

October 21, 2011

ARDN Supports Rural Alberta Water Projects

The Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN) is investing \$100,000 in two rural water research projects aimed at improving the quantity, quality and long term sustainability of water in rural areas.

Water was identified as a priority for rural Alberta at a workshop held in conjunction with ARDN's *Creating Rural Connections* conference in April 2011. Participants included representatives from community-based organizations, municipal government, aboriginal communities and post-secondary institutions who were asked to identify major issues related to rural development in Alberta.

The first project, a partnership of 10 organizations led by NAIT, focuses on the Sturgeon River Watershed. Researchers will gather responses to questions such as: how do citizens understand their watershed? what do they believe to be the challenges and opportunities to watershed management? and what research do they see as most pressing and productive? The project will create connections with communities and engage local citizens in discussions and decision making while the information gathered will inform, Alberta's citizens, researchers and policy-makers.

The second project is a partnership between the University of Alberta's Augustana Campus in Camrose and Sustainability Resources Ltd. This research will examine what successful rural communities have done to balance water usage with commercial and population growth. It will culminate with a workshop to assess, validate, revise and contribute to research results and recommendations.

"ARDN builds bridges between the world of advanced education and the people and organizations in rural communities so they can learn, share, and work together," says Dee Ann Benard, ARDN executive director. "It is important that the projects we support are priorities with rural residents as well as researchers and that they offer benefits to people involved in rural development. These two projects are excellent examples of the collaboration we encourage."

More information is available by calling 1-877-987-1006 or visiting www.ardn.ca.

The Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN) is a not-for-profit partnership of Alberta's 21 public colleges, universities and technical institutes working together to support rural communities. ARDN is funded in part by the Rural Alberta Development Fund whose funding is provided by the Government of Alberta.

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