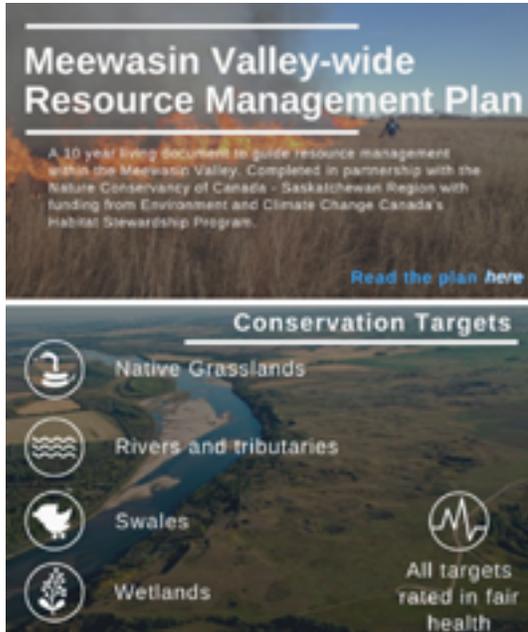


# MEEWASIN EXPLORER

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2018

VOLUME 25 - NUMBER 5

## Meewasin Valley-wide Resource Management Plan



In 2015, Meewasin received funding from *Environment and Climate Change Canada* through the *Habitat Stewardship Program* to develop the *Meewasin Valley-wide Resource Management Plan (RMP)*. Meewasin partnered with the *Nature Conservancy of Canada - Saskatchewan Region (NCC)*, who was simultaneously developing a plan for the same region, to use their method of regional conservation planning called *Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation*.

### Conservation Targets

The conservation targets of hydro-riparian areas (rivers, creeks and the riparian vegetation surrounding them), post-glacial channel scars (swales), native grasslands and wetlands make up most of the complex ecosystems within the planning area.

### Current Status of Conservation Targets

To determine the current status or health of the conservation targets, a viability assessment was conducted. The identification of key ecological attributes (KEAs), defined as the "aspect of a target's biology or ecology that if present, define a healthy target and if missing or altered, would lead to the outright loss or extreme degradation of that target over time" (Conservation Measures Partnership 2013), allowed Meewasin and NCC to develop a list of indicators to measure the status of the KEAs. In the viability assessment indicators, KEAs and targets have their status ranked as poor, fair, good or very good with all four targets receiving a ranking of fair.

### Threats to Conservation in the Region

Threats to the conservation targets were ranked based on scope, severity and irreversibility within the context of the project area. The threats were many and varied, with invasive species standing out as the greatest threat to conservation within the planning area (very high threat). Other high threats include climate change, dams and water management, runoff of pesticides and fertilizers, trespass issues, stormwater, and fire and fire suppression.

### Actions for Conservation

Actions are the activities or tasks that conservation practitioners use to achieve their conservation planning objectives. The RMP includes a list of over 180 recommended actions to be carried out over the next 10 years (2017-2027). These will form the basis of the annual work plan for Meewasin and involves many partnerships, which are the key to success of this plan.

### 2017 Report Card for the Meewasin Valley-wide Resource Management Plan

The RMP is a 10 year conservation plan for the area encompassing the Meewasin Valley. This plan is a living document that allows updates and new information to be added as it is acquired. Annual updates will reflect the Open Standards Model and will include the yearly work plan, detailed budgets, what we have learned from the previous work of the plan (successes and failures), and updates to the viability assessment including any new information and status changes.

The first year of implementation of the RMP was 2017 and we saw 40 of 52 identified actions completed successfully (77%). The 12 actions not completed were due to various reasons including funding issues, lack of resources, data gaps and influence of outside forces with most of the actions already underway, but not actually completed in 2017. Year 1 of the RMP saw recognition of the completion of the RMP and increased opportunities to establish new partnerships and strengthen those already in place. Meewasin has considered Year 1 a success and has identified lingering data gaps to fill as we move forward in the next 9 years of the plan.



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Meewasin

# WHAT'S HAPPENING AT MEEWASIN

## Meewasin Trail Usage Survey Results

The Meewasin Trail is the most popular recreation amenity in the City of Saskatoon. There are over 80 kilometers of trail through Saskatoon and into the surrounding area. In order to monitor and better understand usage, Meewasin maintains a number of trail counters at strategic locations throughout the river valley. Two styles of counters are employed – a simple infrared counter that counts every time someone breaks the beam across the trail, and a more elaborate counter with both a beam and loop in the trail that tells us direction of travel, exact time of day, and pedestrian vs bike details. We collect data from our counters every month, giving us a good understanding of patterns over the year. Monthly monitoring also lets us know if a particular unit is not functioning due to a failed battery or system malfunction.

Our most recent 12 month analysis (April 2017-March 2018) once again shows the trail's popularity. The busiest three sites, in order, were River Landing, the east bank trail at the weir, and the Mendel site. River Landing had almost double the number of users compared with the second busiest location. Annual counts volumes for these locations are as follows:

- River Landing: 512,000
- East bank weir: 265,000
- Mendel: 217,000

May, June, July and August were the busiest months, typically averaging over 1000 visits per day at two locations and over 2000 visits per day at River Landing. Even in January there are between 200 and 300 daily users on average at these locations. Based on the data from 7 counters distributed throughout the trail network, the trail had over 1.34 million visits for the 12 month period.

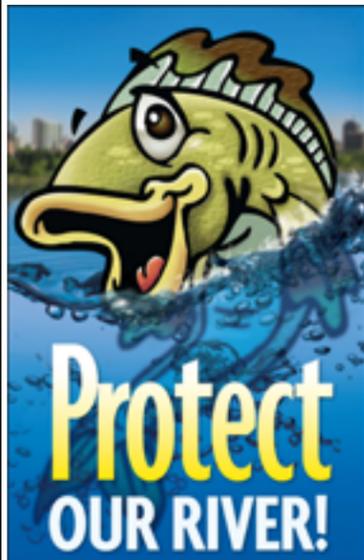
### MEEWASIN TRAIL MAP – ONLINE (AND IN YOUR POCKET!)



Exploring the Meewasin Trail is easy! Chart your adventure and access information along the way. Find out what events are happening along the Meewasin Trail, where the nearest dog parks, water fountains and washrooms are. Simply go to [www.meewasin.com](http://www.meewasin.com), click the map and the fun begins!

Prefer your map in your pocket? A special thanks to the Saskatoon Road Runners for sponsoring the new print edition of the compact Meewasin Trail Guide now available for pick up at the MVA office and Tourism Saskatoon!

Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin, Meewasin Valley Authority, Ducks Unlimited Canada, and the City of Saskatoon would like to thank all past participants of the Yellow Fish Road™ program. This program reminds us that what goes down our storm drains directly impacts our river and wetlands.



Please join us again in Fall 2018 to spread the word that "Rain Only" should be going down storm drains. We are now taking bookings for September and October. Contact [sbouchard@saskriverbasin.ca](mailto:sbouchard@saskriverbasin.ca) for more information on how your class or group can get involved. There is no cost to participate.

Learn more about safe disposal of household hazardous waste: [saskwastereduction.ca](http://saskwastereduction.ca) or [saskatoon.ca/hazardouswaste](http://saskatoon.ca/hazardouswaste) or call 306-975-2487.

## CELEBRATE NATIONAL TREE DAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2018, IN THE MEEWASIN VALLEY

### DID YOU KNOW?

- Trees offer food and shelter for birds, mammals, insects and amphibians
- 98 trees will absorb 1 ton of carbon dioxide every year
- 1 large tree will deliver a day of oxygen to four people
- Trees provide shade to families picnicking in the park
- You can "Plant-A-Tree" in memory or celebration through Meewasin which helps to green our river valley. Simply go online to [meewasin.com](http://meewasin.com) or call 306-665-6887.

Meewasin

# WHAT'S HAPPENING AT MEEWASIN

## Sheep have returned to the Meewasin Northeast Swale!

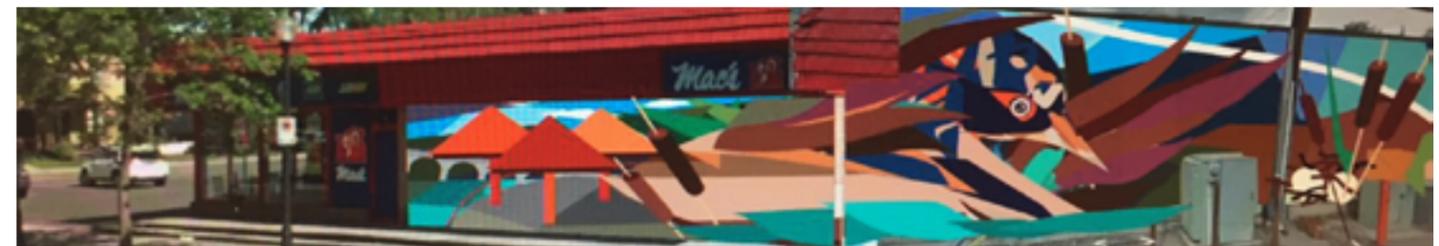
Meewasin has a flock of sheep grazing at the Meewasin Northeast Swale, within Saskatoon's city limits for the month of August. A total of 325 sheep will be used to improve grassland bird habitat at the Swale. Since 2004, Meewasin has incorporated conservation grazing with sheep, goats and cattle, as part of its integrated resource management program. Such Meewasin grassland management practices will enhance Plains Rough Fescue, a rare native grass found only in Canada with less than 5% remaining.



Meewasin is working with rancher and conservation practitioner Sue Michalsky of Quarter L Ranch to use a sheep flock to enhance grassland bird habitat by controlling non-native invasive species, reducing native shrub cover, and reducing overgrowth of grasses and shrubs. The sheep will be "targeted" in small 1-4 hectare plots and will be moved to different plots as management objectives are met.

Environment and Climate Change Canada's Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk has provided funding to Meewasin to enhance grassland bird habitat at its conservation sites including Beaver Creek Conservation Area, Cranberry Flats Conservation Area, Saskatoon Natural Grasslands and the Meewasin Northeast Swale. With less than 20% of native prairie left in Saskatchewan and a 70% decline in grassland bird populations in the last two decades, improving the health of remaining tracks of native prairie is critical to ensure the survival of our grasslands birds. Meewasin utilizes an integrated management approach incorporating conservation grazing, prescribed burning, invasive species management and other innovative techniques to manage its native prairie sites. Grassland birds including the species at risk short-eared owl, common nighthawk, Sprague's pipit, and other grassland birds including western meadowlark, clay-coloured sparrow, and vesper sparrow have been observed at the Meewasin Northeast Swale.

The Meewasin Northeast Swale is a 300 hectare conservation site within Saskatoon and is managed by Meewasin. The Swale is home to more than 100 bird and 200 plant species, with remnant tracts of rare Fescue Prairie grasslands and numerous prairie pothole wetlands. The Swale is a post-glacial channel scar of the South Saskatchewan River that runs 26 km from Petturson's Ravine within city limits northeast to near the Clarkborro Ferry crossing.



Tuesday, July 31, 2018, Macs Circle K Convenience unveiled their second mural from their Community Mural Program. The Mural is titled Nestled by local artist Josh Jacobson, and pays homage to the large variety of birds and other wildlife that can be found nesting on the banks of the South Saskatchewan River. CEO Andrea Lafond represented Meewasin at the official unveiling of the mural to speak and accept a more than \$750 donation from the Mac's event to Meewasin.

You can help **Green the Meewasin Valley** with:

- a monthly or annual gift to Meewasin's Green Circle or 500 Club;
- dedication of a tree, brick, bench, or the Memorial Forest to honor a special person in your life;
- a conservation easement on your land;
- a planned gift in your will; or
- a gift to Meewasin's endowment

For more information, visit our website [www.meewasin.com](http://www.meewasin.com) or call/email our office @ 306-665-6887 or [donations@meewasin.com](mailto:donations@meewasin.com).



HOURS: TUESDAY TO FRIDAY 9 A.M. TO 5 P.M. WEEKENDS 12 P.M. TO 5 P.M. CLOSED MONDAYS

# BEAVER CREEK CONSERVATION AREA

INTERPRETING SASKATOON'S NATURAL HISTORY

## Community Initiatives Fund supports Hiking program at BCCA

Thanks to the support from the Community Initiatives Fund through its Community Grant Program Meewasin is once again able to provide transportation access to Beaver Creek Conservation Area (BCCA) for organizations that support youth, newcomer services, and abilities groups and have transportation barriers through the 2018 fall season.

While on site the groups are able to explore the Interpretive Centre – Discovery Theatre & Beaver Room, hike a selection of four nature trails, try the animal silhouette scavenger hunt, hand feed black oil sunflower seeds to the black-capped chickadees, and visit on the deck to enjoy the sights and sounds of the Beaver Creek Valley. On site interpretive staff members provide introduction to the site, direction for activities, and answers to questions.

BCCA is a microcosm of the Meewasin Valley and is located where a prairie creek meets a prairie river. It contains one of the few uncultivated short grass prairie sites in Saskatchewan. The beavers that live there play an important role in keeping the creek habitat teeming with wildlife. Beavers build dams that flood waters upstream, creating beaver ponds. Many plants and animals make their homes in these sheltered ponds.



Thanks to the support provided by the Community Initiatives Fund approximately 400 individuals will visit Beaver Creek, hike and discover the natural world of the Saskatchewan prairie and South Saskatchewan River system.

## A Creek Forming A Valley; A Valley Forming Habitats

BEAVER CREEK CONSERVATION AREA - FOLLOW LORNE AVENUE SOUTH 13 KM ON HIGHWAY #219

CHIP'S HOT LINE: 306-374-2474 FAX: 306-665-6117 E-MAIL: MEEWASIN@MEEWASIN.COM MEEWASIN.COM

## UPCOMING EVENTS



**National Tree Day September 26, 2018** - Take this time to get out and experience all of the benefits that trees provide such as food and shelter, oxygen and absorption of carbon dioxide, to name just a few.

**Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin The Dammed Rivers! Conference October 1-3, 2018** - Partners FOR the Saskatchewan River Basin and the Canadian Water Resources Association, Saskatchewan Branch, are pleased to announce that their annual conference will be held in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, October 1 to 3, 2018 at the Park Town Hotel. The theme for this year's conference is "The Dammed Rivers!" A multitude of dams are found along the rivers throughout the Prairie Provinces – rivers both large and small. Dams have been constructed for a variety of reasons – to create reservoirs to use for electrical generation, water use and recreation, dams to create wetland areas for waterfowl and wildlife, and dams to control water drainage. These structures change the landscape in many ways, altering stream flows, creating lakes, and creating wetlands. All construction affects the landscape in some way and therefore the way that we humans interact with our surroundings.

To register and find out more, please visit [www.dammedrivers.com](http://www.dammedrivers.com) or call 306-665-6887.

**Dark Skies at BCCA October 20, 2018** - Join us out at BCCA on Saturday, October 20, 2018 to learn about light pollution and how it affects the natural world around us. Stay tuned to Meewasin social media for more details closer to the event. This event is sponsored by the Saskatoon Nature Society.

For more information on all Meewasin events, visit our website at [meewasin.com/events](http://meewasin.com/events).

### Explorer eNewsletter

Help us reduce our paper consumption and sign up for our Explorer eNewsletter today! Receive the same great newsletter in a more eco-friendly format. Phone 306-665-6887 or email [meewasin@meewasin.com](mailto:meewasin@meewasin.com) and provide us with your name and email address.



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