

The History of Brightwater Reservoir According to Fred Wilson

The Brightwater Watershed covers an area from Bradworth and Haywarden and to the South Saskatchewan River at Beaver Creek, south of Saskatoon. The development of the Brightwater Watershed began in the 1700 and 1800's. Settlers were looking for land to raise livestock. The colonization of the Brightwater Watershed can be attributed to two men that traveled through the area looking for good farming land. A man named Palliser came from Eastern Canada to survey the Prairie provinces, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. After traveling through the prairie provinces he concluded that the area from Weyburn to Lloydminster and down to Lethbridge was too dry to be farmed and this area became known as the Palliser Triangle. Brightwater Watershed is in the Palliser Triangle. It was realized later that, Palliser traveled through this area during a dry season. When there is adequate rainfall and snow cover there is enough moisture to grow crops. However, the amount of water was not consistent making it difficult to farm. In the 1880's a rancher delivering mail to Clark's Crossing traveled through the watershed during a time when the marsh was lush with hay. He thought that the Brightwater Watershed would provide food and protection for the livestock and so the colonization of the Brightwater Watershed began.

Farmers would experience times of too much water and other times of not enough water. This created hardship for the farmers and by 1958 landowners and the Provincial Department of Agriculture worked out a solution. They formed the Brightwater Lake Conservation and Development Area. Ninety percent of the cost of this project was funded by the Provincial Government and the other 10% was paid for by the farmers in the area. It was decided that they would create dams and dikes to regulate the flow of the water through the Brightwater Watershed and flood the area south of the Military Camp.

Brightwater Creek travels through the watershed until it goes past the Salvation Army Camp where the name changes to Beaver Creek. During this project Brightwater Creek and Beaver Creek were enlarged and they also built dikes and channels that directed the water to certain areas. When the people felt that the land had soaked up enough water the dikes were opened and the water traveled up the creek to the South Saskatchewan River. The dike system works well during normal rainfall but in years of heavy rainfall the amount of water running through the creek is difficult to regulate so flooding still occurs at times. In years of drought, water is taken from Diefenbaker Lake. Each landowner pays \$22,000 per year for water and receives 4,000 acres/ft of water every spring.

Ducks Unlimited became involved ensuring that the habitat was protected for ducks and geese. They have built little islands in Indi Lake so ducks and geese can nest without fear of predators. The changes in the environment created by the dikes and channels provided habitat for other types of wildlife such as elk, moose, and different types of fish such as Jackfish and Pickeral.