



2019-2021

Agricultural Services Business Plan



2019-2021

1.0 Executive Summary

Situation statement

Yellowhead County is located approximately 94 km west of Edmonton, Alberta. Our western boundary is located just a few short kilometers east of Jasper National Park's boundary. Yellowhead County is considered to be a part of the North West Region of the province.

Surrounding the Towns of Edson and Hinton, Yellowhead County is an economically strong region with immense opportunities in petroleum, mining, forestry, agriculture and tourism industries. The county has a land area of over 22,000 km² (7,012,349 Acres or 2,837,797 hectares).

There are approximately 10,990 residents who call this area home; those living in the hamlets of Evansburg, Wildwood, Robb, Marlboro, Cadomin, Peers, Brule, and Niton Junction; and those who live in the rural areas of the County.

Typical farming practices in Yellowhead County include cereal, oilseed, and hay. Other predominant agricultural practices include; beef, horses and sheep. Yellowhead County is also home to a number of tree nurseries and greenhouses.

Yellowhead County has 2284.1 km of roads. Yellowhead County has Highway 16 running through it from Evansburg to the Jasper Park border. CN's main rail line also runs through the entire County east to west, south to Cadomin and north to Grande Cache.

ASB Program History & Continuity

Yellowhead County Agricultural Service Board (ASB) was established in November of 1959 as I.D #14. I.D # 14 became M.D #94 in 1994 and then Yellowhead County in 1998. The Agricultural Service Board (ASB) operates under the authority of the Agricultural Service Board Act and as such has powers delegated to it by the Provincial Government for enforcement of the following Acts; Weed Control Act, Soil Conservation Act, Agricultural Pests Act and the Animal health Act. Yellowhead County ASB is represented by two County Councilors and three "farmers' at large". Council appoints all members in staggering terms to ensure continuity.

Yellowhead County has many long standing programs and partnerships that still exist today they include;

- Weed Inspection Program
- Roadside Vegetation Management Program
- Pest Control Program
- ASB Bursary Program (2008)

- Farmers Appreciation Breakfast (1985)
- Extension- long history with Yellowhead County approximately 20 extension events a year are held

Since the 2010 Yellowhead County has started the following programs;

- Fence line Program
- Agricultural Plastics Recycling Program
- Pond Days – targets school age children on the importance of riparian areas, aquatic life etc
- Farm Safety- Targets junior high students on the importance of farm safety.
- Home Composter Program
- Mountain Pine Beetle Program
- CHAP (Custom Herbicide Application Program)Program

Yellowhead County partnerships that apply for funding from the ASB to allow them to promote agriculture sustainability and/or rural living include;

- West Central Forage Association (WCFA)
- Stewardship Alliance for Conservation Agriculture (SACA)-formed in 2010 formally West Central Conservation Group formed in 2002
- 4-H groups throughout the County
- Rural Woman's Conference
- Alberta Farm Safety Centre
- Alberta Invasive Species Council (AISC)
- Lobstick Garden Club
- Agricultural Societies

2.0 Mission & Vision

Vision

Yellowhead County: Recognized as a place of choice for those who want to be where great things happen.

ASB: Yellowhead County shall have a progressive, sustainable and environmentally responsible agricultural industry.

Mission

Yellowhead County: Building a better community for present and future generations.

ASB: Encourage good stewardship of the environment while promoting agriculture and a safe, healthy rural lifestyle.

3.0 Values

Honesty: We are sincere and truthful with our staff and residents.

Openness: We are visible and accessible to our residents. We are approachable and listen to the concerns and ideas of staff and the agricultural community.

Responsive: We act on suggestions and/or concerns of staff and residents. We reply to communications in a timely and respectful manner.

Knowledge: We maintain a high level of awareness of current information, facts and ideas on agricultural issues. We improve our knowledge through experience and education.

Accuracy: We avoid errors and are precise in our work.

Compassion: We understand the feelings and perceptions of others in our dealings with them.

4.0 Yellowhead County Council

Mayor Jim Eglinski

Division 1 – Sandra Cherniawsky

Division 2 – Anthony Giezen

Division 3 – Penny Lowe

Division 4 – David Russell

Division 5 – Shawn Berry

Division 6 – Wade Williams

Division 7 – Dawn Mitchell

Division 8 – Lavone Olsen

5.0 Yellowhead County Agricultural Service Board

Is made up of all member of Yellowhead County Council

6.0 Yellowhead County Agricultural Service Staff

Jennifer Benson, Agricultural Services Supervisor

Melissa Marquis, Agricultural Services Coordinator

Patricia O'Neil, Agricultural Services Coordinator

Scott Walker, Agricultural Services Laborer
Vegetation Management Technician (2 Seasonal)
Weed Inspectors (5 seasonal)
Senior Weed / Pest Inspector
Agricultural Laborers (5Seasonal)
Tracy Parker, Administrative Support
Christopher Read, Director of Community Services

7.0 Opportunities and Challenges

A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis was conducted for Agricultural Services with the Yellowhead County Agricultural Service Board (ASB) to help identify the opportunities and challenges that Agricultural Services Department faces over the next few years. This exercise formed the content of this plan.

Strengths- often internal, what we are doing that gives the program strength, staff, equipment, facilities, council support/ financial, strong legislation.

- Well trained permanent and seasonal staff
- Strong Council support for ASB
- Strong financial support from Council
- Well maintained equipment
- Strong well established and recognized programs and extension
- Formal Integrated Vegetation Management Plan
- Strong enabling Legislation
- Good communication exists between Agricultural Staff and residents
- School programs
- Working internal relationships with Infrastructure, Planning and Parks & Rec
- Strong partnerships with outside organizations
- Ability to be flexible
- Strong Rural Communities
- Grant Programs

Weaknesses- Weaknesses represent both opportunity and a threat depending on the organizational response and events that occur in the external environment. In general, weaknesses are driven by demographics, technology, financial and human resource demands that combine to influence effective and efficient service delivery.

- Difficulty covering our huge land area; inspection program, roadside program, extension, farm calls
- Ratepayer reluctance to appreciate complexity of vegetation management
- Limited herbicide options for acreage owners- training for acreage owners allowing them to access herbicide that currently exists on market
- Expanded roadsides- current equipment is unable to reach or cover the area

-
- Finding qualified summer staff
- Weevil Program

Opportunities- opportunities this organization has to strengthen ASB programs.

- Technology- Gap between Social media and Yellowhead County. Unable to connect with producers effectively, through a medium they expect.
- Agricultural producers wanting to get up-to-date and accurate information- Social Media and website design
- More non-agricultural ratepayers becoming concerned with invasive plants and habitat loss
- Willingness and ability of staff to provide in-service and extension support
- Ratepayer influence on neighbors to implement weed management plans
- Strong rural communities
- Hi-ways/Transportation working well with County to control weed problems
- New herbicide/pesticide technology
- Acreage owners- eager to learn & support, early adaptors to new ideas
- Small operators- niche/ specialty stuff
- Area wide gravel pit inspection program- partner with neighbors, decreasing the possible spread of invasive species ie. Brazeau, Parkland, ESRD, private pits in conjunction with Transportation (2019)
-
- Yellowhead Local Food Initiative- collaboration between Yellowhead County and Community Futures West Yellowhead.

Threats- Threats to the organizations wellbeing.

- Misinformation- increased internet usage and social media. Increased concern about pesticides. Negative view or lack of understanding about the AG industry
- Extension- hard to find topics that interest everyone- learning styles have changed
- Small farms having difficulty surviving
- Increased off road vehicle/horse traffic, industry leading to increased weed issues in Green zone Recreation users on west end- environmental damages – introduction of weed species or the spread of infestations
- Partially transient communities not getting involved.
- Agricultural Pests (Clubroot) imposing on YC residents
- MPB significant problem- residents requiring assistance, provincial government grant dependent. Dead trees causing significant concern in regards to fire threats and threats to existing structures because of dead trees.
- Legislation- requirements to do enforcement.
- CN- Not cooperative

- Absentee landowners/renters
- Ageing landowner population
- Located along major transportation corridors Hiway 16 and CN
- Extensive riparian areas-
- ESRD not supporting Orange Hawkweed eradication on Prov. Lands. Lack of enforcement of Prov. Lands, random camping, ATV/UTV use, weed infestations/introductions

8.0 Looking Ahead: Goals for the next three years.

Yellowhead County, Agricultural Services Department has four primary goals. These goals include providing effective and sustainable pest and weed control practices. To provide an increased awareness to Yellowhead County residents regarding soils and water conservation, sustainable practices while promoting healthy rural living.

Goals:

1. To provide effective and sustainable weed control on public and private lands.
2. To promote effective pest control to reduce agricultural losses.
3. To promote soil and water conservation practices in our rural and agricultural communities.
4. To increase awareness of agricultural issues, enhance the economic wellbeing of the agricultural community and promote healthy rural living.

Goal One: To provide for effective and sustainable weed control on public and private lands.

Strategy #1	Activities	Timeline
Provide weed control on County owned lands and road allowances.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Advertise for summer staff in local papers and external connections for hiring in the spring of every year. ii. Purchase required chemical for municipal weed control iii. Purchase biological control for sensitive areas iv. Herbicide is applied to areas mechanically brushed by infrastructure v. Conduct training for all staff in safety and pesticide application and send staff to appropriate product training as required. 	January

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> vi. Species identification training /material to other County departments vii. Communicate municipal weed control plans through advertisements, news releases, workshops, , website and handouts viii. Provide a “No Spray Agreement” program and council residents on invasive species and control practices ix. Policy development and review. x. Install new upgrades to spray program when available xi. Develop and equipment replacement schedule xii. 	2018/2019 2018 approved by Council not implemented
Resources	Measurable Outcome(s)	
2 spray trucks equipped with GPS and operated by qualified personnel. 3 UTV spray units 7AIMS inspection tablets 3 FTE applicators 1 FTE laborer 2 PTE applicator 5PTE laborers Safety equipment & clothing Professional Vegetation Management Association (PVMA) membership (formally IVMAA - Industrial Vegetation Mangt Association of Alberta.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. All referrals for weeds on municipal lands have an action response. ii. Infrastructure reports improved control of mechanically brushed sites. iii. An increase in fence line participants iv. Maintaining a 1 in 3 year rotation v. Increased internal awareness of invasive species vi. Decrease in complaints vii. Visually appreciated control over infestations on roadsides and properties. As such YC now truly operates a spot spray program. viii. County owned properties are included in herbicide/ mowing rotation. 	2018/2019

Well trained FT staff Fleet trucks Weed Inspection software Weed Inspection reports Weed identification brochures Information packages and letters Website Development AISC Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii. Decrease in the amount of complaints by concerned citizens re: weed control problems. iii. Increase in calls requesting contractor services or herbicide retail locations iv. Compliance to our weed control requests 	
---	---	--

Goal Two: To promote effective pest control to reduce agricultural losses.

Strategy #1	Activities	
To provide information to producers and stakeholders regarding agricultural pests and effective pest control and/or management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Clubroot pamphlets available for distribution including; Best Management Practices(BMP) for Canola growers pamphlets, cleaning practices ii. Pest information available for distribution to residents. iii. Agricultural Pests being highlighted in Yellowhead County New Releases, Ads and in our YC Newsletter. iv. Clubroot will be inspected every year as per Agricultural Pests Act. v. Conduct grasshopper counts for provincial grasshopper survey vi. Increase fusarium and blackleg inspections as per Agricultural Pest Act with a minimum of 10 inspections annually per disease. vii. Complete inspections by referral of insect damage on private and public lands to assist with identification and recommend control measures (Both Ag and horticulture) viii. Maintain and monitor insect traps as requested ix. Provide information on agricultural insect pests through workshops, website, news releases and/or 	<p>Annually</p> <p>annually</p>

	<p>newsletter as indicated by pest populations in previous year.</p> <p>x. Participate in the Ab AG Crop Reporting</p> <p>xi. Policy development and review.</p> <p>xii.</p>	
Resources	Measurable Outcome(s)	
<p>Well trained FT staff</p> <p>New seasonal pest inspector position 2016</p> <p>Advertising</p> <p>Information packages and information letters</p> <p>Website Development</p> <p>Facility rentals</p>	<p>i. Increase in number of producers/residents requesting information re: agricultural pests</p> <p>ii. Number of residents attending our information sessions and/or requesting information from the ASB office.</p> <p>iii. Number of programs/news releases on pest control provided for the public</p> <p>iv. Increased number of tree health concerns. (MPB and drought effects on trees, herbicide effects on trees, disease and pests issues on trees)</p> <p>v. Increased amount of horticultural issues.</p> <p>vi. Producers giving positive feedback regarding our Clubroot mail out</p>	

Strategy #2	Activities	
<p>To provide coyote control services to producers experiencing predation</p>	<p>i. Ensure Agricultural Fieldman & one assistant holds a valid Form 7 Permit for Yellowhead County under the Agricultural Pests Act</p> <p>ii. Review and maintain toxicant security</p> <p>iii. Provide education on predator prevention, control techniques, and management strategies to all applicants</p> <p>iv. Offer coyote control solutions to Yellowhead County residents</p> <p>v. Offer predator extension</p> <p>vi. Update and maintain the beaver or predator control contractor list</p>	<p>Annually</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> vii. Participate in Provincial Wild Boar at Large Bounty Program, including fencing inspections viii. Policy development and review. 	2019-2020 2019
Resources	Measurable Outcome(s)	
Staff Form 7 permit Toxicant Secure storage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Reduced reports of predator related losses ii. Decreased number of toxicant requests iii. Increased amount of Wild boar sightings- increased awareness of program 	

Goal Three: To promote soil, water conservation and general Best Management Practices (BMP) in our rural and agricultural communities.

Strategy #1	Activities	
To provide extension services to producers and stakeholders to promote soil and water conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Coordinate with SACA one workshop/demonstration on riparian protection/development, weed control, manure management, alternative watering, etc. ii. Deliver Water Well Management workshops. iii. Submit news releases and/or newsletter articles to promote conservation activities iv. Provide referrals for testing options to assist landowners with soil sampling v. Emphasize soil management and fertility in our workshops vi. Chip Lake Project with SACA vii. Shinning Bank Lake Project viii. Bear Lake Project ix. Composting program x. Provide Spring Seedling Program xi. Facilitate shelterbelt planning and maintenance workshop for residence 	<p>Annually</p> <p>COMPLETED</p> <p>COMPLETED in 2019 2022</p> <p>2016</p>

	xii. Agricultural Plastics Recycling Program	
Resources	Measurable Outcome(s)	
Well trained FT staff Advertising Facility rentals Agriculture specialists AE specialists	i. Number of producers attending information sessions ii. Feedback and adoption of Best Management Practices iii. Adoption of a water well management plans by residents iv. Number of people requesting more information sessions on applicable topics. v. Increased number of landowners participating in composting program, adding water barrels to increase water conservation on properties including hamlets	

Strategy #2	Activities	
Link with local, regional, provincial and federal partners to provide conservation programs.	i. Provide support to the Environmental Farm Plan through grant funding to SACA, advertising and technical assistance ii. Work with and support WCFA and SACA through grant funding to deliver forage or conservation extension and forage demonstration plots iii. Utilize provincial and federal resource agencies to deliver programs iv. Shining Bank Project v. Agricultural Plastics Recycling Program- Clean farms, Recycling Council of Alberta, Edson District Recycling Society	
Resources	Measurable Outcome(s)	
Well trained FT staff Partnering agencies Advertising Facility rentals	i. Numerous extension programs delivered with support from partners ii. Partners report a good working relationship with staff	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> iii. Residents attending Shelterbelt and Pruning Workshops iv. Increased amount of producers participating in Ag Plastics recycling Program 	
--	--	--

Goal Four: To increase awareness of animal health issues and provide support for these issues to producers and stakeholders.

Strategy #1	Activities	
To provide information to producers and stakeholders regarding animal health issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Provide information on animal health issues, disease prevention and Livestock Emergency Response Plan. ii. Animal health issues being highlighted in Yellowhead County News releases, Ads and in YC newsletter. iii. Update and review Livestock Emergency Response Plan. iv. Work with Emergency Services to ensure Agricultural Emergencies are considered as part of the municipalities Emergency Response Plan. v. 	<p>Annually</p> <p>annually</p> <p>2020</p>
Resources	Measurable Outcome(s)	
<p>Council</p> <p>Alberta Agriculture & Forestry</p> <p>Provincial Veterinarian</p> <p>Local Veterinarians</p> <p>Association of Alberta Agricultural Fieldmen (AAAF)</p> <p>Alberta Environment</p> <p>Contracted speakers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Number of producers attending information sessions. ii. Feedback and adaptation of emergency response preparedness by YC staff. iii. Feedback and adaptation of emergency response preparedness by producers. iv. Residents are using social media to stay informed about programs, services and events. 	

Goal Five: To increase awareness of agricultural issues, enhance the economic wellbeing of the agricultural community and promote healthy rural living.

Strategy #1	Activities	
To provide staff and board members access to learning opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Board members and AF will attend the Provincial ASB Conference ii. Board members and at least one staff member will attend the Regional ASB meetings iii. The Agricultural Fieldman and the two Agricultural Services Coordinators will be active members of the Alberta Association of Agricultural Fieldman iv. Staff will participate in regional/provincial information sharing and training programs v. 	Ongoing
Resources	Measurable Outcome(s)	
Council Alberta Agriculture & Forestry Association of Alberta Agricultural Fieldmen (AAAF) Alberta Environment Lakeland College University of Alberta Olds College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Staff and board members report that they have increased their knowledge of agricultural issues. ii. Permanent and seasonal staff fully trained and able to satisfy work requirements iii. Residents are using social media to stay informed about programs, services and events. 	
Strategy # 2	Activities	
To provide access for landowner learning opportunities To disseminate information on agricultural issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Work with WCFA on long term plots to be located on Yellowhead County's East Services Center property to increase their knowledge of forage crops and species variety ii. Extension events iii. Policy development and review iv. Update and maintain resource library of agricultural publications and resource materials 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> v. Update agricultural information on website vi. Deliver informational programs on new/revised resources directed at agricultural producers, eg., landowners rights workshops, farm safety, weed and agricultural pest information sessions, horse health workshops, water well workshops, manure management, MPB information sessions, drought and waste water/septic system workshops and gardening etc. vii. Deliver the Classroom Agriculture Program (CAP) as requested together with SACA viii. Deliver Farm Safety Program to jr. high students in the area 	
--	--	--

Resources	Measurable Outcome(s)	
Resource information Staff Budget Facility rentals Local schools Contracted speakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Communication plan in place ii. County residents indicate they are aware of agriculture and environmental practices. iii. Residents are aware of programs, services and events offered by the County 	
Strategy #4	Activities	
To provide resources to assist producers enhance their economic viability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Deliver workshops focused on agricultural innovation and/or diversification e.g. Landowners rights workshops, farm safety, weed and agricultural pest information sessions, horse health workshops, water well workshops, manure management, MPB information sessions, drought and waste water/septic system workshops, gardening etc. crop diversification on traditional no-crop areas. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii. Coordinate and initiate Agri-Tourism initiatives iii. Provide funding to groups that increase awareness iv. Equipment assessments and lifecycle plan v. Rental Policy development and review in house pilot program 	
Resources	Measurable Outcome(s)	
Well trained FT staff Rental equipment Rental Agents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. County equipment meets needs of the community ii. County equipment is operational and safe 	

Strategy #5	Activities	
Encourage resident retention and pride in safe rural living	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Host Annual Farmer's Appreciation Breakfast ii. Conduct the Annual County Pride Contest, including categories for farms, acreages and hamlets iii. Continue to provide gardening workshops, tree health and pruning workshops iv. Promote the white spruce as the County tree and the bunchberry as the County flower in promotional material v. Provide grant support to groups promoting agriculture and rural living Rural Woman's Conference, WCFA, SACA, Lobstick Gardening Club and 4-H Clubs, Agricultural Societies vi. Centennial Farm Family Award vii. Two \$500 bursaries given to students in Yellowhead County pursuing an education in Agricultural or Environmental Sciences. viii. Policy review – Agricultural Bursaries 	

	ix. Policy review – Farm Family Centennial	ONGOING ONGOING
Resources	Measurable Outcome(s)	
Staff Internal partnerships Facility rentals Contracted speakers	i. Interest in Annual County Pride Contest & tour ii. Attendance at the Farmers Appreciation Breakfast iii. Grant recipients report grants have assisted in promotional activities	

9.0 Summary

Agricultural Services Department is an integral part of the municipality. It serves the agricultural and the environmental needs of residents within its borders. Providing and promoting effective, sustainable practices in agricultural, while enhancing our communities and promoting healthy rural living.