

Source: Adapted from material prepared by Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) for the AEPA Draft SSRP Industry Roundtable Meeting (October 16, 2013).

Note: The material in this briefing is specific to the agricultural content in the draft plan; it does not cover the plan as a whole. To truly understand the intent of the plan, the plan needs to be considered in its entirety.

Regional Outcomes

- Economy is growing and diversified
- Biodiversity and ecosystem functions are sustained
- Air quality is managed to support healthy ecosystems and human needs
- Watersheds are managed to support healthy ecosystems and human needs
- Community development needs are anticipated and accommodated
- Quality of life of residence is enhanced through increased opportunities for recreation and preservation of cultural heritage
- Aboriginal peoples are included in land-use planning

Plan Overview

Private Lands – White Area

- *Management intent:* Agriculture, settlement and multiple uses; continue to respect property rights
- *Immediately:* Build upon strong history of shared stewardship and conservation of the land; greater recognition of stewardship and conservation efforts of landowners and leaseholders (e.g. sustainable grazing practices)
- *Over the next five years:* Expand and develop stewardship and conservation tools

Grasslands – White Area Public Land

- *Management intent:* Agriculture and grazing; maintain biodiversity; address species at risk; grassland conservation; watershed management; resource development and recreation
- *Immediately:* Managing sales and conversion of intact grassland; managing surface disturbance; enhancing conservation tools
- *Over the next five years:* Linear footprint management plan; explore adding new conservation areas

Eastern Slopes – Green Area Public Land

- *Management intent:* Headwaters protection; watershed management; maintain biodiversity; recreation; timber production; resource development
- *Immediately:* Consistent management of Green Area – public land use zones; legislatively protected conservation areas; enhance protection for the Castle
- *Over the next five years:* Linear footprint management plan; recreational and access management plans; incorporate existing integrated resource plans

Recreation and Parks Areas

- *Management intent:* Provide a variety of recreational experiences for a growing population
- *Over the next five years:* Restore flood damaged areas; designate recreational lands
- *Beyond five years:* Enhance existing facilities; establish new facilities

Land Across the Region

- *Management intent:* Cumulative effects management; economic growth; coordinated municipal planning; enhance stewardship ethic
- *Immediately:* Air Quality Management Framework; Surface Water Quality Management Framework; continue flood hazard mapping; land-use policies; support development of municipal flood-hazard mitigation plans
- *Over the next five years:* Biodiversity Management Framework; groundwater management; water storage study; continue flood hazard mapping

For the Agriculture Sector, the plan:

- Provides direction to municipalities on fragmentation and conversion of agricultural lands
- Increases recognition of stewardship and conservation efforts by private landowners

- Increases recognition of the importance of economic diversification and workforce development in the agriculture and agri-food sector
- Provides future direction of the irrigation industry in the region

For Landowners, the plan:

- Respects private property rights – including freehold mineral rights
- Enables collaborative planning on key landscapes and exploration of a suite of approaches to achieve outcomes
- Encourages shared stewardship and collaboration
 - Recognizes the contribution and importance of partnerships, particularly those associated with continued grazing on native lands

Agriculture Related Topic Areas

Agriculture and a Healthy Economy

- Draft strategies that support the maintenance and growth/diversification of agriculture
- Relevant pages in the plan: Growing and Diversified Economy – Agriculture: 61-62

SSRP Strategies:

- Maintain an agricultural land base
- Support a diverse, innovative and value-added agriculture and agri-food sector in the South Saskatchewan Region (SSR) through implementation of *Alberta's Irrigation: A Strategy for the Future*
- Assist the agriculture and agri-food industry to maximize opportunities for value-added agricultural products by focusing on workforce development, investment, attraction, and domestic and international market development
- Support business climate, complementary production and marketing approach that recognizes local, domestic and international market opportunities for Alberta's agriculture, agri-food and agri-product sectors
- Support and enhance the next generation of agriculture, food and rural entrepreneurs

What this means:

- Draft SSRP encourages municipalities to maintain an agricultural land base, limit development in areas that would constrain agricultural activities, and minimize conflicts between agriculture and incompatible land uses.
- *Alberta's Irrigation: A Strategy for the Future* will enhance economic opportunities and contribute to vibrant rural communities. Will also ensure the industry continues to be seen as a global leader in efficient and productive use of water.
- GoA will continue to offer extension programs and services and research based information and innovative business tools to position the province as a competitive global supplier of agricultural products and services. Federal/Provincial/Territorial funding programs will support productivity enhancements, workforce development and new product development.
- GoA will continue to be engaged and collaborate across community and economic development, health, academic and agricultural supply chain disciplines to focus on multi-scale, commercially viable agricultural production.
- GoA will act on advice from the Next Generation Advisory Council and work with stakeholders and organizations to support the attraction of new entrants to the agriculture and agri-food sector. This will occur through the development of programs and services specific to their needs.

Irrigation Agriculture

- Draft strategies that support the irrigation industry, working towards Water for Life water conservation goals and optimizing water management infrastructure
- Relevant pages in the plan: Implementing [*Alberta's Irrigation: A Strategy for the Future*](#): 61; Efficient and Resilient Water Supply: 88-89

SSRP Strategies:

- Implementation of [*Alberta's Irrigation: A Strategy for the Future*](#) (p. 61)
- Continue to develop an optimized water management infrastructure system (p. 88-89)

- Continue to work towards the Water for Life outcome with all sectors demonstrating best management practices, ensuring overall water efficiency and productivity in Alberta improves by 30 per cent from 2005 levels by 2015 (p. 89)

What this means:

- [Alberta's Irrigation: A Strategy for the Future](#) will ensure the industry continues to be seen as a global leader in efficient and productive use of water.
- Five key strategies reflect the ARD's blueprint for the future of the irrigation industry in Alberta.
 - Productivity, Efficiency, Conservation, Water Supply, Environmental Stewardship
- GoA will continue to support water conservation targets (e.g. those developed through Alberta Irrigation Projects Association) through efforts such as [Alberta's Irrigation: A Strategy for the Future](#). Future directions such as regionally based targets and additional commitments to improve efficiency and productivity will be considered in 2015 following the deadline for conservation, efficiency and productivity target improvement.
- Provincial water management infrastructure will continue to be assessed for optimization and efficiencies to address periods of both low flows and drought conditions, and high flows and flooding conditions.
 - Assessments will build off of previous work that considered supply and demand, and integrated management of existing flows as concluded in previous projects such as the Water Supply Study, South Saskatchewan River Basin Adaptation Project, and the Bow River Project.
 - Complete a water storage opportunities study for the SSR by the end of 2015 to explore the potential to develop additional water storage in the region.

Ecosystem Services

- Draft plan does not implement a market for Ecosystem Services; it supports and recognizes stewardship of Alberta's private lands and will use the evaluation of current work to inform future strategies
- Relevant pages in the plan: Stewardship and Conservation on Private Lands: 74-75

SSRP Strategies:

- Encourage and support the continued stewardship of Alberta's private lands through the development and piloting of regionally-appropriate conservation tools
- Complete development and evaluation of the Southeast (SE) Conservation Offset Pilot by the end of 2015

What this means:

- GoA will explore conservation tools such as market-based options, voluntary conservation easements, and the provision of other government and/or private sector incentives that assist in achieving environmental outcomes within the provincial approach for management of ecosystem services.
- Experience gained through the SE Conservation Offset Pilot will be used to educate and demonstrate the use of offsets to producers and to inform development of future market-based approaches for ecosystem services.
- GoA is developing a provincial government approach to ecosystem services as there are currently no government policies or high level principles around ecosystem services and their valuation in Alberta.

Environmental Management Frameworks

- Implement management frameworks for air and water quality; the Biodiversity Management Framework will be finished by the end of 2014
- Relevant pages in the plan: Biodiversity Management Framework: 66-67 & 118-122; Air Quality Management Framework: 75-77; Surface Water Quality Management Framework: 81-82
<http://www.environment.alberta.ca/04244.html>

SSRP Strategies:

- Complete the South Saskatchewan Biodiversity Management Framework by the end of 2014 (p. 66-67, Appendix F (118-122))
- Implement the Air Quality Management Framework for the South Saskatchewan Region (p. 75-77)

- Implement the Surface Water Quality Management Framework for the South Saskatchewan Region (p. 81-82) – No water quantity management framework (as was done in Lower Athabasca Regional Plan) due to the already cabinet approved South Saskatchewan River Basin Water Management Plan (2006)

What this means:

- Limits and triggers for air and water indicators as outlined in each management framework.
- Air and water management frameworks describe examples of management actions following the exceedance of a trigger or limit. It has yet to be determined what impact this will have on agriculture.
- Biodiversity Management Framework (yet to be developed) will focus on indicators that are based on key species that represent the broad range of biodiversity in the region; important habitats where specific direction is provided in recovery plans; and maintaining key landscapes [Appendix F: Overview of the Biodiversity Management Framework].

Water Quality, Stewardship and Beneficial Management Practices (BMPs)

- Theme area brings together much of the current GoA work in surface and groundwater water quality
- Relevant pages in the plan: Establishment of conservation areas: 67; Environmentally Beneficial Management Practices: 75; Surface Water Quality Management Framework: 81-82; Groundwater management, Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils (WPACs), watershed planning, wetland/riparian area management, source water protection: 87-88; Headwater protection: 90; South Saskatchewan Regional Trail System Plan: 97, 130-131

SSRP Strategies:

- Develop and facilitate the continued adoption of environmentally beneficial management practices that demonstrate agriculture and agri-food sector commitment to environmental stewardship (p. 75)
- Implement the Surface Water Quality Management Framework for the SSR (p. 81-82)
- Develop a comprehensive approach for groundwater management (p. 87)
- Support WPACs and watershed planning (p. 87)
- Improve management of wetland and riparian areas (p. 87)
- Encourage development of source water protection plans, use of source water protection measures (p. 88)
- Protect headwaters through the establishment of conservation areas (p. 67, 90)
- Collaborate with others to develop the South Saskatchewan Regional Trail System Plan to provide designated land and water trails for year-round recreation (p. 97, 130-131)

What this means:

- GoA will continue to implement programs that encourage the adoption of BMPs.
- GoA has developed specific water quality triggers and limits for 15 indicators along the Bow, Oldman, Milk and South Saskatchewan Rivers – see framework details.
- GoA will: confirm groundwater priority issues and areas of concern; develop an enhanced regional groundwater monitoring strategy by the end of 2015; continue groundwater mapping; and develop policy direction related to groundwater and surface water connectivity.
- Support WPAC work in alignment with regional planning.
- Establish regional wetland management objectives under the Alberta Wetland Policy and facilitate the advancement of wetland knowledge, data systems and science.
- Build on Alberta Water Council's recommendations on riparian areas, encourage use of [Stepping Back from the Water](#), encourage landowners to maintain riparian areas, continue mapping and inventories of riparian areas.
- GoA will encourage the development of source water protection plans by municipal water utilities, WPACs, and upstream stakeholders.
- GoA will manage forests in the Green Area with headwater protection and integrity (such as water storage, recharge, and release functions) as the highest management priority.
- Collaborate with communities and stakeholders to develop a regional trail system that designates sustainable, high-intensity motorized recreation areas and keeps motorists out of wetlands and water courses.

Conservation of Valued Landscapes and Biodiversity

- Theme area has many draft strategies to support the Biodiversity Management Framework (BMF), maintenance of habitat for species at risk in the Green and White Areas
- Relevant pages in the plan: Biodiversity Management Framework: 66; New conservation areas: 40, 67; Linear footprint management plan: 67; Public Land Use Zones for Green Area public lands: 68; Integrated Resource Plans: 68-69; Outreach and education – shared stewardship of eastern slopes: 69; Green Area forest management (headwaters as highest priority): 69; Minimizing conversion of intact native grasslands: 69; Managing risk associated with invasive species: 70; Guidelines for conversion of grasslands: 127-129

SSRP Strategies:

- Complete the South Saskatchewan BMF by the end of 2014
- Create new conservation areas on provincial Crown land (including establishment of Pekisko Heritage Rangeland (p40))
- Develop a linear footprint management plan for White and Green Area public lands by the end of 2017
- Consolidate and expand Public Land Use Zones (PLUZ) for Green Area public lands
- Review and incorporate the region's Integrated Resource Plans
- Engage in collaborative outreach and education programs to promote responsible land-use and shared stewardship on the Eastern Slopes
- Manage forests in the Green Area with headwaters protection and integrity as the highest management priority
- Minimize conversion of intact native grasslands through transparent guidelines
- Work with others to manage risk associated with invasive species

What this means:

- BMF will focus on indicators that are based on key species that represent the broad range of biodiversity in the region; important habitats where specific direction is provided in recovery plans; and maintaining key landscapes [Appendix F: Overview of the BMF].
- BMF will apply to the region as a whole, however actions on private lands will be voluntary.
- Linear footprint management plans will outline a system to minimize the extent, duration and rate of linear footprint development in order to meet objectives and targets established by the BMF.
- PLUZ provide areas for recreational opportunities including Off-Highway Vehicle recreation. PLUZ are being consolidated and expanded to improve the province's ability to effectively manage public land, manage undesirable impacts, address priority issues and increase the safety and enjoyment of recreationists.
- Streamlining Integrated Resource Plans will reduce the number of sub-regional scale plans to ensure effective implementation of regional plans.
- Education and outreach will relay responsible use messaging (e.g. avoid water courses, wetland areas, power line right-of ways) for the Eastern Slopes.
- GoA will manage forests in the Green Area with headwater protection and integrity (such as water storage, recharge, and release functions) as the highest management priority.
- Under the SSRP, the Minister responsible for the Public Lands Act (Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development) is responsible for the Heritage Rangelands; previously, were a responsibility of Alberta Tourism, Parks and Recreation.
- GoA will continue to work with other government agencies, levels of government, landholders, non-government organizations, industry, the research community and other partners within and outside of the province to manage risk associated with invasive species- terrestrial and aquatic.
- Native grasslands represent diverse habitat containing many species at risk. Appendix H (p. 127-129) describes the Policy Guidelines for conversion of grasslands on White Area public land.
 - Guidelines:
 - Non-intact native grassland = business as usual
 - Intact native grassland + irrigable = possible sale if offset by private land
 - Intact native grassland + not irrigable = no sale/no cultivation

Fragmentation and Conversion of Agricultural Land

- Encourages municipalities to reduce the fragmentation and conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses; implements monitoring of fragmentation and conversion
- Relevant pages in the plan: Maintain an agricultural land base (reducing fragmentation and conversion): 61; Building sustainable communities (efficient use of land): 92-93

SSRP Strategies:

- Maintain an agricultural land base by reducing the fragmentation and conversion of agricultural land (p. 61)
- Elements relating to the efficient use of land are included in the Land-use Patterns under Building Sustainable Communities (p. 92-93)

What this means:

- Municipalities are encouraged to establish land-use patterns which:
 - Maintain an agricultural land base, limit development in areas that would constrain agricultural activities, and minimize conflicts between agriculture and incompatible land uses;
 - Minimize potential conflict of land uses adjacent to natural resource extraction, manufacturing and other industrial developments; and
 - Provide an appropriate mix of agricultural, residential, industrial, institutional, public and recreational land uses; developed in an ordinary, efficient, compatible, safe and economical manner.

Recreation and Park Areas

- Relevant pages in the plan: Establishment of new Public Land Recreation Areas: 96, 115, 151, 157; Outreach, education and enforcement throughout eastern slopes: 96

SSRP Strategies:

- Existing recreational opportunities in the region were developed for a much smaller population and do not meet the full range of recreational experiences of today's growing population; long-term vision is to establish new and expanded recreation and park areas (p. 96, Appendix D (p. 115), map (p. 157))

What this means:

- In the long-term, some existing provincial parks will be expanded and others created.
- Proposed new and expanded park and recreation areas may impact some grazing allotments. The impact is dependent on where and how much recreation facilities/infrastructure are built within these areas. Facility areas would potential need fencing, however, the GoA would work with allotment holders to find an appropriate solution.
- Current understanding is that extensive allotment holder grazing would be considered compatible with the majority of new areas and grazing exclusion would only occur in portions of these new areas where there is infrastructure development.

Relevant Links

- Draft SSRP document: https://landuse.alberta.ca/LandUse%20Documents/SSRP%20Draft%20SSRP%202014-2024_2013-10-10.pdf
- Highlights of the Draft South Saskatchewan Regional Plan: https://landuse.alberta.ca/LandUse%20Documents/SSRP%20Highlights%20of%20Draft%20SSRP_2013-10-10.pdf
- Consultation dates, locations, facility addresses: https://landuse.alberta.ca/LandUse%20Documents/SSRP%20Phase%203%20Join%20the%20Conversation%20Consultation%20Dates%20Poster_2013-10-10.pdf
- Discussion Guide/Workbook (Deadline January 15): <https://www.banister.ab.ca/ssrpphase3>
- Draft Environmental Management Frameworks and Fact Sheets for the SSRP: <http://www.environment.alberta.ca/04244.html>
- "Alberta's Irrigation: A Strategy for the Future": www.agriculture.alberta.ca/irrigation
- AEPA Land-use Planning Key Messages (two versions -pdf) <http://www.agpartners.ca/aepa/Portals/0/LUF%20key%20messages%20compiled.pdf> (Word) http://www.agpartners.ca/aepa/Portals/0/AEPA_LandUsePlanning_240712_v6.pdf (Printed)