

DRAFT
ALBERTA BEEF PRODUCERS
MINUTES FOR THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
FRIDAY FEBRUARY 12, 2016, 8:15 a.m.
AT THE ABP BOARD ROOM, CALGARY, ALBERTA

Present: Judy Fenton - *Chair, Zone 4*
Kevin Stopanski - *Zone 1*
Bob Lowe - *Zone 2*
Chris Israelson - *Zone 3*
Garth Johnson - *Zone 4*
Dick Wymenga - *Zone 5*
Les Geier - *Zone 8*

Staff: Fred Hays - *Policy Analyst*
Jeanette Kennard - *Secretary*

Guests: Darcy Wills - *Prairie Conservation*
Virginia Nelson - *Farm Stewardship*
Olivia Sieniewicz - *Farm Stewardship*
Ken Janzen - *Farm Stewardship*
Stefan Kienzle - *U of L (by Phone)*
Christine Clark - *U of L (by phone)*
Edward Bork - *U of A*
Daniel Hewins - *U of A*
Cameron Carlyle - *U of A*
Daniella de Suza - *U of A*
Getahun Gizaw - *U of M*

Absent: Gary Seutter - *Zone 6*
Ron Wieler - *Zone 9*

The Chair called the meeting to order at 8:20 a.m.

1. Adoption of Agenda

(a) Adoption of Agenda:

Motion by Johnson/Wymenga:

“That the agenda be approved.”

Carried

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

(a) Minutes of the October 21, 2015 meeting:

Motion by Lowe/Israelson:

“That the minutes of the October 21, 2015 Environment Committee meeting be approved.”

Carried

3. Financial Report

(a) Financial Statement ending January 31, 2016:

The committee is under budget and is on par to where we were last year at this time. The total costs for this year will be what is shown today plus today's meeting costs.

There have been no watershed management applications for money.

Motion by Stopanski/Geier:

“That the financial statement be accepted for information purposes only.”

Carried

4. Decision Items

(a) Terms of Reference review:

Any changes made to the Terms of Reference will be made to the document and need to be approved by the Board of Directors. The Terms of Reference are reviewed every year.

(b) Update ESA winners video:

Hays spoke with Katelyn Laverdure and she predicted that it would cost \$3,000-\$4,000 depending on what the committee wants to do (this price is just for a re-edit of the material). Fenton thought it might cost more, around \$15,000 as they want it updated and done professionally. Wanted to go back to past winners and get better video. There is lots of video of more current winners.

Lowe suggested waiting another year in hopes of having a higher budget and being able to do a more comprehensive video of all the past winners. Lowe says that the World Wildlife Fund in the US would likely sponsor it. Lowe will follow up and give Hays the information. The sponsorship discussion will be brought to the board.

Will factor this cost into the 2016/2017 budget.

Everyone agrees a new video is a worthwhile venture. Israelson suggests a 25 years anniversary edition.

Katelyn later came in to speak about pricing and the direction of the video. Katelyn thought it would cost around \$30,000.

Motion by Lowe/Israelson:

“That the Environment Committee have a video made highlighting the last 25 years of ESA winners.”

Carried

(c) Farming for Tomorrow contract renewal:

Background history on Farming for Tomorrow can be found in the package. The committee has budget \$9000 every year for the magazine but that did not include the \$450 for GST. The members discussed allocating \$10,000 from the next fiscal budget to FFT. The committee members agreed.

Motion by Geier/Stopanski:

“That the Environment Committee approve the contract for Farming for Tomorrow for 2016 and will review the renewal on a yearly basis”

Carried

DIRECTION: Hays will send a note to *Farming For Tomorrow* indicating a continued agreement to provide funding for the coming year.

(d) Membership on Watershed committees:

Israelson proposed that expenses for watershed meetings only be paid if a report is submitted. ABP does not have representation at all watershed meetings. Committee believes it is important to have Agricultural representation at all Watershed groups. Committee proposes that all the representatives currently involved will be sent a note indicating ABP support and requesting Watershed meeting reports be provided to the Committee. The following delegates will be contacted:

Doug Sawyer/Chris Israelson – Red Deer River Watershed Alliance

Bill Fox – Beaver River Watershed Alliance

Greg Bowie – Battle River Watershed Alliance

John de Groot – Old Man Watershed Council

(e) Budget for 2016/2017:

There should be an amendment to the *Farming For Tomorrow* line for 2016 to include GST. The FFT line for 2015 should be \$9,000 not \$6,000. Proposing to submit to the board for a budget again of \$55,000. The committee looks to be about \$5,000 under budget, when looking towards the 2016/2017 budget

they intend to use the unutilized money in next year’s budget for the ESA 25 year video.

Motion by Israelson/Wymenga:

“That the Environment Committee request a budget of \$55,000 for the 2016/2017 fiscal year.”

Carried

(f) Resolutions Updates:

The 2015 resolutions report for the committee can be found in the package.

(g) Prairie Conservation Workshop – Darcy Wills:

The workshop was to break down communication barriers between Alberta, Saskatchewan and Montana. Darcy Wills attended the meeting, via conference call, as the director of the Milk River Watershed Council. Wondered why ABP wasn’t represented. ABP didn’t know anything about the meeting until after the fact.

A large take away from the workshop was that they were going to implement free ranging buffalo. Banff is discussing starting within a fenced area and having them acclimated before removing the fences. This occurred after the Buffalo Treaty of 2015 was signed.

Lowe is concerned about the quarantine factor involved with the buffalo. There is also concern about how to manage the buffalo and where the buffalo roam. Also concern over who will be responsible for keeping the buffalo in the correct areas.

Wills will look into who to contact to insure that ABP is involved with this discussion.

Lowe plans to set up a meeting with the Montana Stock Growers Association and the World Wildlife Fund to discuss the buffalo. Hays will look into the conservation issue.

(h) Alberta Land Institute Conference:

The conference is coming up on May 4th & 5th 2016 in Edmonton. Hays and Fenton are interested in attending.

5. In Camera

6. Discussion Items

(a) Farm Stewardship Centre – Virginia Nelson:

Virginia Nelson, Director of the Farm Stewardship Centre, Olivia Sieniewicz, Ken Janzen (both Farm Stewardship Centre) presented on the function of the Farm Stewardship Centre in Lethbridge.

The centre creates a multidisciplinary, integrated approach of looking at the whole farm environment in Alberta.

Ken Jansen, Project Technologist, spoke on solar watering sites for producers. Using alarm system technology they have created multiple ways to alert the producer when water levels and battery levels are low. There was a light/line of site method, a cellular level and a satellite monitoring system. Pricing varies from about \$300 (line of site), to the price of a cell plan + \$6,000 to implement (cellular) or \$2,000 to implement the satellite technology and then \$40-\$50 for the service.

Olivia Sieniewicz, Project Engineer, spoke on calculators for BMPs in Alberta and trying to create a specific Alberta model for BMP. They are trying to unveil the mechanisms behind all the different calculators.

(b) Trends of Climate and Weather across Alberta – Stefan Kienzle:

Stefan Kienzle, Professor in the Geology department with the University of Lethbridge, spoke on the trends of climate and weather extremes across Alberta for the period of 1950-2010.

We see a trend line that average climate values will continue to increase. This can then show how the length of growing season has changed as well as how changes in extreme weather might impact producers. The graphs will also show the trends and forecasting for precipitation and how it could affect things like river flows, water quality and droughts/flood years.

The data presented was for all of Canada and the statistics came from Environment Canada and Canada Climate Service data.

(c) Visualizing Climate Change – Christine Clark:

Christine Clark, University of Lethbridge - Media department spoke on how to visualize climate change data in a way that the public is able to consume and understand it. On the albertaclimaterecords.com website you can specifically zone in on any 10km² patch of land in Alberta and see how different indices are impacting that location.

The results can all be found at www.albertaclimaterecords.com.

(d) Ecological Goods and Services (EGS) and carbon from grasslands – Edward Bork:

Edward Bork (University of Alberta), Daniel Hewins (University of Alberta), Cameron Carlyle (University of Alberta) and Daniella deSuza (beginning a Post Doc with University of Alberta) all from the Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Nutritional Science, presented to the committee.

Bork spoke on the main findings of the ALMA (Alberta Livestock and Meat Agency Ltd) Carbon Benchmarking study. Some of the results are:

Grazing increases biodiversity of plants in the community and did not affect introduced species. Presence of livestock helped preserve the grasslands by limiting shrub encroachment. Grazing reduces vegetation mass and stimulated root production.

Speaking on Carbon losses, their study showed that while it differed regionally, there was significant reduction in soil carbon in cropland/introduced forage land (varying also by species cultivated) versus native grassland.

Native grassland had better soil health based on porosity and moisture content. The higher s-index coefficient shows that the native grassland is better at delivering water to its roots.

Implications included maintaining existing native grassland (maybe assigning value to native grassland) and converting marginal cropland into native grassland, while exploring more implications of cropland/introduced forage land.

Hewins spoke on where soil carbon comes from and how grazing influences carbon cycling looking at plant composition, surface temperature and moisture content. Grazing caused faster decomposition after the six-month mark versus non-grazing. There were also differences on the species level of decomposition especially looking at increaser or decreaser species. Microbial effects of grazing were different based on the sub-region, some places showed an effect while some did not, but they showed seasonal patterns.

Carlyle spoke on what direction continuing studies in the area need to take. They will be looking into grazing's effect on microbial activity and their impact on greenhouse gas emissions. Preliminary results showed that carbon dioxide emissions are less in grazed areas. Results also followed for methane gas. Conclusion: grazing can be used as a tool to reduce greenhouse gas emissions coming out of the soil.

They will also be doing a study into the impact of grazing and drought on forage and greenhouse gases. They hope to be able to identify regionally specific way to capture and maintain carbon as well as being able to increase root growth in droughts.

Hays has a copy of the presentation on PDF.

(e) Ahead of the Herd in Cutting Cattle Carbon – Getahun Gizaw (conference call):

Getahun Legesse-Gizaw, University of Manitoba spoke on changes in greenhouse gas emissions in Canadian beef production in 1981 as compared with 2011.

His presentation looked at the importance of the beef industry in Canada. They looked at cattle, feed and land related mechanisms to examine nitrous oxide, methane and carbon dioxide emissions. They found that today as compared to 30 years ago we need less slaughtered cattle and less land to produce the same quantity of beef. They also found a 15% smaller carbon footprint in the production of the same quantity of beef. Similar trends can be found in Australia and USA over a 30-year period. He attributes the positive change to improvements in animal performance and improvements in feed crop yields.

(f) North America Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) update:

Information on the Waterfowl Management plan can be found in the package.

(g) Wildlife Committee Report:

There was a wildlife forum in Edmonton on January 26, 2016. Report can be found in the package under 6(g). Discussion was around compensation. The committee is looking to bring in AFSC and Alberta Agriculture. There is a wildlife committee meeting February 29, 2016.

(h) Cows and Fish update:

No update. There should be a meeting in May 2016.

(i) Canadian Round Table for Sustainable Beef (CRSB) update:

CRSB will take over the sustainability program from McDonald's on April 1st. VBP+ is nearly finished developing the assessment modules for producers. There is some concern about a program that is being developed for the Cattle Feeder market. Producers

who have looked at it find it onerous and with standards that are impossible to meet.

(j) Alberta Watershed updates- Rosanne's report:

Information on the watersheds can be found in the package.

7. General Information

(a) 2015 EC Resolutions and Action Items

8. Next Meeting and Upcoming Events

Will be around Semi-annual meeting time; second week in June.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned on a motion by Lowe at 3: 15p.m.