

Aquatic Invasive Species in Alberta – Background

The Issue

- Two aquatic invasive species (AIS) pose imminent threats to Alberta:
 - **Eurasian Watermilfoil** is an aquatic weed that grows quickly and reproduces from fragments. It forms dense floating mats of vegetation that can block irrigation and other conveyance infrastructure, hinder recreational activities, reduce biodiversity, and cause fish kills via reduced dissolved oxygen during fall die-offs.
 - **Dreissenid mussels (Zebra mussels, Quagga mussels)** are small mussels that are well known for being prolific breeders, and having the ability to attach to virtually any submerged surface. They can quickly clog pipelines and obstruct flow to water infrastructure, creating a permanent maintenance issue once established. They can also cause toxic algae blooms and excessive plant growth due to increased water clarity via filter feeding. As well, decomposition of dead mussels and associated plant growth can cause fish kills.
 - Currently, Alberta is believed to be free of mussels but is highly susceptible to infestation.
 - The most likely way invasive mussels could enter AB is ‘hitchhiking’ on trailered watercraft coming from infested areas outside of the province. Alberta does not have a mandatory boat inspection program.
- Alberta’s 8000km of irrigation infrastructure (canal and pipeline) is worth an estimated \$3.5 billion.
 - An infestation of invasive *Dreissenid* mussels would reduce water conveyance to crops and cost millions of dollars annually to manage. The impacts on water management structures are estimated to be \$8,841,373 annually.
 - Total estimated annual cost for all of AB should mussel infestation occur = \$75,540,773
- Once established, mussels are almost impossible to eradicate or control.
 - Mechanical, biological and chemical control mechanisms are either ineffective, highly labour intensive and costly, or are harmful to non-target organisms.
- Prevention is the least cost alternative.

The Action

- Provincial AIS Prevention Program:
 - Alberta ministries of Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD), Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (ESRD), and Tourism, Parks and Recreation partnered in 2013 to begin a pilot program that included voluntary boat inspections, and education and outreach campaign, monitoring waterbodies.
 - In late 2013 and continuing into 2014 and onward, a province-wide prevention program was created, headed by ESRD. Multi-stakeholder participation is focused into five task teams: Policy & Legislation, Education & Outreach, Monitoring, Inspections, and Rapid Response.
 1. *Policy and Legislation:*
 - Current policy:
 - Alberta Weed Control Act (Eurasian watermilfoil)
 - Alberta Fisheries Act (mussels)
 - 42: Restricted possession of zebra mussels
 - 32 (2), 32 (3) and 33: Authorizes fisheries officers to take action when mussel-fouled boats are intercepted
 - Department of Fisheries and Oceans planning on including Quagga and Zebra Mussels on prohibited list by late spring 2014, which permits inspectors to ban mussels from importation across international (but not domestic) borders
 - Provincial legislation still needs to be strengthened, either in amendments to the fisheries act, or the addition of a standalone AIS act.

2. *Inspections:*

- Currently boat inspections are voluntary
- Mandatory boat inspections are needed at all Alberta borders in order to better safeguard borders (US/Canada, provincial)

3. *Education and Outreach:*

- Focus on behaviour change (“Clean, Drain, Dry”)
- Task team to address boaters, anglers, aquarium/pet stores, cultural release
- Producing educational products and materials; and
- Signage for boat launches

4. *Monitoring:*

- ESRD and ARD are monitoring several lakes and reservoirs throughout Alberta, including many southern reservoirs located within irrigation districts, for both juvenile and adult mussels
 - Partnerships and cooperation with irrigation districts have been developed to support the initiative
- In 2013, all results of monitoring efforts were negative. This will help build a strong baseline for comparison: Alberta has never monitored for invasive mussels
- In 2014, the plan is to increase monitoring efforts and frequency, including boat traffic data, as well as data on aquatic plants/weeds

5. *Response:*

- The public is encouraged to report aquatic invasive species at 1-855-336-BOAT (2628). Calls to this AIS hotline go through a radio control center. If the call is a general inquiry, the caller is directed to either the ESRD Info Center or the AIS Coordinator. If it is a concern, the call is directed to a fisheries officer, who then can receive support through a decontamination team if required.
- Protocol for containment of infestation to limit the spread to other water bodies and jurisdictions will be developed
- Control options involve different options for each water body type (e.g. high pressure hot water and manual removal from boats; mechanical, chemical and other control if the mussels are found in water)

• What can the Agriculture or Irrigation industries do?

- Tell your clients, water users, etc. about the issue and the need for a proactive approach
- Partnership and collaboration opportunities

• What can the public do?

- Be an advocate: keep your eyes on the water
- Report aquatic invasive species or suspicious activity at 1-855-336-BOAT (2628)
- Clean, Drain and Dry your boat and recreational gear
- Get informed: <http://mywildalberta.com>
<http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/science/enviro/ais-eae/index-eng.htm>
http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Business/Biodiversity/2ColumnSubPage/STDPROD_068689.html

For more information

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Review of the Alberta Municipal Government Act

Alberta Municipal Affairs is currently conducting a comprehensive review of Alberta's *Municipal Government Act* (MGA). The MGA was introduced in 1995 upon the consolidation of a number of different provincial planning acts and regulations, and since then has not been significantly updated. This legislation provides municipalities with decision-making autonomy in addition to providing them with the enabling legislation and guidelines for numerous municipal functions and duties, some of which provide direction for agricultural land.

There are several ways in which you can engage in the MGA review process:

1. Face-To-Face Consultations (remaining sessions)

<http://mgareview.alberta.ca/consultations>

- Brooks: March 26-28
- Grande Prairie: April 2-4
- Calgary: April 9-11
- Medicine Hat: April 14-16
- Peace River: 23-25

2. MGA Review Workbook

<http://mgareview.alberta.ca/workbook>

The deadline for workbook submission is **April 30, 2014**. The MGA Consultation workbook is also available in PDF format, and it can be filled in, saved, shared and submitted electronically.

Areas Relevant to Agriculture in the MGA Review Workbook:

Chapter 1: MGA Review

- Provides an introduction to the workbook and MGA Review process and themes.

Chapter 8: Industrial Property Assessment

- Particularly Part B (Linear property assessment) and Part C (Machinery and equipment property assessment)
- Provides discussion points regarding the assessment and taxation of linear property (including exemptions for linear property on farming operations) and machinery and equipment.

Chapter 9: Farm Property Assessment

- Provides discussion points relating to the assessment and taxation of farm property, including the regulated assessment model.

Chapter 10: Taxation and Exemptions

- Particularly Part B (Exemptions and other special tax treatment)
- Provides a summary and discussion of tax exemptions, including those for farming operations.

Chapter 11: Planning in Alberta

- Provides discussion on growth and development, and statutory plans and land use bylaws.

3. Formal Submissions

Stakeholders may also email formal submissions and comments to mga.review@gov.ab.ca. The deadline for emailing formal submissions is **June 13, 2014**.

Partner Profile: Alberta Canola Producers Commission

Submitted by ACPC

Founded in 1989, Alberta Canola Producers Commission (ACPC) was the province's first refundable checkoff producer organization. Today, ACPC is celebrating 25 years of increasing the long term profitability of the over 15,000 Alberta farmers who grow canola. One canola producer is elected from each of the 12 regions to be a director on the board. The directors govern the activities of the Commission that supports research, grower extension, market development, promotion, education, advocacy and policy development for the benefit of all Alberta canola producers.

Alberta set new provincial production records in 2013 at 6.0 million tonnes and an average yield of 43.7 bushels per acre, even though seeded acres declined. A third of all Canadian canola production is grown here, which represents a total economic impact of \$6.1 billion in Alberta. The Canadian canola industry is thriving, driven by an insatiable global demand for healthy oils. In less than a decade, canola has more than doubled its annual contribution to Canada's economy at \$19.3 billion; and generates nearly 249,000 Canadian jobs.

Canola's amazing success story is achieved through partnership, investment and innovation throughout all parts of this high-functioning value chain. Building on its success, the Canola Council of Canada has set aggressive new targets of 52 bushels per acre by 2025 (or 26 million tonnes) and ACPC will be working hard to ensure Alberta producers profit from these goals.

ACPC in conjunction with our national canola organizations, are moving forward on a number of sustainability initiatives advocating:

- Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS) increase to 5%, require 50% GHG reduction, require sustainability production measures
- GHGenius (a lifecycle analysis model) to assess environmental footprint
- Predictable science-based regulatory environment
- Bees are good for canola ~ Canola is good for bees
- Best management practices to produce canola in an sustainable and environmentally responsible manner

As a member of the Agri-Environmental Partnership of Alberta (AEPA) and the Crop Sector Working Group (CSWG), ACPC is actively engaged in addressing agri-environmental policy discussions affecting the agriculture industry and the crop sector. ACPC is able to accomplish more as a member of AEPA and CSWG than it could on its own in the areas of: Ecosystem Services, Land-use Framework, environmental footprinting, agriculture plastics, Growing Forward 2, farm safety, offsets, etc., which offers tremendous value to the Commission. It is significant that the Government of Alberta highly regards the consensus-based voice of the Agri-Environmental Partnership of Alberta on agri-environmental policy development issues.

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