



WBEA@Work

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Executive Director's Report

Dr. Kevin Percy

Throughout the spring and summer, WBEA representatives have advanced our monitoring relationships, communicated results of our science, and engaged stakeholders both close to home and farther afield.



In June, WBEA celebrated fifteen years of monitoring with a Community Open House. Over one hundred local residents braved torrential rains and fierce winds to drop by WBEA headquarters and learn more about our work in the region. WBEA staff participation was a significant element in the success of the event. Staff conceived a number of interactive science-based activities and displays that gave the public a glimpse behind the scenes of our three monitoring programs. The Human Exposure Monitoring program invited the public to "calibrate their noses" using the range of odour standards employed in the training of Fort McMurray Community Odour Monitoring Panel volunteers. Our air monitoring program was represented by the Mobile Monitoring Unit as well as an array of weather and air analyzers. The Terrestrial Environmental Effects Monitoring program's display referenced the Traditional Environmental Knowledge (TEK) project, passive air monitoring and the pH of regional soils. WBEA technician Kendra Thomas is shown in the top photo at the TEEM display with Open House visitors.



RMWB Mayor Melissa Blake, pictured in the lower photo, graciously brought greetings from the municipality on WBEA's fifteen year anniversary. Mayor Blake's presence was greatly appreciated by WBEA staff and members.

Also close to home, passive air pollution monitors, were set out in selected regional blueberry patches as the TEEM- funded TEK

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"Berry Focus Group" project, comprised of Fort McKay community members, moved to field assessment of factors that could potentially influence berry crops.

The Air and Waste Management Association (A&WMA), a non profit, nonpartisan professional organization that enhances environmental knowledge and expertise by providing a neutral forum for information exchange, held the 106th conference and exhibition in Chicago, IL, in late June. The conference served as a professional development opportunity for two WBEA technicians and Dr. Yu Mei Hsu presented her paper "Semi-continuous Measurements of Inorganic Gases and PM_{2.5} Composition in the Athabasca Oil Sands Region". WBEA Communications hosted an information booth about our regional monitoring work.

Prior to Parks Canada's successful application for WBEA membership, I was invited to speak at the Peace-Athabasca Delta-Ecological Monitoring Program (PAD-EMP) meeting held in Fort Smith, NWT, in late June. Following a short start up period, this multi stakeholder monitoring organization is forging ahead with an impressive approach to monitoring in this important and ecologically sensitive northern delta area. WBEA will continue to discuss areas of joint interest with Wood Buffalo National Park and PAD-EMP members.

WBEA reached beyond our boundaries to gain a better understanding of terrestrial monitoring in Europe in May through participation in the annual conference of the **United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) International Co-operative Programme on Assessment and Monitoring of Air Pollution Effects on Forests (ICP-Forests)**, held in Belgrade, Serbia. On behalf of WBEA members, I presented on our monitoring programs and explored opportunities for future monitoring linkages. ICP-Forests, which

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Top: Passive air pollution monitoring at a Berry Focus Group blueberry plot.

Bottom: Blueberries.

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monitors forest health from Finland through to Turkey, expressed considerable interest in collaboration with WBEA given the commonality in designs and measurement approaches.

Joint Canada/Alberta Implementation Plan for Oil Sands Monitoring (JOSM) partners have begun six weeks of intensive monitoring in the region. As one component of this initiative, WBEA's Air Monitoring Station 13 - Fort McKay South, pictured, will be the ground base for a large suite of air measurements.

During the last eight months, the RAMP-WBEA Subcommittee held a number of meetings to explore the opportunity to establish an aquatics monitoring program

within WBEA. A report was presented and discussed at the WBEA General Members Meeting on June 12th.

In 2013, WBEA is funded under and is currently transitioning more fully into JOSM. WBEA is presently engaged in the JOSM Air, Water, Data, and Communications Technical Advisory Committees which are working on the plans for monitoring in 2014/15. It is expected that the two JOSM Government Leads will be making budget decisions later this fall. While planning continues, WBEA staff will execute our work plan efficiently and in a timely manner, while providing essential support where needed for other JOSM activities. ■ ■ ■

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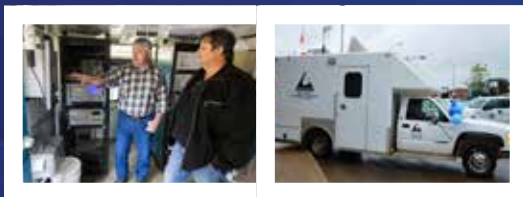
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WBEA Opens Doors to the Community to Celebrate Fifteen Years of Environmental Monitoring in the RMWB



Jane Percy, WBEA Communications

On June 9th, WBEA Members and staff welcomed the community to an Open House to celebrate our fifteen years of environmental monitoring in the region. The day was planned in conjunction with RMWB Environment Week, and was held at WBEA's offices on Thickwood Blvd.



Top: WBEA technician, Melissa Lemay, welcomes her niece, Felicia, to WBEA's Community Open House.

Bottom left: Gary Cross, right, explains air analyzer operations to a visitor.

Bottom Right: WBEA's Mobile Monitoring Unit at the Community Open House.

"The event was an opportunity for people in the community not only to learn more about WBEA's air, terrestrial and human exposure monitoring programs, but to also meet the dedicated and knowledgeable staff who carry out the monitoring," said Executive Director, Dr. Kevin Percy. "The emphasis was on hands-on science demonstrations, one-on-one interactions between staff and community members and entertaining activities!"

Visitors were able to tour WBEA's Mobile Monitoring unit to see air analyzers in operation and view real-time air quality data.

Gary Cross, provided tours of the mobile unit and explained how WBEA's analyzers - literally - generate numbers (air quality data) from the air.

WBEA's Mobile Monitoring Unit is dispatched to respond to air quality events at various locations in the RMWB as needed. It holds air analyzers that continuously measure for a variety of air pollutants, as well as wind speed, wind direction and temperature.

Each of WBEA's three monitoring programs hosted displays and demonstrated equipment specific to their monitoring work at the

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WBEA Celebrates Fifteen Years of Environmental Monitoring in the RMWB

Community Open House. Staff members were on hand to speak with visitors and answer questions.

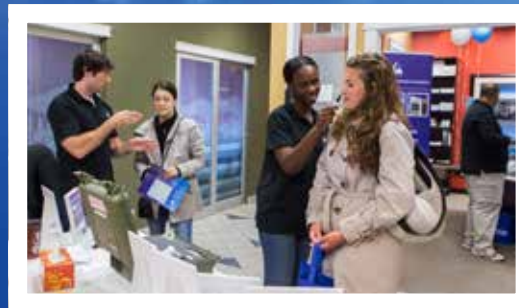
At the Human Exposure Monitoring Program (HEMP) display, top photo, visitors were able to test their sense of smell against a series of the odour standards used in the recruitment and training of WBEA's Community Odour Monitoring Panel members. Just for fun, a series of well known essences such as orange, clove, cinnamon and lemon, were also available for those who wished to test their scent recognition abilities. HEMP Program Manager, Abena Twumasi-Smith, pictured second from right, and technician Zach Eastman, pictured left, spoke with visitors and recruited several new members to the WBEA Community Odour Monitoring Panel.

WBEA's air monitoring program was well represented, and their display, centre photo, featured monitoring and meteorological instruments. Sanjay Prasad, pictured right, coordinated the display and met with the public. AATC technicians Michael Martineau and Kendra Thomas were also on hand to assist.

At the Terrestrial Environmental Effects Monitoring table, lower photo, visitors had an opportunity to view some indigenous plants of the boreal forest. Blueberries, the focus of WBEA's Traditional Environmental Knowledge (TEK) Project with Fort McKay community members, were displayed in a terrarium. Passive monitoring, which allows WBEA to monitor in areas without electricity, was demonstrated. As well, visitors had the opportunity to test and observe the pH of different soils found in the regional landscape, pictured.

Top: HEMP display. Middle: AATC display. Bottom: TEEM display.

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WBEA Celebrates Fifteen Years of Environmental Monitoring in the RMWB

In the lead up to the event WBEA Communications had reached out to the public and stakeholders through postcard and email invitations, advertising and signage.

It wasn't all serious science, though! At the children's table many beautiful buffalo pictures were created in tribute to the name of the Association. Everyone enjoyed a BBQ thanks to the intrepid team of Melissa Lemay and Ryan Power, pictured, who braved driving rain and winds to serve hamburgers and hotdogs to all.

RMWB Mayor Melissa Blake was in attendance and graciously spoke of the work of the Association and its importance to the region. Shirley Lin presented a certificate of congratulations on behalf of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. Mayor Blake, left, and WBEA President, Diane Phillips, right, then cut a celebratory cake.

Although it was a very wet day, over 100 citizens came out to the event and many expressed how much they had enjoyed learning more about the work of WBEA and meeting our staff. ■ ■ ■ ■



Top Left: Melissa Lemay and Ryan Power at the barbeque!

Bottom Left: Anniversary Cake.

Top Right: RMWB Mayor Melissa Blake and WBEA President Diane Phillips.

Bottom Right: Open House visitors and WBEA staff.

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HEMP Expands Odour Monitoring Capabilities

Jane Percy, WBEA Communications

The Human Exposure Monitoring Program's (HEMP) mandate focuses on the detection and chemical characterization of regional odours. HEMP's approach to better understanding odours includes a panel of Fort McMurray community volunteers who track and report odours through the Community Odour Monitoring Panel, as well as operation of specialized odour measurement instrumentation.

HEMP currently operates a Pneumatically Focused Gas Chromatograph (PFGC), pictured, at AMS 1 Bertha Ganter-Fort McKay. In addition to hourly, semi-continuous monitoring for a suite of volatile organic compounds (VOCs), the PFGC also provides information on a wide range of inorganic and organic sulphur compounds (RSCs).

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HEMP Expands Odour Monitoring Capabilities

The advantage of the PFGC is that it provides hourly measurements of VOCs and RSCs together. An integrated PFGC canister (multi-absorbent cartridge system) can also be automatically triggered when sulphur analyzers at AMS 1 indicate RSC concentrations in ambient air are reaching a set threshold level.

HEMP will take delivery of a second PFGC in the near future and in preparation for this has commissioned a new trailer, pictured to the right, to house the instrument. Housing the PFGC in a portable station will allow the HEMP committee to deploy it to areas throughout the region where odours are of concern. The trailer is being readied to receive the new PFGC by technician Zach Eastman, shown here in the lower photo with HEMP Program Manager Abena Twumasi-Smith, at WBEA's Field Operations Centre (FOC).

The HEMP trailer also holds analyzers for ozone, sulphur dioxide and methane/non-methane hydrocarbons. Future plans include installation of a second Electronic Nose. When fully equipped the HEMP portable trailer will be deployed to AMS 2 Mildred Lake for approximately twelve months.

The HEMP Committee regularly reviews the data from the PFGC and other instruments such as the Electronic Nose and methane/non-methane hydrocarbon analyzer. 



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WBEA and Parks Canada

Jane Percy, WBEA Communications

In June 2013, Parks Canada became a member of the Wood Buffalo Environmental Association (WBEA). This was a fitting addition to our membership as the southern territory of the Wood Buffalo National Park (WBNP), one of Canada's most northerly national parks, is also part of WBEA's airshed. Stuart McMillan, Manager, Resource Conservation WBNP, was on hand at WBEA's June AGM to support the Parks Canada application and to speak about the Wood Buffalo National Park. One of the programs he elaborated upon was the Peace-Athabasca Delta - Ecological Monitoring Program, or PAD-EMP.

The mandate of PAD-EMP is to determine, measure, evaluate and communicate the state of the Peace-Athabasca Delta ecosystem, including any changes that result from cumulative regional development. Both traditional knowledge and western science play a role in PAD-EMP's activities. The participants in PAD-EMP include 10 Aboriginal Governments, 6 federal, provincial and territorial government departments and 2 environmental non-government organizations. PAD-EMP arose out of the shared concerns, shared interests and shared responsibility of its members.

WBEA Executive Director, Dr. Kevin Percy, participated in the June 2013 meeting of PAD-EMP held in Fort Smith, NWT. Kevin gave a presentation on the full scope of WBEA's



Executive Director, Kevin Percy, addresses PAD-EMP participants during their June 2013 meeting in Fort Smith.

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programs and governance model. The presentation was well received and resulted in discussions with Parks Canada staff and PAD-EMP members on opportunities for air and terrestrial monitoring in Wood Buffalo National Park and the Peace River delta.

"I very much appreciated the invitation to speak to PAD-EMP members on behalf of WBEA. I'm very impressed by the cooperative engagement of the members and the commitment to monitoring," said Dr. Percy. "The progress made to date through PAD-EMP is notable. I look forward to further discussions between WBEA, Parks Canada and PAD-EMP concerning additional monitoring opportunities."    



The Slave River white pelican colony near Fort Smith.

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WBEA and the European Forest Monitoring Experience

Dr. Kevin Percy, Executive Director

The International Co-operative Programme on Assessment and Monitoring of Air Pollution Effects on Forests (ICP - Forests) is a Pan-European international cooperative program for the long term monitoring and measurement of forest condition and forest health in Scandinavia and Europe, extending into Turkey. ICP- Forests is mandated under the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and has been in operation for about 20 years. As part of this program, ICP-Forest monitoring plots are assessed annually. Canada and the USA are both partners of the organization, although not active members. I first became acquainted with ICP-Forests through my previous career with the Canadian Forest Service. Subsequently, European scientists associated with ICP-Forests have also learned of, and expressed an interest in, WBEA's monitoring programs.

In late May, I was invited to give a keynote presentation to open the two day 2nd UNECE ICP-Forests Scientific Conference - *ICP - Forests, Today's Evaluations and Future Monitoring*, held in Belgrade, Serbia, from May 28 to May 29. The annual conference provides a forum for experts who are active in evaluation and analysis of ICP-Forests data, as well as interested stakeholders.

I presented an overview of WBEA's air and terrestrial programs, with an emphasis on the science enhancement in our programs, since adoption of the Forest Health approach in 2007. The title of the presentation was "Requirements for Future Forest Monitoring: A Case Study from the Oil Sands Region, Alberta, Canada." The presentation included data and visuals on boreal forest ecosystems and the WBEA technologies, infrastructure and indicators used to measure forest health in the Oil



Participants of the UNECE ICP-Forests Scientific Conference - "ICP - Forests, Today's Evaluations and Future Monitoring", Belgrade, Serbia.

Sands region. In particular, I noted that there were a lot of commonalities and similarities between the ICP - Forests program in Europe and our program in northeastern Alberta.

In conclusion, I made the point that there was a real opportunity for collaboration between the UNECE Pan-European ICP-Forests program and WBEA through, for instance, installation of some of their plots in the Oil Sands; WBEA specialists working together with ICP-Forests specialists; or at the very least exchanging data about the state of forest health in the northern hemisphere.

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WBEA and the European Forest Monitoring Experience

I was asked to give a follow-up short presentation, on the final conference day, in which I proposed specific ways in which WBEA and the UN - ICP - Forests might collaborate:

- Installation of ICP - Forests Level II plots into WBEA Forest Health Monitoring (FHM) network.
- Addition of ICP - Forests parameters, not currently measured, in WBEA FHM plots.
- A joint measurement campaign at selected plots by ICP - Forests and WBEA technicians.
- Open data sharing between WBEA and ICP - Forests.

The potential areas for collaboration were favorably received, and the ICP - Forests has agreed to follow up through ongoing contacts. The ICP - Forests is already investigating a European trial with one of the indicators used in WBEA FHM: soil ions in solution, measured passively using plant root simulators. 



One of WBEA's five instrumented 30 m towers. This tower is located at WBEA Forest Health site JP104, located NE of Fort McMurray. These towers provide continuous meteorological and site-condition (e.g., light intensity, soil moisture) data, necessary for proper interpretation of air quality and ecological monitoring data.

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Wrapping WBEA Air Monitoring Stations

Jane Percy, WBEA Communications

Two WBEA Air Monitoring Stations (AMS) located in Fort McMurray have recently had colourful wraps installed. The stations are AMS 6 - Patricia McInnes, located near the skateboard park at the Syncrude Athletic Park in Timberlea, and AMS 7 - Athabasca Valley located in downtown Fort McMurray near the Athabasca River.

The wraps were envisioned by WBEA Communications as a way to improve the appearance of the white trailers that hold our air monitoring equipment. The enhanced visual impact of the shelters will also improve awareness of WBEA air monitoring activities in the community. For each station wrap, scenes were chosen which illustrate people engaging in local outdoor activities.

The top photo shows an aerial view of AMS 6 - Patricia McInnes as it appeared before the wrap was installed.

AMS 6 - Patricia McInnes is covered in a skateboard-themed wrap to tie into the Syncrude Athletic Park skateboard park which is located nearby. The lower two photos show front and back views of AMS 6.



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AMS 7 - Athabasca Valley, WBEA's air monitoring station in downtown Fort McMurray, is located on the road leading to MacDonald Island Park. The Athabasca River and the Snye come together here and so a canoeing motif was chosen for this location. The Government of Alberta supplied the shelter for AMS 7, and in recognition of this, their logo was incorporated into the design. The top photo shows an aerial view of the station prior to the installation of the wrap and the lower photo shows the completed project.



WBEA Communications is also planning to wrap two new portable monitoring units this year to increase awareness of our monitoring work at times when the portables are deployed around the region. Thanks are extended to WBEA's Ambient Air Technical Committee (AATC) members and staff for approving and facilitating this project!



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- WBEA welcomes the following new staff members:

Hayley Drake - Field Technician
Ben Wentzell - Field Technician

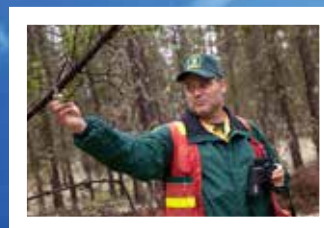
- The landscaping improvements made by staff at the WBEA Headquarters building have been recognized by the Nominate Your Neighbour/Business in Bloom Program for an "outstanding display of floral, plantings and landscaping". This program is sponsored by Wood Buffalo Communities in Bloom.

- Gary Cross, WBEA Senior Air Quality Specialist, provided an overview of WBEA monitoring activities and a tour of AMS 6 for Cali Auty, a grade 11 student at Holy Trinity High School, Fort McMurray, who has an interest in Environmental Sciences.



- Dr. Yu Mei Hsu, WBEA Atmospheric Chemist, presented her paper "Semi-continuous Measurements of Inorganic Gases and PM_{2.5} Composition in the Athabasca Oil Sands Region", at the Air and Waste Management Association's (A&WMA) 106th Annual Conference and Exhibition in Chicago, IL, in June. WBEA Communications also hosted a booth to engage with A&WMA delegates in attendance from around the world, and to provide information on WBEA's monitoring work and results.

- Tom Hutchinson, Regional Forest Health Officer, pictured, and Marty Robillard, Forest Health Technician, as well as additional Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (AESRD) staff assisted WBEA with a survey of forest health and tree condition at our Forest Health Plots once again this summer.



- WBEA Operations Manager, Kathleen Furlong, has accepted another position in the region, and WBEA staff held a luncheon recently to say good bye and to wish her well. During her time at WBEA, Kathleen made positive improvements to operational programs such as Health and Safety and Human Resources, among others. Kathleen and Kevin Percy are pictured with her gift from the Association. Best wishes, Kathleen!



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Please contact Jane Percy, WBEA Communications, with questions, comments, or suggestions. jpercy@wbea.org 780-799-4420

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- A new WBEA vignette has been released. WBEA had previously showcased the 2011 TEEM Forest Health Survey with a vignette following researchers as they sampled soil and vegetation and collected data in our region. The new vignette illustrates the analysis of these data and field samples at laboratories throughout Canada the US. The vignette may be viewed at http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=h6uacGMsaKA

In WBEA's new vignette, Mike Fort, Atmospheric Research and Analysis Raleigh, NC, USA, is shown conducting an analysis of 2011 Forest Health Survey lichen samples.



- Under the WBEA funded berry health project, the Fort McKay Berry Focus Group carried out a series of field trips in the vicinity of Fort McKay and at Moose Lake in 2013 to observe, evaluate and gather blueberries and cranberries. This summer the group decided to install passive air monitoring



Front row (l to r) Clara Bouchier and Celina Harpe (Berry Focus Group) and Natalie Bonnell (WBEA). Back row (l to r) Shay Bouchier, and Andrew Bouchier (Berry Focus Group) and Ian Curry (WBEA summer student).

equipment at selected berry patches to better understand air emissions. Passive shelters containing filters specific for O₃, SO₂, NO₂, NH₃, HNO₃ and VOC's were installed with the help of TEEM technicians, Berry Focus Group members and Shay Bouchier, also from the Fort McKay community, pictured lower left. Each month the passive filters will be collected for lab analysis and new filters installed. Results of this monitoring will be shared with the Berry Focus Group members.

- Edmonton Journal writer, Sheila Pratt, interviewed Dr. Kevin Percy and filmed at AMS 6 as part of the paper's upcoming series of print and online stories on environmental issues in the Fort McMurray area.
- Wildrose Party Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta visited WBEA and met with Dr. Kevin Percy on July 24th. A tour of AMS 6 in Timberlea was later conducted by Senior Air Quality Specialist Kelly Baragar. Pictured at AMS 6 are (l to r) Dr Kevin Percy, WBEA Executive Director, Jason Hale, MLA Strathmore-Brooks, and Pat Stier, MLA Livingstone-Macleod.



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- Construction is underway on a new mezzanine floor at WBEA's Field Operations Centre (FOC), pictured, in Taiga Nova Industrial Park, Fort McMurray. The FOC houses WBEA technical staff, an instrument laboratory, field sample preparation and storage facilities, as well as bays to accommodate portable, mobile and fixed air monitoring shelters during set-up or maintenance work.    

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