

Buffalo Lake project pumping along

By **BRENDA KOSSOWAN**

Advocate staff

Pumps installed to raise water levels at Buffalo Lake are now hard at work for the 1997 season.

Ken Looten, an official with Alberta Environmental Protection in Red Deer, said the pumps were started early in June after a short delay.

Some residents in the area sought to prevent the project from getting under way, and suggested in one letter that they may seek help from the court, said Looten, branch head of operations for the department's Parkland region.

Looten said he hasn't been told so far to shut the pumps off.

Although this is the second year of active pumping for the Buffalo Lake Stabilization Project, the pumps and system are still undergoing a schedule of tests. There was a problem with the main pump last year which required that all the work was done by the smaller, auxiliary pump, said Looten.

Both pumps, located on the Red Deer River southeast of Joffre, must be tested in a variety of situations throughout this season before they can be declared fully operational, he said.

The project has been getting some help from unusually heavy snowpacks over the last two winters. The high amount of runoff from spring helped put more water into the lake than they would have received in a typical year. The rate at which the lake

level is raised depends largely on natural precipitation and drying rates, he said.

The water level of the lake has been declining for decades. The project is intended to improve recreational potential around the lake.

"The whims of nature far outweigh the capacity for the system at Buffalo Lake to be productive on a continuous basis," said Looten.

The \$9.5 million Buffalo Lake Stabilization Project is financed by the province's Public Lands Department and operated by the Buffalo Lake Management Team.

Buffalo Lake lies between Erskine and Bashaw.

Water for the project is taken from the Red Deer River, via Parlby Creek.