



2020 AGM Summary

On February 26 the Alberta Grazing Leaseholders Association (AGLA) held their Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Lethbridge. The AGM creates an important link between the membership and the board. It allows AGLA to inform our members about the activities of the AGLA and provides an open forum to hear the concerns from members.

AGLA engagement with Alberta Environment and Parks

The meeting opened with a conference call with Alberta Environment and Parks Deputy Minister Bev Yee on the newly updated disposition contract recently released by the government. The new disposition contract was sent out to around 700 leaseholders without any industry consultation or notice in January. The contents of the disposition and the changes to the previous contract were highly concerning to leaseholders. Deputy Minister Yee stated that the new disposition contract was to streamline the process to address and reduce the current backlog in renewals and transfers. The intent was not to diminish the rights of leaseholders which are embedded in legislation. Lease renewals have been put on hold until the concerns with the new disposition contract have been addressed. The 700 disposition contracts that were sent out will be updated as required and the ones in the queue will remain in overholding tenancy. AGLA along with Western Stock Growers' Association have hired legal counsel and will submit the results of the legal review to government for their consideration to settle this issue. The concerns will be addressed at the next Alberta Grazing Disposition Holders Operational Committee meeting and we are looking forward to quick resolution of this.

AGLA Activities Update

Following the conference call, there was an update from AGLA Chairman Kyle Forbes on the group's activities over the past year. AGLA has been diligently working on promoting our industry and the role of the leaseholder in the responsible stewardship of grazing lease lands for public, ecological and economic benefits.

AGLA continues to support its leaseholder members by advocating on a number of issues; the suite of concerns regarding recreational access, the lag time for lease transfer and assignment paperwork to make its way through the department, the recognition of the property rights that are associated with a lease contract and the recognition of the work of the leaseholder through tenure for stewardship.

Rental Rate and Assignment Fee Modernization

In June 2014 the Department approached the industry to strike a committee to modernize the rental rate and assignment fee structure for grazing leases in Alberta. The final proposal, which was put

forward to government to navigate through the legislative process two years ago, represents so much work and dedication of all the industry organizations. This year the proposal was rolled out in Bill 16 in October and came into force in January 2020.

The new proposed calculation factors in the costs a leaseholder incurs to run a lease which was not in the previous formula nor factored into the frozen rate from the past 20-some years. The lease costs were determined by a province-wide lease cost survey conducted by MNP. The new proposal, over the long term, will represent no net revenue increase with government nor no net loss for leaseholders – this was an objective from the start.

It was agreed that assignment fees would be a set cost that reflects the administration costs of transferring the lease contract. When the bill was tabled, the cost of assignment fees was set at \$3150 as per a study from the government on the average fee for transfers with other dispositions within the department. For some leaseholders, this represents a significant increase in transfer fees and could be a barrier to commerce for them. AGLA will continue with discussions on this with the department.

Our website has copies of the proposal summary and FAQs for those who would like more information.

Extended Tenure for Exemplary Stewardship

The development of a tenure for stewardship initiative was started last year through the Grazing Disposition Holders Operational Committee (GDHOC). This committee serves as a very important line of communication with government to deal with operational and policy issues in the grazing lease system.

In terms of government programs, this one developed at the speed of light (relatively speaking). Alberta Environment and Parks Minister Jason Nixon announced in July that 20-year tenure will be granted to leaseholders who demonstrate exemplary stewardship. Starting 2019, rangeland agrologists conducting renewal inspections will be evaluating for eligibility for extended tenure, which will be automatically awarded at renewal. Leaseholders do not need to apply for this.

The tenure criteria audit process is composed of three main components:

- 1) Administrative Audit – ensuring the paperwork is submitted and basic responsibilities addressed
- 2) Environmental Audit – range/riparian health is properly managed, noxious and prohibited weeds concerns are addressed
- 3) Stewardship Audit – demonstrated application of the four principles of range management

The criteria for determination and the stewardship assessment documents can be found on our website.

Government representatives at our meeting reported that about 25% of 2019 lease renewal inspections qualified for extended tenure for stewardship and many more would qualify with minor tweaks.

Department backlog reduction initiative

For years AGLA has lobbied for the government to address the backlog of renewals and transfers to be processed through the department. In some cases, leaseholders are waiting up to four years for their renewal to go through. It was tabled as a resolution at our 2018 AGM to keep addressing this issue in our advocacy efforts as it represents a significant barrier to commerce.

Starting in January, the department has instituted a program to address and avoid future backlog of the processing of renewals and transfers of grazing leases. Mike Alexander from Alberta Environment and Parks updated the meeting. There has been great progress made on the backlog and it is expected this could be resolved in the next three months, provided the new disposition contract issue gets resolved in a timely manner.

Recreational Access

Recreational access has continued to be a point of potential conflict between leaseholders and recreational users with this past hunting season seeing record number of complaints from both the hunter side and the leaseholder side. As this issue is escalating, the Minister has asked the grazing groups to get together with the recreational groups to table some solutions.

AGLA and other grazing groups have met with Alberta Fish and Game Association for discussion. The issue is currently being addressed through the GDHOC where at the last meeting, solutions were characterized into three groups: education, liability and enforcement. These groups will continue to work together and also bring in other stakeholders to develop a solution to present to the department.

There is a great deal of misinformation out there in regards to what the leaseholder rights are when granting reasonable recreational access. When recreationalists are acting in contravention to the regulation, there are fines involved. Leaseholders are encouraged to call the Report-A-Poacher line and even submit a picture of the user's license plate. Even if the officer doesn't end up catching the perpetrator, data can be collected that more accurately reflects the scope of the problems for the leaseholder.

Grazing leases being designated as OECMs to meet Canada Target 1

Canada Target 1 is Canada's commitment to AICHI Target 11 – to conserve and protect the biodiversity of 17% of Canada's terrestrial ecosystems by 2020. Recently Canada has signed on to 25% by 2025 and 30% by 2030.

It has been suggested in order to meet these targets that grazing leases be designated as Other Effect Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs). The idea was floated to grazing lease stakeholder groups at a Grazing Disposition Holders Operational Committee meeting. And the idea was also presented at ABP AGM, which later became the subject of the article in the Western Producer.

AGLA has heavy concerns as to the increased oversight and regulation this brings to leaseholders but solid information is lacking. We have expressed our concerns to government and will continue to do so.

Grazing Disposition Holders Operational Committee

AGLA has been an active participant in the Grazing Disposition Holders Operational Committee (GDHOC). The membership of the committee includes AGLA, Alberta Beef Producers, Western Stock Growers Association, Northern Alberta Grazing Association, Central Alberta Grazing Association, Sustainable Canada, Special Areas, Rocky Mountain Forest Grazing Reserve Association and a number of government representatives.

Elections

The AGM is also the forum where the member representatives are elected to the board of directors. In November we were so happy to welcome Larry Gaultier, Bill Smith and Nick Villiger to the board. All three of these hail from northern Alberta with Larry and Bill representing Zone D and Nick serving as a director at large. In January, Brett Mattheissen joined as a representative from Zone C. At the AGM, this year's election resulted in welcoming new director Don Broomfield from Zone A. Kyle Forbes, Dan Gray, Perry Shwetz, Lee Fryberger, Regan Curry and Pat Rutledge were all re-elected to the board.

In the board meeting following the AGM, Kyle Forbes was re-elected as chairman, Dan Gray was re-elected as vice chairman and Darcy Wills was appointed as secretary / treasurer.

We are elated our board has expanded over the past couple of years with effective province-wide representation. This truly makes our organization stronger and able to effectively advocate on behalf of our members. The board is comprised of very capable individuals who are committed to the continual effort it takes to maintain and improve the grazing lease system.

There are still some vacancies in the board – two directorships in Zone A1 and two directorships in Zone B.

Resolutions

The AGM is the opportunity for any members to bring forward and/or discuss any resolutions they see fit for the association. This year we had two resolutions tabled for the membership to discuss.

RESOLUTION 2020-01

WHEREAS the RCMP are not aware nor do they have the manpower to commit to investigating shot livestock, and

WHEREAS the RCMP have limited knowledge to properly investigate and document shot livestock to ensure compensation is paid to the owner

THEREFORE be it resolved, the AGLA lobby the government to transfer the responsibility to Alberta Fish & Wildlife

RESOLUTION 2020 – 02

WHEREAS each year many producers are acquiring or transferring grazing leases for the first time. Many of these acquisitions and transfers are not going smoothly because of unforeseen problems caused by government not getting the paperwork done in a timely fashion; and

WHEREAS These unforeseen problems can be very costly in time, management and money for both parties involved in grazing lease transfer. An example would be the extremely long wait for a disposition transfer could add cost if an early entry commitment is not negotiated when signing the offer to purchase contract.

THEREFORE be it resolved AGLA develop an information sheet that summarizes, in plain and simple English, the potential problems and the recommended solution to issues that could arise when acquiring or transferring a grazing lease.

If you have any questions about this year's AGM or you would like more information on the issues that were discussed at the meeting, please feel free to contact any of the board members listed below:

Name	Title	Zone	Phone	Email
Kyle Forbes	Chairman	A1	403-548-3183	k_forbes_@hotmail.com
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Larry Sears	Past Chairman	A	403-625-0417	larrylsears@gmail.com
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