planning process engages watershed residents, stakeholders and government to identify and prioritize watershed issues, gather and analyze local, technical, and traditional knowledge, and develop recommendations to address priority issues in targeted areas. Plan implementation is shared by watershed districts, all levels of government, stakeholder organizations and watershed residents.

Watershed districts have initiated 27 watershed management plans as of 2019-20, of which 23 plans are complete, three plans are at various stages of development, and one plan has begun its renewal process.



## WATERSHED MANAGEMENT REGULATION

Under The Water Protection Act, the Watershed Management Regulation came into force on January 1, 2020 and designates watershed districts as water planning authorities responsible for the development of integrated watershed management plans for watersheds within their boundaries. While conservation districts had previously been responsible for leading the development and implementation of watershed management plans, this regulation formalizes that role for the watershed districts in the planning process.

# GROW – GROWING OUTCOMES IN WATERSHEDS

## LOCAL GROW PROGRAMS

Growing Outcomes in Watersheds (GROW) is a new, made-in-Manitoba approach to encourage and support the delivery of ecological goods and services (EG&S) in Manitoba. The two priority outcomes for GROW are improved watershed resilience to the impacts of a changing climate (for example, reduced flooding and drought vulnerability) and improved water quality (through, for example, sediment and nutrient management). Co-benefits include improved on-farm water management, enhanced sustainable agricultural production, improved biodiversity and habitat, and carbon sequestration and storage.

Watershed districts have been identified as key delivery agents for GROW. Watershed districts are ideally positioned to develop locally-focused programs that support actions identified in local watershed management plans. Each district delivering GROW will establish a Local GROW Committee that includes representation from agricultural producers, watershed district members, and partners and technical experts as needed.

Local GROW Committees will focus on priority outcomes and co-benefits that are consistent with local integrated watershed management plans. Activities that are eligible for inclusion in a Local GROW Program include:

- Water retention
- Wetland conservation, restoration and enhancement
- Riparian area conservation, restoration and enhancement
- Buffer establishment (ex: shelterbelts)
- Upland area conservation, restoration and enhancement (ex: grassland conservation, soil health improvement)







## GROW TRUST

The GROW Trust was established in June, 2019 with an initial investment of \$52 M by the government of Manitoba. The Trust is managed by The Winnipeg Foundation and administered by the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation. Building on the innovative approach introduced through the Conservation Trust in 2018, the Conservation and GROW Trusts provide project establishment and landowner incentive payments for Local GROW Programs, and will ensure ongoing funding for GROW and conservation-based programming in perpetuity.

In October, 2019, the Seine Rat Roseau and Assiniboine West Watershed Districts (formerly Seine-Rat River and Little Saskatchewan River Conservation Districts) received initial funding from the GROW Trust to expand their existing ecological goods and services programs. All fourteen watershed districts submitted proposals for the first intake of applications in January, 2020.

## CONSERVATION TRUST

Watershed districts received over \$1 M in funding in the first round of projects funded by the Conservation Trust in April, 2019. Watershed district projects included water retention, wetland and riparian enhancement, habitat improvements, and other projects that build watershed health and resilience.

A second call for proposals was announced in fall of 2019, and all 14 watershed districts submitted applications for an additional \$750,000 in project funding under the Watersheds, Habitat and Wildlife, Innovation and Conservation Planning, and Enhancing Soil Health categories.



# 2019-20 MUNICIPAL PARTNERS

## 104 MUNICIPALITIES ARE PARTNERS IN THE WATERSHED DISTRICTS PROGRAM

### VILLAGES

Dunnottar  
St. Pierre – Jolys

### TOWNS

Carberry  
Carman  
Minnedosa  
Neepawa  
Niverville  
Ste. Anne  
Stonewall  
Swan River  
Teulon  
Virden  
Winnipeg Beach

### CITIES

Brandon  
Dauphin  
Morden  
Selkirk  
Steinbach

### MUNICIPALITIES

Alonsa  
Arborg  
Argyle  
Armstrong  
Bifrost – Riverton  
Boissevain – Morton  
Brenda – Waskada  
Brokenhead  
Cartier  
Cartwright – Roblin  
Clanwilliam – Erickson  
Coldwell  
Cornwallis  
Dauphin  
Deloraine – Winchester  
De Salaberry  
Dufferin  
Ellice – Archie  
Elton  
Emerson – Franklin  
Ethelbert  
Fisher  
Gilbert Plains  
Gimli  
Glenboro – South Cypress  
Glenella – Lansdowne  
Grahamdale  
Grandview

Grassland  
Grey  
Hamiota  
Hanover  
Harrison – Park  
Kelsey  
Killarney – Turtle Mountain  
La Broquerie  
Lakeshore  
Lorne  
Louise  
McCreary  
Minitonas – Bowsman  
Minto – Odanah  
Montcalm  
Mossey River  
Mountain  
Norfolk Treherne  
North Cypress – Langford  
North Norfolk  
Oakland Wawanesa  
Oakview  
Pembina  
Piney  
Pipestone  
Portage la Prairie  
Prairie Lakes  
Prairie View  
Reynolds

Riding Mountain West  
Ritchot  
Riverdale  
Roblin  
Rockwood  
Rosedale  
Rossburn  
Rosser  
Russell Binscarth  
Sifton  
Souris – Glenwood  
Springfield  
St. Andrews  
St. Laurent  
Stanley  
Ste. Anne  
Ste. Rose  
Stuartburn  
Swan Valley West  
Taché  
Thompson  
Two Borders  
Victoria  
Wallace – Woodworth  
West Interlake  
West St. Paul  
Westlake – Gladstone  
Woodlands  
Yellowhead





# 2019-20 EXTERNAL PARTNERS

## DISTRICTS RECEIVE ADDITIONAL FUNDING FROM A NUMBER OF EXTERNAL PARTNERS

### FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada  
Canada Summer Jobs  
Canadian Agricultural Partnership – Ag Action Manitoba  
Environment and Climate Change Canada

In addition to these partnerships, many municipalities contribute more than the required matching funds in support of the high quality programs and projects completed by districts.

### PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT & CROWN CORPORATIONS

Manitoba Agriculture and Resource Development  
Manitoba Emergency Measures  
Manitoba Fisheries and Wildlife Enhancement Fund  
Manitoba Forestry Association  
Manitoba Hometown Greenteam  
Manitoba Hydro  
Manitoba Sports

### NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS

ALUS Canada  
Brandon Area Foundation  
Canadian National Railway Stronger Communities Fund  
Conservation Trust  
Ducks Unlimited Canada  
Federation of Canadian Municipalities  
Hop Foundation  
Manitoba Forage and Grasslands Association  
Nature Conservancy of Canada  
Nature Manitoba  
Project Learning Tree  
RBC Foundation  
Sunrise Credit Union  
Swan Valley RISE  
Tundra Oil & Gas  
Watershed residents & local community groups  
Local Corporate Sponsors

## 2019-20 PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

### MANITOBA ASSOCIATION OF WATERSHEDS (MAW) AND PARTNERSHIPS

The Manitoba Association of Watersheds (MAW) supports the work of the watershed districts by working on public policy issues, organizing and hosting the annual Manitoba Watersheds Conference, publishing an annual newsletter (The Current), administering joint funding projects and raising the profile of the program by sharing district success stories and promoting the districts as key players in protecting Manitoba's watersheds.

Some of the most important work that MAW does is in building relationships and promoting partnerships between watershed districts, provincial government departments, First Nations, as well as various non governmental organizations.

### LIVING LABORATORIES – EASTERN PRAIRIES INITIATIVE

In 2019, the Government of Canada announced the \$10 M Living Laboratories Initiative to advance collaborative agricultural science and help address some of Canada's most pressing environmental issues. The Initiative is a network of Living Labs across the country where farmers, researchers and various partners work hand in hand on farms developing novel tools and techniques that are tailored to local environments and needs. Practical technologies to adjust to climate change, reduce water contamination, improve soil and water conservation, and maximize habitat capacity and biodiversity on agricultural landscapes are some of the outcomes expected from this initiative.

Four watershed districts along with the Manitoba Association of Watersheds are key partners in the Living Laboratories – Eastern Prairies Initiative: Assiniboine West (Upper Oak River subwatershed), Pembina Valley (Swan Lake subwatershed), Redboine (North Shannon Creek subwatershed), and Seine Rat Roseau (Main Drain subwatershed) Watershed Districts. Water retention, pollinator and forage plantings, alternative watering systems and innovative tile drainage practices are some of the best management practices being investigated in these watersheds.

This report is available in alternate formats by contacting the Department's Accessibility Co-ordinator at 1-844-769-6224.  
Requests to access information from this report in French can be made by calling 204-573-0739.