

BULLETIN # 4/09

AEPA

- The Partnership continues to work on developing options and recommendations for several key issues.
 - **Fragmentation and Conversion of Agricultural Land** – conflicting goals complicate the development of a workable policy. Rural development is important in smaller communities while urban sprawl around Alberta’s larger cities is eating up valuable agricultural land and driving up land costs. Watch for public consultations early in 2010.
 - **Cumulative Effects Management** – Alberta currently manages the environmental impacts of individual projects or developments through regulations without considering the cumulative effects of multiple individually regulated projects. Alberta’s new Cumulative Effects Management (CEM) system will define environmental end states and outcomes with a shared understanding of implications and trade-offs. Issues for the agriculture sector include the inability for farmers, who are price takers, to pass along any increased costs of CEM to customers, and the differences between industrial and agricultural impacts on the environment. The agriculture sector through AEPA will be fully engaged in the development of targets and outcomes and in ensuring that the specific needs and concerns of the sector are considered.

Land Use Framework

- The South Saskatchewan Regional Advisory Council public consultations have started with sessions in Calgary, Vulcan, Strathmore, Cochrane and Airdrie completed in the first week of December. All meetings run from 4pm to 7pm. The rest of the sessions are as follows:
 - December 7 – Lethbridge (Eagles Hall); Brooks (Brooks Heritage Inn)
 - December 8 – Fort MacLeod (United Church Hall); Medicine Hat (Coast Hotel)
 - December 9 – Pincher Creek (Ramada Inn); Taber (Legion Hall)
 - December 10 – Cardston (Remington Carriage Museum); Milk River (Heritage Hall)
 - For more information see www.landuse.alberta.ca

- Issues of particular importance in the South Saskatchewan Region are water and development pressures, which affect fragmentation and conversion of agricultural land, as well as recreation demand, oil and gas activity, and species at risk.

Wetlands Policy

- The latest draft of the new Alberta Wetlands Policy is expected to go to the Government's Agenda and Priorities Committee this winter with a draft policy possibly going to Cabinet in the spring session.
- Although the draft policy has undergone some changes since the Alberta Water Council submitted their report in 2008, ephemeral water bodies are not part of it at this time. These are low areas that may have water in them in the spring but that farmers can seed when they dry out. There were concerns that the new policy would include more restrictions on these temporary water bodies but that doesn't appear to be the case.

Calgary Pesticides By-Law

- Calgary's City Council recently voted against pursuing a pesticides bylaw that would restrict pesticide use for urban residents and commercial applicators, in part because it would be unenforceable and unnecessary.
- The Utilities and Environment Committee had been working on a draft bylaw that was a compromise between those who want a total ban and those who support existing regulations on the safe use of pesticides. The pro-ban supporters considered the draft bylaw too weak anyway and although the crop protection industry thought it was workable, no new bylaw is the preferred outcome.
- While this bylaw is an urban issue, a ban would send a message to citizens that pesticides are dangerous and this could have serious consequences down the road for the agriculture industry.
- Efforts to ban pesticides in Calgary will likely continue in some form in the coming months.