

## **Report prepared for Peace River Agriculture Development Fund**

**Title of Project:** Wildlife Management & Environmental Stewardship Awareness for BC Grain Producer's

**Report Title:** Final Report

**Covering Period:** April 1, 2006 – March 31, 2007

**Organization(s):** BC Grain Producers Association.

**Contact Person:** Irmi Critcher, Chair, Robert Vander Linden, Edmund Rath

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### **Objective:**

The objective of this project was to have representation on committees and working groups actively seeking solutions to the environmental issues grain farmers are facing and to create environmental awareness among producer and communicate initiatives and the availability of on farm stewardship programs back to farmers

### **Description of Activities:**

Irmi Critcher, President 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 has and 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 BCGP A 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.

### **Enhanced EFP delivery:**

Actions undertaken to increase EFP activity over the remaining months of the program have been reported. One feedback concern was the level of cost share funding is not sufficient to tip the balance for a number of producers. This has been communicated back to the federal EFP steering committee—we have no new direction to date on this issue. We have had discussions around incentives for producers who complete the EFP and have agreed that there should be recognition. Details are being worked out.

The BC Grain Producers Association has initiated a study to determine the wildlife impacts on Peace River grain farms. We have received funding from the Ministry of Environment, AEPI, Ducks Unlimited, BCGIDC and administrative support from MAL, to create a damage hotspot map, where wildlife impacts are severe also we are trying to determine the value of economic impact on our farms and hope to convince the province to respond through compensation programs. We have also investigated the programs currently in place in other provinces and are convinced that an existing program could be modified to make it suitable for Peace River grain farms. We have also investigated the programs currently in place in other provinces and will work together with government agencies to provide solutions.

### **Wildlife Damage Assessment Project**

We are heading into year 2 of our Wildlife damage assessment project, getting funding for the project hasn't been an issue as we have been able to partner with multiple resources (MOE,BCAC,MAL,DU), to work towards the betterment of wildlife Management practices for all concerned.

The initial project was spurred by the "Excreta in grain" situation in the fall of 2005, however in 2006 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 damages occur, get a handle on what it is costing us and take these figures to the Provincial Government to come up with solutions, one of them being a wildlife damage compensation program similar to the one they already have in Alberta. We are assessing the damages for a second season so we can substantiate the numbers and are working together with the Ministry of Environment on wildlife reduction solutions, one of them being the Hunter Management program, which demonstrates a totally new concept. We also have indicated to our Ag Minister & Minister of Environment on numerous occasions that we need a compensation program for the grain sector, however at present I have no indication if this is going to happen.

Last March there have been some changes announced to the hunting regulations mainly the antlerless elk season; there also have been attempts to quantify the numbers of wild ungulates in the Peace region. These are important steps as there are many stakeholders having very differentiating views on how this should be handled. So we keep working away at it and hopefully we will be able to influence the decision makers so wildlife policies reflect the interests of the Ag sector. We will continue to communicate back to our producers the importance of partnerships in these new initiatives

### **Peace River Enfranchisement Pilot (PREP):**

The Peace River Enfranchisement Pilot (PREP) will help government and the various sectors within the Peace to establish and manage towards a social carrying capacity for wildlife on the private land base. The overarching 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/](http://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, environmental regulatory requirements, as well as Environmentally friendly best Management practises.

**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 could you please find proper website .

**Accomplishments:**

BC Grain Producers continues to lead the delivery of Environmental Farm Plans in the BC Peace River. We are a commodity based EFP delivery group with funding secured until March 2008. We have contracted a provincially approved Planning Advisors to implement the EFP program. Ministry of Environment has committed to funding a student position to help with the assessment work of the planning advisor with an additional \$15,000. The planner has proved EFP workshops to the directors of the BC Grain Producers and to the Grain Producers in the BC Peace Region. The Steering Committee continues to provide direction and assist the Planning Advisor on a regular basis. The Wildlife assessment project continues to work towards defining the scope of the wildlife problem.

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**The Pesticide Container Collection Program** has removed a tremendous amount of waste from the environment and continues to be very popular with farmers.

**Summary:**

The current framework for the EFP-delivery will expire in March of 2008 and consultations are under way to make recommendations for a new era of EFP's. This mean that in order to utilize the funding available in this program **producers must apply by October 2008** for any projects they wish to get funded through this program. The EFP program still has money available for projects such as GPS, Autosteer and other farm improvements. The BC Grain Producers continue to be pro-active and maintain strong presence on these committees as this provides us the opportunity to identify potential problems and to address them before they become a real problem.

**Attachments:**

Financial Actual vs. Budget summary

“In kind” listing

Information Bulletin (March 16, 2007)

Press Release (March 29, 2007)

Peace River Wildlife Damage Compensation Pilot Project Work Plan Update

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## INFORMATION BULLETIN

For Immediate Release  
2007ENV0023-000270  
March 16, 2007

Ministry of Environment

### **OPEN SEASON FOR ANTLERLESS ELK DECLARED IN PEACE REGION**

**FORT ST. JOHN – The Ministry of Environment will immediately implement an open season for antlerless elk in British Columbia’s Peace region to help address the ongoing issue of wildlife/agriculture conflicts.**

The open season applies to Management Units 7-20, 7-21, 7-32 to 7-35, 7-44 to 7-46 and 7-58 on private property and Crown land within 1,000 metres of private property.

This open season starts immediately and runs until March 31, 2007 or until 72 hours after the regional manager informs the public that the season will be closed, whichever occurs first.

Hunters must report their kill within 48 hours to the Fort St. John regional office by phone (250 787-3411) or in person. The date and location of the kill must be reported.

This special opening, which was authorized under the Wildlife Act, has a separate one-elk limit in addition to the normal antlerless elk limit. Hunters may use any uncanceled elk tags from the fall 2006 hunting season or purchase new tags.

The Conservation Officer Service encourages the public to Report All Poachers and Polluters (RAPP) by calling the 24-hour hotline toll-free at 1-877-952-7277 (RAPP), #7277 on the TELUS Mobility Network, or by visiting the RAPP website at [www.rapp.bc.ca](http://www.rapp.bc.ca).

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Media      Andy Ackerman  
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              Stewardship  
              Peace Region  
              250 787-3411

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Press Release March 29, 2007 Peace River Regional District

Peace River Regional District Chair, Karen Goodings, and Vice-Chair, Tim Caton, accompanied by Irmi Critcher, President of the BC Grain Producers Assoc, Rick Kantz, President of the Peace River Forage Assoc., with Julie Robinson providing technical support, traveled to Victoria to meet with Provincial Minister of Environment, Barry Penner and Minister of Agriculture, Pat Bell to discuss the ongoing crisis created by the drought and ungulates destroying the scarce hay supplies. Joining the meeting in support of the local producers were Minister Richard Neufeld and MLA Blair Lekstrom.

“Our intent was to impress on Minister Bell that the present programs of production insurance, forage insurance and CAIS fall far short of being sufficient to cover the losses in this area” stated Chair Goodings. “For the Province to continue to rely solely on these programs is simply turning their back on the agriculture sector in the Northeast.”

Tim Caton stated that “Minister Penner is receptive to ongoing dialogue, in the near future, on the reduction of the ungulate populations that have cost our producers hundreds of thousands of dollars this winter. We recognize that this winter has been tough on the ungulates as well.”

All were appreciative of the support shown by the two local MLA's.

Irmi Critcher stated that “As the President of the BC grain producers it is important for the Minister to understand that the current risk management programs don't work. It is a bit discouraging that our own Ag Minister showed little understanding as to the compounding issues affecting our regions farmers and that a great deal of our energy goes towards convincing him to the seriousness of the situation”.

“The Forage association has spent our time and energy documenting the evidence of damages” states Rick Kantz “ We expect Minister Bell to act on our behalf and to focus on the future of agriculture. If agriculture is to survive he should dialogue with young producers, such as myself, who are seriously involved in the business of producing food.”

## Peace River Wildlife Damage Compensation Pilot Project Work Plan Update

### Identified landholders and made contact with them

- Completed June 2006,
- Selected 9 producers and monitored and additional 2 producers fields (Critcher, Rath, Wuthrich, Baxter, Hill, Miller, Piper, South Peace Hutterite Colony, Bickford)

### Developed sampling Methodology

- Detailed and spot loss grain loss assessment
  - 5 crop types were monitored (Wheat, Canola, Barley, Oats, & Peas)
  - Exclosures were put out in 2 fields for all crop types, before and during crop emergence
  - 30 fields were monitored throughout the growing season and evaluated for wildlife damage prior to harvest, one in predetermined high risk area and one in lower risk area. Information was collected on:
    - Growing season loss - vegetation and seed removal
    - Growing season loss of vegetation by trampling
    - Crop loss to after swathing before combining but loss was minimal due to majority of straight cut combining this year
  - Detailed information collection was minimized after Alberta crop inspection protocol was followed.
  - Spot loss assessments were completed on all 30 fields and detailed assessments and only 5 fields (each crop type)
- Feces contamination assessment
  - This harvest season there was minimal feces contamination
  - 5 crops with swaths laying in high damaged areas were walked but very minimal feces detected. Straight cutting reduced the feces impact for 2006 harvest

### Developed Wildlife Survey

- Wildlife Survey created and distributed to members
- Over 30 replies from producers.
  - Over 95% of producers who responded allowed hunters and experienced intolerable levels of wildlife damage in crops in 2005
  - Compiled data to be added to final report

### Responded to spot losses during the season

- Collected area of damage, percent of damage levels as per Alberta Crop Inspection protocol

### Analyze results

- Working on final report compiling data and economics

### Compile reports and deliver presentation

- Presentations have been given on data collected from summer 2006 to local Regional Wildlife Board, BCGPA group, and other interested groups