

December 23, 1999

Councillors for the County of St. Paul #19
c/o Mr. Bob Krawchuck, Municipal Administrator
5015-49 Avenue
St. Paul, Alberta T0A 3A4

Dear Sirs:

Requesting your support and Agriculture Fieldman staff participation in the following community based action plan.

I would like to share with you the following riparian awareness and education initiative that we plan to start in northern Alberta in the year 2000 . This initiative is a community based action plan that focuses on the care and wise use of riparian areas, those green zones and patches found along side lakes, sloughs, creeks, rivers, and other associated depressions. Riparian areas are critical areas that help the overall watershed provide a sustainable water supply (quantity and quality) to Albertans and other downstream users. Being a community based action plan it is important to the success of this initiative that the local governments and staff are involved as core and consultative members of our working group.

Baseline research indicates that a significant number of Alberta's riparian areas may not be functioning properly or are healthy at risk (Cows and Fish, 1999). A group of govt and non-govt agencies (Public Lands Division/AAFRD, Natural Resources Service/EP, Cows and Fish Program, Alberta Conservation Association, Alberta Environment Sustainable Agriculture, PFRA, Riparian Wetland Research Program, Canada-Agriculture Beef Industry Fund, and other partners) plan to work with northern Alberta communities to learn together, grow, and help each other ensure that riparian areas are healthy and functioning properly. Achieving this vision, riparian areas can continue to provide sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits and values.

A southern Alberta group(partners similar to those found above) have been successfully implementing a riparian awareness and education program that deals with creeks and rivers.

Northern Alberta Riparian Awareness and Education Initiative

Building upon the results and experiences from the southern Alberta group, the northern Alberta group plan to develop and implement a northern Alberta riparian awareness and education initiative.

The major purpose and focus of the northern Alberta group will be to work with northern Alberta communities to increase our collective awareness and education, and develop management tools that primarily deals with the care and wise use of "standing water" riparian areas, those wetland areas that are found around lakes, sloughs, potholes, and other associated depressions. Farmers and cottagers are the two major community stakeholders we would like to work with, as well as other interested stakeholders (for example real estate agencies).

Our northern group plans to find three selected riparian areas in the NE Region, Alberta to serve as a base from which we can work with community stakeholders and carry out the necessary research, learning, and the development of management tools. From these three centers, our northern group will transfer the new knowledge and tools, and help other interested communities in northern Alberta. In time, we feel that this process will provide a cost effective awareness and education program that can reach many people and communities in northern Alberta. The outcome of this approach should reduce the need for regulatory and enforcement options.

One of the proposed riparian areas is Vincent Lake, located about 10 miles north of St. Paul. This lake provides many benefits to local and city recreation users such as cottage development , recreation, and sport fishery. Vincent Lake is also important to provide a local supply of drinking water, breeding habitat for pike, walleye, and perch, and wildlife habitat. Although there is no livestock grazing that takes place on Vincent Lake's riparian areas, agriculture use from " Malaig Beach" Creek that feeds into the north end of Vincent Lake and the surrounding adjacent uplands do impact the proper functioning of the Vincent Lake watershed. For example, farming practices and run-off. During high water level years, the waters from Vincent Lake drain into Atimoswe Creek (Dogrump Creek) and then into the North Saskatchewan River.

Our group plans in March, 2000 to hold in St. Paul a focus group meeting(s) with the community stakeholders of Vincent Lake. The purpose of this meeting is to exchange information about the importance of lake shorelines to the overall health of the watershed and sustainable agriculture and recreation use. The results of the focus group will hopefully provide the necessary linkages to work with interested cottage and agriculture users of the Vincent Lake watershed. These developed interested individuals and/or groups will learn with us as we develop the new research, knowledge, and tools.

On behalf of the Vincent Lake Working Group, I would ask the County of St. Paul for the following assistance:

1. Opportunity to discuss with you about this community based action plan.
2. Request your support for this initiative.
3. Request your co-sponsorship of the proposed March, 2000 focus group information meeting with the Vincent Lake stakeholders, ie. cottagers, farmers, and other interested stakeholders (for example real estate agencies).

4. Participation of Dennis Bergheim, Larry Lamothe, and Ken Yettaw during the carrying out of this initiative.

5. Request per attached letter, contact information for your cottage rate payers that live on Vincent Lake, Garner Lake, Lac Sante Lake, Laurier Lake, and Upper Mann Lake. See attached request letter. The purpose of this information is to survey the cottagers of these lakes to obtain their understanding and values. In this way our working group will be able to better understand the cottager's view, and collectively work with cottagers to develop solutions that link the need for properly functioning riparian areas and sustainable recreation use and enjoyment, and development. I will ensure the contact information is destroyed following its use, and no personal contact information will be made public. We are only interested in finding out a group viewpoint.

Attached are two publications called "Caring For The Green Zone" and "Caring For Shoreline Properties" that provide additional background information.

If you require any additional information, please call me call me at 780-645-6336.

Gerry Ehlert, Manager
Provincial Grazing Reserves, North-East Region

Copy to Ron Ball