



**Agri-Environmental
Partnership of Alberta**
2010 Annual Review



ABOUT THE AGRI-ENVIRONMENTAL PARTNERSHIP OF ALBERTA

The Agri-Environmental Partnership of Alberta (AEPA) is an inclusive partnership of the agriculture industry, government and environmental stakeholders. This diverse group provides a unique forum for developing balanced policies and programs to 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 14 members of its Board and their alternates provide direct communication links to numerous organizations including crop and livestock agencies, federal, provincial and municipal government agencies, 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, sets broad policy directions and coordinates resources to address priority issues. It takes a strategic, pro-active approach to achieving its goals, which are:

- Healthy agricultural landscapes that maintain or increase both their agricultural productivity and ecological integrity.
- A safe and secure water supply for agricultural production.
- Optimal agricultural producer use of technology and nutrients, by adding value, saving costs and minimizing negative impacts on air, land and water.
- Energy-efficient farming systems, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and maximized profitability and productivity.
- Recognition that Alberta's agricultural producers are environmental stewards.
- Partners have an impact on policy direction; improved relationships between partner members and key stakeholders.

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

This report reviews the AEPA's accomplishments in 2010 and looks ahead to 2011.

VISION

Alberta's agriculture industry is profitable, thriving, accountable and recognized for its pro-active, responsible environmental stewardship.

MISSION

Facilitate a robust dialogue to reach consensus on policy decisions that are balanced and fair, and will impact both agriculture and the environment.

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JURGEN PREUGSCHAS

Pork producer and delegate with Alberta Pork

Well, another year has passed by quickly, and once again, the AEPA has been front and centre on sustainability, focusing on the long-term picture as agricultural production and environment meet.

Much of the AEPA's work in 2010 involved issues facing Alberta's Land-use Framework (LUF) and how that relates to the different watersheds. Progress has been made in having strong input from our organization on these important issues. Our continued dialogue with Government and members of the LUF Regional Advisory Councils and the Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils is crucial in ensuring that both the environment and agriculture survive and thrive in our province.

I have been extremely encouraged by the engagement of both the Intensive Livestock Working Group and the Crop Sector Working Group together with the commodity groups at the AEPA table. With commitment and involvement from all the sectors and thorough discussion of the issues, we do come up with very good recommendations and decisions. Critical in the AEPA's success is the commitment of Government to listen and engage in the discussions. This is being achieved and will ensure better policy development for Alberta.

This past year has seen changes in our Board. In the spring we welcomed our new Government Co-Chair, Brenda Brindle, and just in December we welcomed our new Industry Co-Chair, Jack Swainson. I really appreciated Brenda's input and leadership, which she will certainly continue to bring to the AEPA in the future. Also I wish Jack all the best in his term as Co-Chair and am confident in his abilities to lead the organization forward.

I send a big thank-you to Carol Bettac, our former Government Co-Chair. I had great pleasure in working with Carol; her forward-looking, open thinking causes many of us to think more deeply and be more innovative.

The AEPA Secretariat staff really makes the life of the Co-Chairs much easier, and I thank Janet Dietrich and Christine Sweet for their dedication and organizational talents.

Finally I would like to thank the full Board for all the support during my term as Industry Co-Chair. It is with mixed feelings that I move on as the work being done by the AEPA is so vital for agriculture in this province, but I leave with full confidence in an organization that has matured and will continue to provide the direction and leadership required.

BRENDA BRINDLE

*Executive Director, Environmental Stewardship Division
Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development*

During 2010, my first year as Government Co-Chair, one of the things that has most impressed me about the AEPA is its emphasis on continual improvement. It constantly strives to become even more effective as a credible voice on agri-environmental policy issues.

Fundamental to developing that credible voice is the 'robust dialogue' noted in the AEPA's mission statement. We encourage thorough debate and discussion in many ways, not least of which is through the Board's diverse membership. With representatives of over 20 producer groups as well as provincial, federal and municipal governments, and a non-government conservation agency, every meeting brings together a wide range of perspectives from inside and outside of the industry, strengthening our deliberations.

We also deepen and broaden the level of our debates by bringing additional expertise into our meetings. For example, in 2010, we had discussions with guests concerning the Land-use Framework (LUF), cumulative effects management, environmental indicators and many other topics. These people shared their specialized information and enriched our understanding of the issues and possible solutions.

In addition, the AEPA holds forums and workshops on agri-environmental matters that help enhance the knowledge of members; in 2010 these sessions covered LUF and water-related issues. Just as important, AEPA members are mentoring other people within their own organizations. So as membership turnover occurs, new AEPA members often arrive with a good grasp of the issues.

The AEPA strives for continual improvement in other ways, too. For instance, in 2010, we updated our strategic priorities, honing in on what we need to accomplish and how to get there. And we initiated a Partner Survey to assess the value being provided by the AEPA to our member organizations and other stakeholders. The Board will be examining the survey's findings in early 2011 as a basis for setting future directions.

Ultimately, the AEPA's success comes from the people involved. I would especially like to thank Jurgen Preugschas for his strong dedication and commitment as the Industry Co-Chair for the last two years. I also greatly appreciate the hard work of the AEPA Secretariat staff. As well, I thank the many guests who have provided their expertise at AEPA meetings. And I commend all the Board members for building the solid trust and respect that are so essential to making the AEPA an effective voice for agriculture in Alberta.

JACK SWAINSON

Crop producer and Alberta Winter Wheat Producers Commission Director

I'm looking forward to a very stimulating year in 2011 as the Agri-Environmental Partnership of Alberta deals with the many complex issues facing agriculture.

Although my responsibilities to the Board will be new and challenging, I have followed the AEPA's progress with great interest through my involvement with the AWWPC (Alberta Winter Wheat Producers Commission), CSWG (Crop Sector Working Group) and other agricultural organizations. I believe the AEPA's strong foundation of consensus decision-making will continue to be the key to success in the years ahead.

I see the AEPA as a really good melting pot – it gives the opportunity for agricultural organizations, whether they are from the livestock side or the cropping side, to get together around the table, go over some of the major issues, bring in expertise, discuss all the implications, and come up with a consensus agreement on our approach. Instead of each organization going off on its own tangent, we can work together to create a common message and more effective actions on shared objectives.

There's certainly no shortage of significant issues to challenge the AEPA in 2011. Of course, Alberta's Land-use Framework (LUF) will continue to be a top interest because of its potentially far-reaching implications for producers across the province. For instance, LUF takes a cumulative effects management approach, so regional planners will be considering the potential impacts of all the activities within an area and identifying thresholds for water, air, land and biodiversity. We want to make very sure that agriculture has an effective voice in regional planning and the setting of environmental targets and thresholds.

I think one of the emerging environmental issues for agriculture could be the rapidly growing attention on environmental footprinting. Some of our major food retailers are already demanding an awareness of and responsibility for our environmental footprint in producing food products. So producers will need to understand what's involved, including the potential hurdles and benefits. Other issues ahead could include market-based instruments for encouraging environmental stewardship and policies on non-point source pollution.

The AEPA offers a way for the agricultural community to address such complicated issues. Together we can move forward on our common goals.



PHOTO CREDIT: Alberta Agriculture



PHOTO CREDIT: Christine Sweet

Progress on Strategic Priorities

Early in 2010, the Board updated the AEPA's strategic priorities, establishing three top priorities for 2010 to 2012. The Board and the AEPA teams made important steps forward on those three priorities in 2010.

PROGRESS ON PRIORITY 1: THE AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY IS A CREDIBLE PARTNER AND ENGAGED IN LAND-USE DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES, AND IS ABLE TO BE RESPONSIVE TO CRITICAL SHORT-TERM POLICY PRIORITIES.

Alberta's agriculture industry manages about one-third of the private land in Alberta so the industry has a vital interest in land-use decision-making. The Government of Alberta's Land-use Framework (LUF), released in 2008, provides a comprehensive approach to planning and management of private and public lands in Alberta. To ensure that agriculture's voice is reflected in LUF processes, the AEPA created its LUF Advisory Team in 2009.

In 2010, the Advisory Team focused on LUF's regional planning process. Under LUF, the Government of Alberta has divided the province into seven regions, and each region will have a long-term regional land-use plan. These plans will be developed by the Government with input from multi-stakeholder Regional Advisory Councils.

The Advisory Team completed preparation of a set of key policy recommendations related to LUF in January, and created a strategy for communicating these recommendations. Then, with the Board's approval, the Advisory Team started implementing the strategy. For instance, the Team guided development of articles and a backgrounder for producers about agricultural issues related to LUF. As well, the policy recommendations were used in discussions with the agricultural representatives on two Regional Advisory Councils about how the AEPA and industry groups could assist the representatives during the regional planning process.

Also in 2010, the AEPA identified water as a growing concern in the context of LUF, especially with respect to water allocation and Alberta's draft wetland policy. As part of addressing this concern, the Advisory Team held the AEPA Water Workshop in November. The workshop helped agricultural stakeholders to increase their understanding of water issues so they will be better able to participate in LUF and other planning processes. The presentations clearly identified the water-related challenges facing agriculture.



Highlights

- **LUF Awareness:** A series of four news articles were developed for crop and livestock producers about the importance of LUF to agriculture, how producers may be impacted, and why they should participate in LUF consultations. The first article was released in December 2010. As well, a backgrounder called *Agriculture in Alberta's Landscapes: The Agri-Environmental Partnership of Alberta's Backgrounder for Agricultural Participants in Land Use Planning* was released in the fall.
- **AEPA Water Workshop:** This workshop for the agricultural community was held on November 9 in Red Deer. The 74 attendees learned about water policy issues related to LUF and other planning processes in Alberta. The presentations identified challenges for agriculture like water quality thresholds, water allocation, and Alberta's draft wetland policy.



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PHOTO CREDIT: Len Pettitt

The Project Team completed its work in fall 2010. Its major conclusion is that BRM and cross-compliance issues are different for each commodity group. Therefore these issues are best addressed by the individual commodity groups as each group sees fit. The Board approved that approach.

Highlights

- **Increased Understanding:** The BRM Project Team's investigations and discussions enhanced understanding among the Team members, Board members and commodity groups about the important concerns and varied perspectives related to linking environmental outcomes to BRM programs.
- **Towards Continuous Improvement:** At the conclusion of the Project Team's work, the members provided feedback on their learnings to help improve AEPA processes in the future.

PROGRESS ON PRIORITY 2: *PROVIDE INPUT TO A POLICY ENVIRONMENT THAT WILL HELP THE AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY ACHIEVE ENVIRONMENTAL OUTCOMES THROUGH INNOVATION AND NEW BUSINESS MODELS.*

During 2010, the AEPA's efforts related to Priority 2 concentrated on Business Risk Management (BRM) programs. In January, the Board created the BRM Project Team to explore opportunities for BRM programs to aid in achieving environmental outcomes.

The Project Team began its work by discussing BRM policies and programs with a representative of the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation (AFSC), which is the primary government-supported delivery agent for BRM products in Alberta. AFSC's programs are cost-shared between the Governments of Canada and Alberta. The program and policy directions are set under Growing Forward, the current federal/provincial/territorial agreement on agriculture which runs from 2008 to 2013.

With 2013 fast approaching, the Project Team decided the best approach to bring about policy change would be to participate in the June 2010 consultations to develop the BRM components of the next five-year national agricultural agreement. At those sessions, the AEPA representatives brought forward the issue of environmental outcomes in BRM programming.

A fundamental principle of BRM programming is that it should be production neutral. However, the Project Team's investigations found that the introduction of environmental outcomes into BRM programs might not be production neutral because of the potential for cross-compliance issues. If producers are required to meet certain environmental criteria to be eligible for BRM programs, then that could influence production.

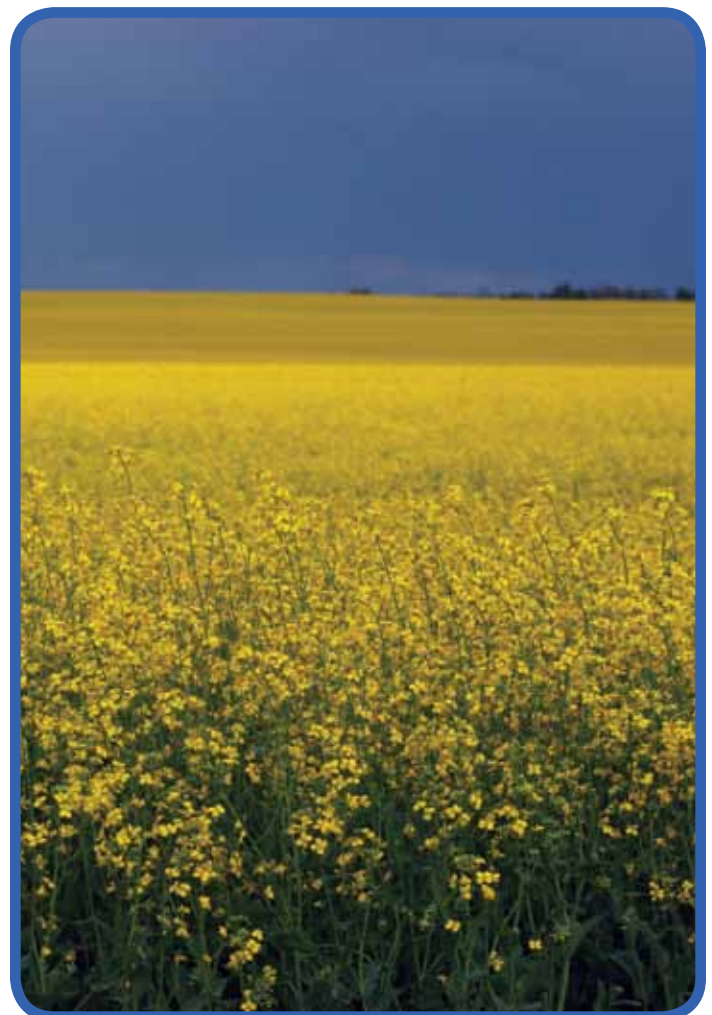


PHOTO CREDIT: Alberta Agriculture

PROGRESS ON PRIORITY 3: AEPA WILL ENGAGE AND BUILD CAPACITY WITH ITS INDUSTRY PARTNERS SO THAT THE AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY IS A CREDIBLE PARTNER IN AGRI-ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY DECISIONS.

Building and deepening the agricultural community's understanding of agri-environmental issues is crucial to ensuring that agriculture continues to have a credible voice in planning and policy development related to agriculture and the environment.

In 2010, many of the AEPA's Priority 3 activities focused on LUF. For instance, the LUF Advisory Team developed articles and a background paper to increase awareness and understanding of LUF issues among agricultural producers (see Priority 1). Other LUF awareness/education activities included the AEPA's 2010 Agri-Environmental Forum and the AEPA Water Workshop (see Priority 1).

As well in 2010, the AEPA continued to play its vital role as a forum to bring forward perspectives on agri-environmental issues and share that information with commodity groups, governments and others through meetings, discussions, publications and its website (www.agpartners.ca).

Highlights

- **Agri-Environmental Forum:** The AEPA holds an annual Agri-Environmental Forum – or 'AgForum' – for people involved in the AEPA and its member organizations who want to learn more about agri-environmental policy issues. The aim of the March 2010 AgForum was to increase understanding of potential LUF impacts on agriculture. Presentations covered such topics as fragmentation and conversion of agricultural land, cumulative effects management, and market-based approaches to encouraging environmental stewardship.
- **Consultation on Draft Wetland Policy:** AEPA representatives provided input on Alberta Environment's draft wetland policy at two consultation sessions in 2010. The sessions were to test the overall intent and direction of the draft policy; the details of the policy are still under development. Some of agriculture's key considerations as the policy develops are: what the baseline and targets will be for wetland restoration since much of the focus will likely be on restoring wetlands on farmland; and how producers will be compensated for any negative impact on their ability to operate.
- **Information Sharing:** The AEPA members continued to dialogue with representatives from a variety of organizations such as: Agriculture Financial Services Corporation, AI Bio-Solutions, and the Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute. The AEPA continued to keep the lines of communication open between all levels of government. Presentations kept the AEPA up-to-date on the latest government policies within Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Alberta Environment, and the Land Use Secretariat. Additionally the AEPA's partners continued to build stronger relationships at the Board table and share their initiatives and learnings with one another.



PHOTO CREDIT: Alberta Agriculture



PHOTO CREDIT: Alberta Agriculture

AEPA Board Members in 2010

The members of the AEPA's Board of Directors and their alternates are committed to two-way communication between the agencies they represent and the Board, to enable the AEPA to develop a unified voice on priority issues.

Board Member/Alternate	Agencies Represented
LIVESTOCK INDUSTRY GROUPS	
Glenda Elkow/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
Jurgen Preugschas, Industry Co-Chair (up to December 2010)/ Will Kingma	Alberta Pork
John Richter/Martin Van Diemen	Alberta's 4 poultry organizations (Alberta Chicken Producers, Alberta Egg Producers, Alberta Hatching Egg Producers, Alberta Turkey Producers)
Rich Smith/Bryan Walton	Alberta Beef Producers, Alberta Cattle Feeders' Association
CROP INDUSTRY GROUPS	
Jody Klassen/Ward Toma	Alberta Canola Producers Commission
Neil Boyd/Sheri Strydhorst	Alberta Pulse Growers Commission
Wayne Tuck/Rick Istead	Alberta Winter Wheat Producers Commission
John Wozniak/Darcy Kirtzinger	Alberta Barley Commission
Tom Jackson	Alberta Oat, Rye and Triticale Association
Jack Swainson	Industry Co-Chair (as of December 2010)
ENVIRONMENTAL NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION	
Kim Schmitt/Morgan Stromsmoe	Ducks Unlimited Canada
GOVERNMENTS	
Bob Barss	Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties
Ernie Hui/Janet Mclean	Alberta Environment
Colin Jeffares/Brenda Brindle, Government Co-Chair	Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development
LIAISON	
Rodney Dlugos/Terry Dash	Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

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