

Village of Avonlea Receive 2013 Provincial Watershed Stewardship Award

The Moose Jaw River Watershed Stewards have been working closely with Avonlea to mitigate their lagoon effluent discharge issues. Avonlea has had issues with compliance since the 1970's with effluent release from a single cell lagoon. Various options and reports were considered but none were implemented until the MJRWS presented the idea of building an engineered constructed wetland that would be designed to treat the effluent instead of continually releasing it. The Village of Avonlea embraced this concept along with the Stewards as the reduction of impact from any effluent release is a priority for source water protection as well as residents downstream.

The engineered riparian area performs important functions, including filtration of pollutants, and assists in the breakdown of organic and inorganic materials. Avonlea saw this as a natural and cost effective alternative to waste water treatment. With their new drinking water facility up and running it was a huge investment for such a small community of just under 400 to undertake, both within 10 years. The Community received some grant funding but ultimately 80% of the cost of the project is with Avonlea. They took ownership of this project and have shared their story with other small communities in Saskatchewan facing the same regulatory rigor. Although there are other constructed wetlands in Saskatchewan this is the first engineered wetland designed to effectively treat waste water from Avonlea to satisfy any results based regulations for effluent.

This project satisfies agricultural, environmental, and government compliance concerns over waste water influence on surface water quality, riparian and watershed health.

It is important to bridge the gap and build successful relationships between rural communities and agricultural producers to improve overall health of our watershed.

The Avonlea Engineered Constructed Wetland Lagoon System has been a fully functional waste water treatment facility since 2012 and the Village has not had to release any effluent into surface water systems in the Moose Jaw River Watershed since.