

PRIORITY 2: *To provide policy input on innovations and business models that will help the agriculture industry achieve AEPA-desired outcomes.*

In 2012, the AEPA’s efforts under this strategic priority included a forum on environmental footprinting and input into the development of an upcoming agricultural policy framework.

ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINTING FORUM

Major food retailers such as Walmart and McDonald’s are now asking producers and processors not only to be environmentally responsible but also to be able to prove it. Environmental footprinting is one way to achieve this. An environmental footprint involves a broad suite of environmental measurements which for agriculture and food include factors like energy and water use, greenhouse gas emissions, nutrient impacts, pesticide use impacts and land-use effects.

To help inform producers and processors about this emerging topic, the AEPA, ARD and the Canada-Alberta Agri-Flexibility Fund jointly sponsored ‘Environmental Footprinting from the Farm to Fork: What’s in it for You?’ Held on March 12, 2012 in Nisku. This Workshop included presentations ranging from big-picture considerations like sustainability in product chains, to the local scale with examples of the actual experiences of producers and processors who are finding value in sustainability.

GROWING FORWARD 2

Growing Forward 2 is the successor to Growing Forward, a federal-provincial-territorial agricultural policy framework that expires on March 31, 2013. In the last couple of years, the AEPA has been providing input to ARD regarding Growing Forward 2’s development. In 2012, the Board received updates on this framework and AEPA representatives provided agriculture’s perspectives at two consultation sessions.

Strategic Priority 3: *To engage and build understanding with members and industry partners to enable the agriculture industry to be a credible partner in agri-environmental policy development.*

The AEPA addressed this priority in 2012 by implementing its new communications plan and holding a forum on the latest developments in land-use and water policy issues.

NEW COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

In 2012, the AEPA implemented its new three-year communications plan. Its original communications plan

created in 2009 and revised in 2011 had served the AEPA well. However, in 2011-12 while developing its 2012-15 strategic plan, the AEPA decided it was time to step back and take a fresh look at its communications efforts.

The revised communications plan enables the AEPA to communicate more effectively in ways that are focused, cost-effective, flexible and adaptable. The plan is linked to the AEPA’s 2012-15 strategic plan enabling a consistent, coordinated approach to communications. It makes communications a central element in all aspects of the AEPA’s activities so those activities can be conveyed clearly and effectively, ensuring transparency and accountability.

Implementation of the communications plan in 2012 included revising and reorganizing the AEPA website, revising the AEPA logo, developing presentation templates, developing a feedback mechanism, and creating an e-newsletter called On Common Ground.

The first issue of On Common Ground was released in the fall of 2012. The newsletter is intended as a source of information on the AEPA and agri-environmental policy topics in Alberta. Other communications activities in 2012 included distribution of the AEPA’s 2011 Annual Review and printing and distribution of the key messages on land-use planning, wetland management and water allocation. These publications are also available on the AEPA’s website along with the e-newsletter, workshop presentations and reports.

FALL FORUM

One of the ways the AEPA builds understanding of agri-environmental policy issues within the industry partners is through its forums. In 2012, the Fall Forum was held on November 8 in Red Deer. This event provided participants with an update on land-use and water policy issues and an opportunity to engage with speakers on these issues. The Forum covered such timely topics as progress on LUF, transfer of development credits, cumulative effects management system, and water law.



AEPA Board Members in 2012

The members of the AEPA’s Board of Directors and their alternates are committed to two-way communication between the organizations they represent and the Board, to enable the AEPA to develop a unified voice on priority agri–environmental issues. The AEPA thanks the representatives who departed the Board in 2012 and welcomes the new members who joined the Board during this past year.

Board Member/Alternate	Organizations Represented
Jack Swainson	Industry Co-Chair
LIVESTOCK INDUSTRY GROUPS	
Herman Bulten/Diana O'Hara	Alberta's 8 diversified livestock organizations (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)
Lorrie Jespersen/Allan Child	Alberta Milk
Will Kingma/Darcy Fitzgerald	Alberta Pork
Martin Van Diemen/David Hyink	Alberta's 4 poultry organizations (Alberta Chicken Producers, Egg Farmers of Alberta, Alberta Hatching Egg Producers, Alberta Turkey Producers)
Rich Smith/Bryan Walton	Alberta Beef Producers, Alberta Cattle Feeders' Association
CROP INDUSTRY GROUPS	
Elaine Bellamy/Ward Toma	Alberta Canola Producers Commission
Neil Boyd/Leanne Fischbuch	Alberta Pulse Growers Commission
Wayne Tuck/Rick Istead	Alberta Wheat Commission
Bernie Klammer/Darcy Kirtzinger	Alberta Barley Commission
Terence Hochstein	Potato Growers of Alberta
ENVIRONMENTAL NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION	
Morgan Stromsmoe/Tracy Scott	Ducks Unlimited Canada
GOVERNMENTS	
Soren Odegard/Pat Gordeyko	Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties
Shannon Flint/Andy Ridge	Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development
Colin Jeffares/Brenda Brindle	Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development
LIAISON	
Don Reiter/Terry Dash	Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

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Contact the AEPA

For more information about the Agri-Environmental Partnership of Alberta, please contact the AEPA Secretariat:

Agri-Environmental Partnership of Alberta
Phone: **780-427-3629** (toll-free through 310-0000)

Or visit the AEPA’s website, www.agpartners.ca



2012
Annual Review



ABOUT THE AGRI-ENVIRONMENTAL PARTNERSHIP OF ALBERTA

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

The AEPA grew out of a need identified by many agricultural organizations for a transparent partnership between government and the agriculture industry and for a collaborative approach to resolving agri-environmental issues. The AEPA was formed near the end of 2007, and its Board of Directors was established in January 2008.

The AEPA provides a unified voice on agri-environmental issues in Alberta. The members of its Board and their alternates provide direct communication links to numerous organizations including crop and livestock groups; federal, provincial and municipal governments and an environmental non-government organization. The Board has two co-chairs, one from Alberta’s agriculture industry and the other from the Government of Alberta. The AEPA Secretariat carries out administrative functions for the AEPA.

Using a consensus-based approach, the AEPA identifies its agri-environmental priorities and takes a strategic, proactive approach to achieving its desired outcomes which are:

- 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.

By working together, the AEPA aims to ensure that agriculture and the environment both thrive in Alberta.

This report reviews the AEPA’s accomplishments in 2012 and looks ahead to 2013.

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 public stakeholders working together to proactively address agri-environmental issues from a policy perspective.

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FROM THE AEPA’S INDUSTRY CO-CHAIR

JACK SWAINSON

Crop producer and Chair, Crop Sector Working Group

In this first year of implementing our new 2012-15 strategic plan, the Agri-Environmental Partnership of Alberta (AEPA) has achieved solid progress on our three updated strategic priorities. Looking back at 2012, I am especially proud of our continued ability to provide a unified voice for agriculture on agri-environmental issues.

That unified voice is an outcome of the efforts of all our Board members and their alternates. It is their commitment to the partnership, their open thinking and their willingness to take part in frank discussions that make the AEPA a success.

The AEPA brings together diverse groups and acts as a melting pot for its members. We discuss priority issues, deal with any concerns members may have, and make sure we’re all on the same page by the time we finish our discussions. Our consensus-building approach takes time but it allows us to achieve much stronger results.

In 2012, we continued to get positive feedback that our input is truly appreciated and being considered in the development of agri-environmental policies. Some examples of where we provided input on planning and policy development in 2012 include: Growing Forward 2, a major agricultural policy framework that will come into effect on April 1, 2013; the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan, one of seven regional land-use plans being created under Alberta’s Land-use Framework; and options for mitigating wetland degradation and loss, which is one component in developing a wetland policy for Alberta.

To ensure the AEPA remains an effective voice, we take steps to address the members’ information needs. That is an ongoing task because agri-environmental issues are both complex and continually evolving. One of my favourite ways to keep up to speed is through the AEPA’s website which is always kept very current. As well, our forums and workshops offer a great opportunity to share ideas with experts and other stakeholders. In 2012, we partnered on an excellent workshop on environmental footprinting, a timely topic for producers and food processors. And our Fall Forum provided the latest updates on water and land-use planning issues.

At our December 2012 Board meeting, our year-end review showed we are on track with our strategic plan. That’s the result of a lot of hard work by the Board members and their alternates, the advisory teams, and the AEPA Secretariat staff. I thank all of you for your dedication.

I know 2013 will be another busy year, and I am certain everyone involved in the AEPA is ready for the exciting challenges and opportunities ahead.

FROM THE AEPA’S GOVERNMENT CO-CHAIR

BRENDA BRINDLE

Executive Director, Environmental Stewardship Division
Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development

Since the AEPA was created in late 2007, the organization and its processes have continued to develop and mature. In 2012, this evolution expressed itself in the partnership’s broadening influence within the agricultural community and beyond.

One of the essential pieces in creating this web of influence is the AEPA’s key message process. The partnership identifies priority issues, explores those issues, and then comes to consensus on a set of clear key messages. For instance, in 2012 we developed key messages on water allocation and wetland management, and updated our key messages on land-use planning. This process creates a strong understanding of the issues among the AEPA members.

The AEPA’s key messages are then shared in many ways. Key message publications are printed, sent to target organizations, and posted on the AEPA’s website. As well, the messages are shared within the partner organizations. For example, as Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development’s Board member, I pass on the partnership’s perspectives to the Ministry’s policy developers and decision makers.

The key messages are also shared through dialogue at the AEPA’s forums. The forums are designed to encourage engagement so experts and specialists from various organizations provide information but they also listen to the views of the partner members.

An exciting achievement in 2012 was the spread of the AEPA’s influence to groups outside of agriculture. A great example of this is the strengthening of linkages between the AEPA and several multi-stakeholder water partnerships including the Alberta Water Council and the regional Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils. Those particular linkages are further networked through the Crop Sector Working Group and Intensive Livestock Working Group. By being a part of the AEPA, these groups are better able to provide consistent, informed input to these other partnerships.

I’d like to take this opportunity to thank all the Board members and their alternates for their dedication to the AEPA and to acknowledge Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (AESRD) whose commitment to the AEPA has been unwavering through its transition from the two original departments.

I also really appreciate the work of the AEPA Secretariat staff, Janet Dietrich and Laura Polasek. They keep us focused on our strategic priorities and provide us with quality information and facilitation.

The AEPA has come a long way in its first five years. I’m looking forward to what 2013 will bring!

Progress on the AEPA’s New Strategic Priorities

In 2012, the AEPA began working on the three strategic priorities under its 2012-15 strategic plan.

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

Agri-environmental policy issues are complex and challenging. The AEPA creates advisory teams to delve into specific priority issues and develop key messages for the Board’s consideration. The Board finalizes the messages through its consensus approach. Then the AEPA provides the messages to the partner agencies and target stakeholder audiences as a way to share the AEPA’s perspectives and provide input to decision-making. The two current advisory teams focus on land-use planning and water.

LAND-USE PLANNING ISSUES

The Land-use Framework (LUF), released by the Government of Alberta (GoA) in 2008, provides a comprehensive approach to land-use planning in Alberta. To ensure that agriculture’s voice is reflected in LUF processes, the AEPA created its LUF Advisory Team in 2009.

In 2012, the team updated and refined *Agriculture in Alberta’s Landscapes: Key Messages on Land-use Planning* ensuring that the publication is current, concise and relevant. The publication was printed and distributed to the Ministers and Deputy Ministers of Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) and Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (ESRD). As well, the Board members distributed the publication to their own organizations and the publication was posted on the AEPA website (www.agpartners.ca).

Development of land-use plans for Alberta’s seven regions is a key strategy of LUF. The South Saskatchewan Regional Plan (SSRP) was in Phase 2 of its planning process in 2012. This phase includes stakeholder and public consultations about the advice provided by the SSRP Regional Advisory Council to the GoA in the previous year.

In 2012, the AEPA provided input on the Regional Advisory Council’s advice and AEPA representatives participated in the consultation sessions. The consultations, along with the Regional Advisory Council’s advice and cross-ministry knowledge, will inform the GoA’s development of the draft plan for the South Saskatchewan Region.



In addition, AEPA representatives participated in a stakeholder discussion session in 2012 regarding surface water and air quality management frameworks for the SSRP.

WATER ISSUES

The Water Advisory Team was created in 2011 when the AEPA identified water as a growing policy focus.

In 2012, the team developed key messages and information sheets on water allocation and wetland management. These documents were printed, given to Board members for distribution to their own organizations, and posted on the AEPA website.

The team also held the ‘Workshop for Agricultural Representatives on Water Partnerships’ in Nisku on March 13, 2012. Alberta’s Water for Life strategy includes three levels of multi-stakeholder partnerships: the provincial Alberta Water Council; the regional Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils; and the local Watershed Stewardship Groups. The workshop’s purpose was to have an initial discussion about how the AEPA could develop a stronger communication network with the representatives of the agricultural sector on these multi-stakeholder partnerships.

The Workshop’s discussions identified five major challenges faced by the agricultural representatives. The Water Advisory Team has decided to initially focus on the challenge ‘Lack of a Common Knowledge Base’. It is working on communication options to give the representatives access to the broader agricultural community and enhance information sharing.

Also in 2012, an AEPA representative participated in the Wetland Mitigation Working Group. This multi-stakeholder group is examining options for mitigating wetland degradation and loss. The group’s work will feed into development of Alberta’s wetland policy.