

Peace River Agriculture Strategic Planning Society

Title of Project: Peace River Prospects - Agriculture in the BC Peace

Quarterly Report

April 1, 03 to June 15, 03

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Please note the highlighted areas

Immediate Objectives:

1. To make sure that stories of a more technical nature are submitted to the Northern Horizon, whereas a mix of stories and photos are suitable for the two daily newspapers.
2. To ensure a good cross section of material is provided to the dailies, including four or five briefs.
3. Conduct a phone campaign to request information and request long term support with the objective of PRASPS becoming a marketing tool for commodity groups to use for their promotional needs.
4. Continue to work with the Alaska Highway News to increase and enhance their interest in covering and sponsoring the agriculture sector.
5. Selectively submit material to other agriculture and regional newspapers.
6. To continue providing Peace Prospects as both a marketing and information source for the agriculture & rural sectors
7. **To seek new funding to prolong the project beyond April 1, 2004.**

Accomplishments:

- This project began in 1999 as a pilot project. **We are now entering the fourth year of this project.**
- Peace Prospects has one primary writer and a co-ordinator.
- The existence of Peace Prospects in the Northern Horizon has prompted several groups to capitalize on the value of communicating their news and events to a large regional audience. We receive material from the Forage Association and Forage Seed Association, information from the PFRA, the North Peace 4-H clubs, the Peace Bison association and notice of special events from both agriculture ministry offices.
- Agriculture is a busy sector and there is no shortage of material.
- The Ministry of Agriculture clips all Peace agriculture stories and sends them to Victoria - very often PRASPS is supplying the only material about the agriculture sector.
- We continue to have a weekly presence in both the Alaska Highway News and the Peace River Block News that runs Friday and Thursday respectively. The Block News is interested in having as much material as we can send. **The Northerner (weekly paper in Fort St. John) has started distributing to rural communities again and they are carrying PRASPS material. A recent discussion with the Alaska Highway News has resulted in more space and customizing of the material they receive for ease of use.**

- Tracking the success of the project depends partly on specific feedback from 4-H, PROPA, Sheep producers, individuals, the Peace River Regional District, the Bison industry, the FSJ farmers market, cattlemen grain producers, pea producers, etc. The Northern Horizon says our contribution definitely enhances their newspaper resulting in more advertising. Increasingly people who have not used the paper are calling to post their special events and sales. Alaska Highway News reporters occasionally ask for contact information so they can cover the sector as well. **During a recent discussion with the Editor of the AHN it was confirmed that reporters don't necessarily understand agriculture issues and prefer us to provide headlines for the stories we submit. They don't have a lot of contacts of their own and due to time limitations this arrangement with PRASPS is working well for them.**

Tasks in Progress:

- The Northern Horizon continues to be published twice monthly – producing approximately 100 agriculture related stories during the project's 12 month cycle. The Alaska Highway News still publishes its largest paper on Fridays and we publish in the Thursday edition of the Block News. **An offer has been made to Alberta papers, the Fairview Post, Peace River Gazette, etc. There have been no takers, so this information could be sent as a regular practice, however tracking whether it gets printed is time consuming and we need to remember those are local regional, daily or weekly papers. As well the two dailies we are working with now prefer to get as close to original material as possible – they are sharing with the Northerner and the Northern Horizon. It might be best to approach the Chetwynd Echo and leave it as that.**
- Recognizing that the daily papers are reaching the urban market more than rural we are attempting to provide stories that explain about issues affecting food quality, access and price as well as where local meat and produce can be purchased.
- **It would be a good idea for various agriculture groups and associations to move away from expecting free coverage for their events and begin supporting the papers by buying advertising as much as they can. PRASPS will continue to post events for the sector.** News does not automatically follow the purchase of an ad however it creates good will and reporters do look for material to cover. The papers are no longer willing to allow us to post paying events on the Agriculture page. Groups must pay and can get a non profit rate. We can still offer space in the Northern Horizon, however Mike Bailey does not want us promoting for profit agriculture events that we may feel are of interest to our readership.
- An active campaign to have groups to submit their information is underway – we are only hearing from the most active groups and feel there are many groups who could use marketing assistance in getting maximum participation for their events and meetings. It is important for groups to understand the time lapse between deadlines and when their event is scheduled; there are groups whose events might have been better subscribed with more advance promotion.
- **We believe Peace Prospects is a useful tool and we are probably the only vehicle that specifically devotes itself to favourable coverage for the agriculture sector in North-eastern BC, not to mention enjoying a position of trust in the industry. Increasingly there are fewer resources available through the Ministry for promoting events, ideas and information. PRASPS must find other sources of income in order to continue beyond the next funding year. The board has**

