

PRIORITY 2: TO PROVIDE POLICY INPUT ON INNOVATIONS AND BUSINESS MODELS THAT WILL HELP THE AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY ACHIEVE AEPA-DESIRED OUTCOMES.

SOCIAL LICENCE

In 2014, social licence became increasingly significant to agriculture in the province. Agriculture and the food industry are being faced with increasing pressure by consumers to address challenges related to environmental sustainability, resource use, food safety, and animal welfare. In response, some of the world's largest food companies have developed sustainability platforms that are increasing pressure on their suppliers, including farmers, to meet their sustainability criteria. This will change how agriculture and the food industry conduct business, right down to the farm gate.

To better understand this broad issue, in 2014 the AEPA began exploring the topic through expert presentations, including agri-environmental aspects.

LOOKING FORWARD

To help the AEPA partners and stakeholders continue to increase their knowledge, and to discuss how the agriculture industry can address the issue, a 'Social Licence in Agriculture Conference' has been planned for March 11 and 12, 2015. Conference objectives include increasing knowledge and understanding of social licence, its drivers, and to present options for solutions for the agriculture industry.

PRIORITY 3: TO ENGAGE AND BUILD UNDERSTANDING WITH MEMBERS AND INDUSTRY PARTNERS TO ENABLE THE AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY TO BE A CREDIBLE PARTNER IN AGRICULTURE POLICY DEVELOPMENT.

COMMUNICATIONS

Communications to partners and stakeholders is a key action for the AEPA. The Communications Plan aims to convey information clearly and effectively to increase engagement and build knowledge of agri-environmental issues related to AEPA's strategic priorities. In 2014, the AEPA and the Communications Committee continued implementation of the 2012-2015 Communication Plan including maintenance of the website, new issues of 'On Common Ground' (e-newsletter), various webinars, and email communications.

PARTNER SURVEY

Every three years, AEPA partners have the opportunity to provide feedback via an anonymous survey. The results are used to help inform the next three year Strategic Plan, and to assist in the continuous improvement of the AEPA. In 2014, the survey was

developed by the Planning Committee, and conducted online in two parts. Questions focused on AEPA's strategic direction, current functioning, as well as partners' perspectives on the AEPA's effectiveness and value.

Examples of survey results include (out of 4):

- Participation in AEPA offers benefits to my organization = 3.8
- AEPA aligns to the interests of my organization = 3.5
- AEPA accomplishes more together than my organization would individually = 3.8
- The process used to develop AEPA policy input is effective = 3.5
- AEPA has been successful in working towards its Strategic Priorities = 3.5

2015-2018 STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Throughout 2014, the AEPA and the Planning Committee worked towards development of the new 2015-2018 Strategic Plan, with final approval in December. The plan will be used as a guide for AEPA actions and priority work for the next three years, and as a foundation document to inform partners and communicate to stakeholders.

The new plan includes updates to the AEPA's vision, mission and strategic priorities effective April 1, 2015:

VISION

Agri-environmental policies are balanced, support sustainable industry growth, and increase social acceptance.

MISSION

To engage and build knowledge of partner organizations which enable the AEPA to provide credible, proactive, and respected input to agri-environmental policy development processes.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. Engage in agri-environmental policy development processes including land-use, water, air and biodiversity.
2. Provide timely policy input on innovations and emerging opportunities that will help the agriculture industry achieve environmental sustainability.
3. Engage and build understanding with partners and stakeholders to enable the agriculture industry to be a credible partner in agri-environmental policy development processes.

LOOKING FORWARD

In 2015, the 2015-2018 Communications Plan will be developed and approved to ensure consistency with the 2015-2018 Strategic Plan. The AEPA will continue to communicate using various communication tools, while improving effectiveness whenever possible.

AEPA BOARD MEMBERS IN 2014

The members of AEPA's Board and their alternates are committed to two-way communication between the organizations they represent and the Board to enable AEPA to develop a unified voice on priority agri-environmental policy issues. AEPA thanks the representatives who departed the Board during this past year and welcomes the new members who joined the Board.

BOARD MEMBER/ALTERNATE	ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENTED
Jack Swainson	Industry Co-Chair
Sean Royer	Government Co-Chair
CROP INDUSTRY	
Bernie Klammer/Erin Gowriluk	Alberta Barley Commission
Greg Sears/Ward Toma	Alberta Canola Producers Commission
Sarah Weigum/Leanne Fischbuch	Alberta Pulse Growers Commission
Wayne Tuck/Erin Gowriluk	Alberta Wheat Commission
Terence Hochstein	Potato Growers of Alberta
LIVESTOCK INDUSTRY	
Herman Bulten/Diana O'Hara	Alberta Elk Commission, Alberta Goat Breeders Association, Alberta Lamb Producers, Alberta Reindeer Association, Alberta Whitetail and Mule Deer Association, Bison Producers of Alberta, Horse Industry Association of Alberta, Ostrich Association of Alberta
Rich Smith/Bryan Walton	Alberta Beef Producers, Alberta Cattle Feeders' Association
Martin Van Diemen/David Hyink	Alberta Chicken Producers, Alberta Hatching Egg Producers, Alberta Turkey Producers, Egg Farmers of Alberta
Lorrie Jespersen/Allan Child	Alberta Milk
Will Kingma/Darcy Fitzgerald	Alberta Pork
ENVIRONMENTAL NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION	
Tracy Scott	Ducks Unlimited Canada
GOVERNMENTS	
Dave Burdek/Sean Royer	Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD)
Soren Odegard/Pat Gordeyko	Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties
Shannon Flint/Andy Ridge	Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development
LIAISON	
Don Reiter/Terry Dash	Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

AEPA acknowledges the support of its partner organizations, the Crop Sector Working Group and the Intensive Livestock Working Group.

CONTACT THE AEPA

For more information about the AEPA, please contact the AEPA Secretariat:

Phone: 780-427-3629 (toll-free through 310-0000)
Email: info@agpartner.ca

Or visit AEPA's website, www.agpartners.ca

AEPA Agri-Environmental Partnership of Alberta

ANNUAL REVIEW

2014

CONTENTS

2
FROM AEPA'S INDUSTRY CO-CHAIR

2
FROM AEPA'S GOVERNMENT CO-CHAIR

3
PROGRESS ON AEPA'S STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

5
AEPA'S BOARD MEMBERS IN 2014



ABOUT THE AGRI-ENVIRONMENTAL PARTNERSHIP OF ALBERTA

The Agri-Environmental Partnership of Alberta (AEPA) is an inclusive partnership of the agriculture industry, government and an environmental non-government organization working together to proactively address agri-environmental issues from a policy perspective. This diverse group provides a forum for developing balanced policy input that encourage both a vibrant, profitable agriculture industry and a healthy, sustainable environment.

Established in January 2008, the AEPA grew out of a need identified by many agricultural organizations for a transparent partnership between government and the agriculture industry, as well as a collaborative approach to resolving agri-environmental issues.

As a consensus-based partnership, the AEPA provides a unified voice on agri-environmental issues of common interest. Board members and their alternates provide direct communication links to various sectors including: cropping, livestock, provincial and municipal governments, and an environmental non-government organization. The Board has two co-chairs, one from the agriculture industry and the other from the Government of Alberta (GoA). The AEPA Secretariat carries out administrative functions.

The AEPA takes a strategic approach to achieving its desired outcomes which include:

- *Healthy agricultural landscapes sustain both agricultural productivity and ecological integrity.*
- *A safe and secure water supply is assured for agricultural production.*
- *Agricultural practices optimize productivity while minimizing risks to air, land and water.*
- *Alberta's agricultural producers are recognized as responsible environmental stewards.*

This document reviews the AEPA's accomplishments in 2014 and looks ahead to 2015.

VISION
Alberta's agriculture industry is profitable, accountable and recognized for its proactive, responsible environmental stewardship.

MISSION
The AEPA is an inclusive multi-stakeholder partnership of government, industry and environmental stakeholders working together to proactively address agri-environmental issues from a policy perspective.

FROM AEPA'S INDUSTRY CO-CHAIR

JACK SWAINSON

Crop producer

It is always a necessary exercise to look back and assess the events and accomplishments of the past year as we embark upon the new one.

The AEPA serves a fundamental role for its members and the agricultural industry by providing an opportunity for input into policy development processes, and for being a conduit for information transfer and analysis. The active participation of partners is testimony to the value derived from being a part of the AEPA.

We are fortunate to have many individuals in our partnership that contribute unselfishly of their time and talents, and I would like to recognize all of them. Individuals include members of the Board, two advisory teams, and four organizational committees. Their exemplary actions are one of the many reasons for the success of our partnership.

Our advisory teams continue to be actively involved in water and land-use concerns and policy. Our input to regional plan development and respective land-use and water decisions has required a lot of time and member consultations. Accolades to these teams and the great work they do, always reporting back to the Board with consensus based decisions.

We also continue to enjoy a productive and informative relationship with government policy makers and staff. Their interest and support is essential to the AEPA and gives us the opportunity to discuss and have input on issues and initiatives that are pertinent to our industry.

One of the pending challenges currently facing agriculture producers is sustainability and social licence. These issues are demanding deliberate, dedicated and verifiable actions from our producers that will demonstrate both responsible stewardship and accountable production practices to our consuming public. We had best be paying attention and engage in finding solutions.

In closing, I would like to recognize the dedication and talents of our General Manager, Janet Dietrich. I would also like to thank Laura Polasek for her contributions as Project Coordinator and wish her well in her new adventure with Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (ESRD).

My tenure as Industry Co-Chair of AEPA will conclude on April 1st, 2015 and I encourage you to support Martin Van Diemen as the Co-Chair elect. My role as Co-Chair has been a stimulating challenge, as well as very rewarding experience, and I thank you for your support and affording me this cherished opportunity.

Cheers and the best of continued success.

FROM AEPA'S GOVERNMENT CO-CHAIR

SEAN ROYER

Executive Director, Environmental Stewardship Division, ARD

The AEPA continues to be a valuable forum for the GoA to meet with representatives from the agriculture industry to discuss important agri-environmental policy issues impacting the day-to-day operations of producers.

In 2014, issues of relevance were the Land-use Framework (LUF) and water. The AEPA Board, LUF Advisory Team, and Water Advisory Team were particularly active in various policy development processes related to these topics.

Going forward into the next three year Strategic Plan, the LUF and water will remain as key issues for discussion, however, a new issue is on the horizon for both AEPA and agriculture producers in the province. Social licence was frequently discussed in 2014, and will only grow in significance for the agriculture industry in the future.

Agriculture no longer enjoys the preferred place it once had in the minds of consumers. Increasingly, consumers are questioning where their food comes from and how it is being produced. This is raising questions on how the agriculture industry protects the environment, uses pesticides and hormones, protects animal welfare, and a host of other concerns.

Although these issues go beyond the environment, which is the traditional mandate of AEPA, the partnership may be able to play a role in helping to provide information and expertise on how its partners can position the industry to communicate to consumers on how they are being effective stewards of the land and livestock. The 'Social Licence in Agriculture Conference' in March will help in AEPA's discussion on how it can best serve their partners' producers on the ground.

Policy making with respect to the environment is becoming increasingly complex for the province. The AEPA will become even more important in helping the GoA navigate the needs of industry while still meeting the environmental objectives the public expects of government. The GoA places high priority on the work of the AEPA.

As the AEPA completes another successful year and moves towards their new Strategic Plan, I would like to thank all partners for their significant contributions and continued commitment. These have been key to the ongoing success of the AEPA.

I would also like to thank Jack Swainson for his dedication as the Industry Co-Chair for the past four years. His efforts and perspective have been very valuable in helping the AEPA address its strategic priorities.



PROGRESS ON THE AEPA'S STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

In 2014, AEPA continued working on the three strategic priorities under its 2012-2015 Strategic Plan.

PRIORITY 1: TO ENGAGE IN LAND-USE, WATER, AND AGRI-ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES.

LAND-USE

The LUF, released by the GoA in 2008, provides a blueprint for land-use management and decision-making that addresses Alberta growth pressures. One strategy in the LUF is development of land-use plans for each of the seven regions in the province. In 2014, the GoA released the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan (SSRP), and initiated development of the North Saskatchewan Regional Plan (NSRP).

To help address land-use in this strategic priority, the AEPA and the LUF Advisory Team engaged in various LUF related development processes. AEPA and its partners participated in public consultations on the Terms of Reference for Developing the NSRP, and developed consensus feedback in response to the document. Input was also provided at workshops on the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan (LARP) draft Biodiversity Management Framework (BMF). As the first regional BMF to be developed in the province, engagement was important as it sets the stage for development of future BMFs in regions where agriculture is a significant land manager (such as the SSRP). The AEPA and LUF Advisory Team also increased their awareness of current ecosystem services initiatives and research, and provided input to support their advancement.

The AEPA was also successful in nominating a candidate as a Regional Advisory Council (RAC) member with an agriculture interest for the North Saskatchewan Region (Tim Hofstra).

WATER

In addition to providing feedback to water aspects in the Terms of Reference for Developing the NSRP, in 2014 the AEPA and the Water Advisory Team focused on building knowledge and

understanding about irrigation, GoA water policy and actions which relate to agriculture.

The GoA's Alberta Wetland Policy was released in 2013, and implemented September 1, 2014 in the province's White Area (settled areas where agriculture is the most significant land use). Understanding the policy is important for landowners in making informed management decisions. In late 2014, development of an information sheet was initiated to help clarify key agriculture questions related to implementation of the new policy. The final document will be communicated through AEPA partners.

As a way of building knowledge about irrigation, AEPA hosted a tour in the Lethbridge Northern Irrigation District July 2014. The purpose of the tour was to learn about how water is managed throughout an irrigation district, from headwaters to outlet. Stops on the tour included the Oldman River Dam, diversion into the main canal, flume drive-over, pumping station, pivots, and the drain outlet.

In December 2014, the GoA released the Water Conversation Action Plan, along with a summary of discussions from the 2013 engagement initiative. The documents will be reviewed early 2015 to better understand relevant aspects.

LOOKING FORWARD

Land-use and water issues will continue to be of priority to the AEPA in 2015. The development of the NSRP will move forward with the release of the RAC recommendations report expected by late winter, and release of the draft NSRP expected by late fall.

The AEPA and both advisory teams will continue to be engaged in various processes and develop feedback to these released documents.

Related to land-use, ecosystem services and market-based instruments will continue to be topics which the AEPA will stay informed and engaged.