

## Nutrient Watch: Testing the Waters Together

For immediate release:

September 4, 2020, Saskatchewan -

Saskatchewan water users are becoming more concerned about the quality of the water they use. We use water for many purposes, including drinking water, livestock watering, irrigation of crops, watering gardens, and recreation. Recently, there has been a growing concern about increasing levels of nutrients such as phosphorous and nitrogen in Canada's waterbodies. Increased nutrients in our water can come from storm water run-off, fertilizers, septic systems, and lawn waste. These nutrients can deteriorate the quality of our water, water recreation, wildlife habitat, and can even make it unsafe. These nutrients promote plant and algae growth in the water including Blue-green Algae (Cyanobacteria). When algae is abundant it can reduce the available oxygen for aquatic wildlife, which can degrade their habitat and result in fish kills. This not only reduces opportunities for recreational fishers, but can change the ecosystem, increasing the opportunity for invasive species to thrive. Increased growth of Blue-green algae (Cyanobacteria) is toxic to humans, wildlife and livestock that are exposed to the water. Nutrient loading in our waterbodies should concern all Canadians, and monitoring our water is key in ensuring our water remains available and safe for all users.

To better understand phosphorous levels in Saskatchewan waterways, four Saskatchewan Watershed Stewardship Groups are collaborating to collect water samples from tributaries of the South and North Saskatchewan Rivers. This project will study how the tributaries contribute phosphorous to these rivers and eventually the Lake Winnipeg Basin. The ***Carrot River Valley Watershed Association***, the ***North Saskatchewan River Basin Council***, the ***South Saskatchewan River Watershed Stewards***, and the ***Swift Current Creek Watershed Stewards*** (4watersheds) have been collecting water samples for the last two years from the tributaries of the Saskatchewan River. These samples are then sent to a laboratory to be tested for phosphorous levels. As part of the project, the 4watersheds have been using the Nutrient App from Global Water Futures (GWF) to connect results from this app to those received from laboratory testing. This smartphone app is free to the public to enable people to measure and record levels of nitrate and phosphorous in their local waterbody and can be downloaded from either the Apple store or Google Play store.

The 4watersheds involved in this project are encouraging people across Canada to take part in this project to help identify nutrient contamination hot spots by using the app to test waters near them. A Facebook Group called ***Nutrient Watch: Testing the Waters Together*** has been launched for people interested in learning more about this project and the use of the GWF Nutrient app. To celebrate the launch of this Facebook group the 4watersheds are announcing the ***"Nutrient Watch Photo Contest Draw"*** and the ***"DIY Water Sampler Bonus Prize"*** - the contest aims to encourage Canadian residents to test waters near them and to find the most creative way to collect a water sample using a homemade sampler. Contestants will enter the Nutrient Watch Photo Contest by entering a photo showing themselves taking a water sample or using the GWF Nutrient App and to enter the DIY Water Sampler Bonus prize they will enter a photo of themselves using their DIY water sampler. The winner of the

Nutrient Watch Photo Contest will receive a \$150 cash prize and the winner of the most creative DIY Water Sampler will win \$250 cash prize. The deadline for entry is **November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020**.

For more information and contest details please visit the Facebook Group; ***Nutrient Watch: Testing the Waters Together*** or contact one of the 4watersheds closest to you.

This project was undertaken with the financial support of:  
Ce projet a été réalisé avec l'appui financier de :



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Climate Change Canada

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Changement climatique Canada