

What is Working with Nature?

“Working With Nature is a step-by-step process that municipalities can use to identify their natural infrastructure, then determine actions they should undertake to better employ that infrastructure in mitigating flood and drought risks.”

Introduction

Alberta municipalities are increasingly concerned about the impacts of flood and drought on their community. ‘Natural Infrastructure’ is often offered up as a solution, but what does that look like?

While flood and drought can show us the power of nature, and often make us feel at nature’s mercy, that same power can work for us, too. The principle at the heart of ‘natural infrastructure’ is using the natural machinery that is already in place, and sometimes just letting it do its work.

Natural infrastructure is often much cheaper to bring on line than traditional infrastructure, can require less maintenance, can last much longer, and provides numerous co-benefits.

So natural infrastructure is magic, free, self-operating, and replaces grey infrastructure ... right?

No - it requires work to identify, investments to operationalize, and policy support to realize. It complements grey infrastructure, but does not entirely replace it.

The *Working With Nature* process was designed to guide small-to-medium-sized municipalities through a process of identifying hazards and risks associated with flood and drought, understanding the natural infrastructure assets that could help mitigate those risks, and then creating a prioritized action plan to maximize the effectiveness of their natural infrastructure assets.

The Three ‘W’s of Working With Nature

The *Working With Nature* process involves three ‘W’s: workbook, worksheets, and workshops.

The **workbook** is the starting point and the ‘final’ product. Participants work through the process of populating the workbook. When complete, the workbook can be exported as a stand-alone plan, or it can be used to inform several supporting plans / polices.

The **worksheets** are used to capture the individual input of participants (i.e., the municipal personnel gathered together as the Natural Infrastructure Working Group or Team), in a way that allows it to be easily collated by the Team Leader.

The two **workshops** are a recognition that expecting busy people to fill in worksheets and a workbook without guidance or collaborative energy leads to fractured conclusions and frustrating delays.