

Report Prepared for Peace River Agriculture Development Fund

Title of Project: Environmental Awareness & Action Liaison 2007
Report Title: Final Report
Covering Period: April 1, 2007 – March 31, 2008
Organization(s): BC Grain Producers Association.
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Objective:

The objective of this project was to provide representation on committees and working groups which are actively seeking solutions to the environmental issues grain farmers face. Farmers need to be made aware of environmental conflicts, initiatives and the availability of on-farm stewardship programs.

Description of Activities:

Irmi Critcher, President of BCGPA, currently has a seat on the (AEPI) Agriculture Environmental Partnership Initiative Management Committee and the Environmental Working Group in charge of policy recommendations concerning the EFP program. She also represents the Partnership Committee of Agriculture and the Environment in BC.

The BCGPA Environment committee continues to actively represent the grain & oilseed sector on committees dealing with farming and the environment. Our direct affiliation with the Peace River Regional District has provided a seat on the provincial Environment Conflict Advisory Committee, and our membership with the Grain Growers of Canada has provided us representation at a national level dealing mainly on regulatory issues.

Environmental Farm Plans have been the focus of activities for the Provincial Environmental Working Group and BCGPA since 2004. This industry led initiative is to show a proactive on farm approach to government regulations and pressures from the general public and consumers.

Developments on the future of Environmental Farm Plans (EFP) and National Farm Stewardship Program (NFSP) Growing Forward – Agriculture Policy Framework (APF) Extension and Transition:

Provincial and federal governments are in the process of developing a 6-12 month extension agreement. Federal and provincial ministers met in mid-November and it is expected further clarification on the continuation will be announced. The chair of the committee believes EFP and NFSP Programming will most likely be a part of those extension arrangements.

As a result of our concerns about the need for continuity and effective transition and uncertainties about the federal provincial processes, the EFP working group made a request to the Investment Agriculture Foundation Board to provide a “backstop” or “insurance policy” for bridging the transition of EFP and NFSP if something happened or delayed the federal provincial extension process.

We were pleased IAF supported this request. Due to the bridging approval “insurance policy” the focus of our discussions at the EFP Working Group level was on an effective

transition on a “going forward” basis as opposed to a focus on winding down current projects. This does not extend “status quo” but was an opportunity to determine the most effective way to move forward in this transition period knowing we had encouraging direction at the federal and provincial level.

The BC Grain Producer’s Association completed and terminated its involvement as a Delivery Group of the EFP program as of December 31, 2007. Our director representatives continue to participate in the consultation process regarding the direction of the new APF in regards to environmental policy and programs.

Wildlife Damage Assessment Project

We have completed year two of our Wildlife Damage Assessment project, getting funding for the project wasn’t an issue as we were able to partner with multiple resources (MOE, BCAC, MAL, DU) to work towards the betterment of wildlife management practices for all concerned. BCGPA’s directors have been involved through a steering committee to guide this program to completion.

The initial project was spurred by the “Excreta in Grain” situation in the fall of 2005, in 2006 & 2007 the contaminants weren’t as severe due to the early harvest, but the presence of wildlife and damages through grazing, bedding and destroying was as bad as ever. We had Julie Robinson, Wildlife Biologist, determine the “hot spots” where most damage occurs, determine what it is costing producers and take these figures to the provincial government to assist with the development of solutions, one of them being a wildlife damage compensation program.

A student worker was hired to continue with the assessments in 2007 under Julie’s supervision. We have assessed the damage for a second season to prove the numbers and we have worked together with the Ministry of Environment on wildlife reduction solutions, one of them being the Hunter Management Program, which is a totally new concept. Ongoing discussion continues regarding a provincial crop insurance program that compensates for wildlife damage. The conclusions drawn from this project will assist in formulating recommendations for what any future strategies would be based on.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Lands announced a Wildlife Compensation Policy in late March which is only for standing forage. This plan does not include the grain sector. There is \$10 M each year for four years. The provincial government wants this started by May 15 for forage, and have a Excreta in Grain policy by September 2008. This is a scaled program for 2008 and hopefully there will be a full program in 2009. We continue to work with government to have a working program for grain as well.

The BCGPA Board was told there is an intention to collect crop loss data which will be compared with the completed data from the two year report. There is a technical working group that is working on a policy that can be acted on in 2009. There will be a grain representative to work towards the Sept 15, 08 deadline.

Peace River Enfranchisement Pilot (PREP):

Rick Kantz represents BCGPA as well as the Forage Association on this initiative. The Peace River Enfranchisement Pilot (PREP) will help government and the various sectors in the Peace to establish and manage a social carrying capacity for wildlife on the private land base.

The goal is to harmonize objectives in order to develop and strive for sustainable agriculture and sustainable wildlife populations. This pilot is supported by the Ministry of Environment (MOE) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands (MAL) at headquarters and regional levels.

Five major goals will be pursued by the PREP. First, wildlife populations and their impacts to agriculture will be assessed. Second, mitigation techniques will be explored. Third, the pilot will enable inter-sector dialogue and inform the statutory decision makers who develop wildlife management strategies and regulations. Fourth, 'user pay', or enfranchisement, models that generate revenues to offset producer costs will be explored. Fifth, compensation programs will be explored.

Web Site:

www.env.gov.bc.ca/fw/wildlifeactreview/discussion/.

General Involvement:

The BC Grain Producers are affiliated with the Grain Grower's of Canada and the Canola Council of Canada. Through this communication we have been able to obtain information on what is affecting the grain industry on a national level in regards to environmental research, policy, and practices. Canola Watch is a publication available during the growing season to help producers assist in the monitoring of crop, disease and pest development.

Extension and demonstration:

- Reported at BCGPA directors meetings and various e-mails
- Interaction with AAFC through working group consultations
- Membership mail out
- Committee reports at Annual info seminar & Verbal updates to producers
- Partnership Committee Minutes are posted on BC MAL website

Accomplishments:

BC Grain Producers has completed its contractual obligation as a Delivery Group of the Environmental Farm Program with many completed farm plans throughout the Peace Region. Information regarding the conclusion of this program was distributed to producers on a regular basis. During the duration of the program there have been (see attachment) completed Environmental farm Plans on Grain farms in the Peace River Region.

The Wildlife Assessment Project has concluded its work defining the scope of the wildlife problem. Conclusions drawn from this study will shape the formation of a wildlife damage compensation program as well as hunting management strategies for this area.

The Pesticide Container Collection Program has removed a tremendous amount of waste from the environment and continues to be very popular with farmers. New collection dates are being proposed for this season.

Summary:

The conclusion of the current Agriculture Policy Framework has posed a challenge for the ongoing work of the EFP program. Our representatives have assisted in securing funding and ensuring the smooth transition to the new APF. Wildlife issues continue, but our study can provide a guide to solutions.

Attachments:

Financial Actual vs. Budget summary \$10,014.58 vs. \$11,076.00
"In kind" listing