



2023 AGM Summary

On February 15 the Alberta Grazing Leaseholders Association (AGLA) held their Annual General Meeting (AGM) at the Medicine Hat Lodge. 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.

2023 Grazing Disposition Rental Rates

2023 is the fourth year of the phased implementation of the new rental formula. The grazing disposition rentals for this year are \$4.58/AUM in the Zone 1 (south) and \$3.08/AUM in Zone 2 (north).

This represents a 41% increase in rental rates for Zone 1 and a 59% increase in rental rates for Zone 2. The unusually large increase is a product of a number of things that aligned for a large increase: there is phase in from the rental rate modernization, the lease cost survey results were not ready in time to be included in the 2023 calculation, the Consumer Price Index in the calculation only includes the first eight months of the year and fall calf prices were strong.

AGLA Activities Update

AGLA Chairman Kyle Forbes updated 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 access, solidifying the role of the leaseholder as the caretaker of the land through the Rangeland Grazing Framework as well as operational issues for the day-to-day management of grazing leases.

Rangeland Grazing Framework

In December 2021, grazing industry stakeholders (which includes AGLA) and Government of Alberta (GoA) representatives led by the deputy minister came together at a "Grazing Summit". The outcome of the Summit was a "policy framework" to:

- a. resolidify grazing as the primary use on grazing disposition,
- b. formalize government's acknowledgement of the leaseholder's key role in stewardship and providing ecological goods and services, and,
- c. define the objectives and expectations for crown land rangelands,
- d. educate the public on the GoA/industry partnership that are grazing leases.

For over a year AGLA with other grazing stakeholders have worked with GoA to develop the framework document.

The Rangeland Grazing Framework recognizes the collaborative stewardship role farmers and ranchers play in the management of Crown rangelands. To reinforce the spirit of the grazing lease instrument and the on-going contributions of farmers and ranchers, the Rangeland Grazing Framework sets out a process for involving leaseholders when proposed land-use changes are being considered.

Existing land use rights of leaseholders or recreationalists don't change with the implementation of the framework. In fact, these current uses are further supported in the Framework by placing greater emphasis on current legislation and policy.

The Framework will provide lasting benefits to leaseholders, industry, rural communities, and all Albertans by providing clarity about how grazing fits into the Crown Land Vision and integrated land management practices.

At the time of the AGM, the Framework was awaiting sign off at the ministerial level.

Recreation Access Survey Results

A nine question survey on recreational access on Crown lease land was sent out in the 2022 membership renewal. We decided to send out a survey because rec access is a constant topic in our advocacy efforts with elected officials, bureaucrats and other stakeholders. We need to go into these conversations with the best information from our membership to help guide our position, to be proactive and act in the best interests of leaseholders. This survey was not intended to develop scientifically significant statistics, it is merely to poll the membership on what is going on out on the landscape.

The overall results align with the messaging and advocacy AGLA has been engaging in over the past few years. This reinforces the confidence AGLA has that we are representing our membership when we talk to stakeholders about recreational access.

The majority of leaseholders province-wide are concerned with being required to grant access for recreation. When considering the risk leaseholders are forced to accept when granting access, this is not a surprise. In the survey comments received back, there were many leaseholders who reported not having troubles with recreationalists respecting both the position of the leaseholder and the land they are accessing for recreation. As with almost everything, it's the bad examples that ruin it for everyone.

The full report of the rec access survey results is available on our website www.albertagrazinglease.ca

Undeveloped road allowances

Increased use of undeveloped road allowances for recreation is leading to increased risk of erosion, fire, weed dispersal and other environmental damage. In addition to the damage of motorized access, there is increased instances of trespassing on adjacent lands. This leads to concerns of injury to livestock and people and damage to infrastructure on top of concerns of the damage to the rangeland resources and risk of accidental fire.

The first step is education and awareness to get people talking about this issue. We are collaborating with Western Stock Growers' Association and Alberta Beef Producers to engage ag service boards and municipal councils. The solutions we are proposing include implementing consistent province-wide regulations and policy that allow undeveloped road allowances to be controlled by the adjacent landowner or leaseholder unless it needs to be developed for access.

Upcoming Engagement and Advocacy

Grazing-Timber Integration Manual Modernization

This manual was last updated in 2011 so a modernization is long overdue. Previous updates were driven by forestry concerns around livestock damaging reforestation efforts. Now, a need for more protections for sustainable grazing and maintenance of long-term grazing on dispositions, ensuring the overlapping dispositions allow for each to meet their legislated requirements and red tape reduction are important drivers of this initiative.

Preliminary meetings to prepare for consultations with the timber industry occurred this summer. This is another collaborative effort to ensure our engagement is most effective. The other groups at the table include NAGA, WSGA, ABP, and Rocky Mountain Forest Range Association.

Recreational Access Regulation Review

Review of the Recreational Access Regulations (RAR) is required every five years. The regulations expired in 2021 but Ministerial Order pushed the review back three years to 2024. Consultations will start this year, after the election. RAR is an important regulation to the operations of grazing leases in Alberta and we are committed to upholding leaseholder rights throughout the consultation. At the time of the AGM, we were preparing for the consultation in collaboration with other industry groups.

Grazing Disposition Holders Operational Committee

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

The chair is Executive Director of Lands Delivery and Coordination South Rob Simieritsch, representing a direct link from the committee to department executive.

The workplan for the next year is robust and reflects provincial concerns. The list includes initiatives to reduce red tape, operational efficiencies, policy clarification/enhancements, and succession management challenges.

Elections

The AGM is also the forum where the member representatives are elected to the board of directors. This year's election resulted in welcoming new directors Ray Marcy (Zone D) and Darcy Kleinknecht (Zone A1). Darcy Wills, Larry Sears, Don Broomfield, Kevin Stewart, Art Wheat, Bill Smith and Lee Fryberger were all re-elected to the board. We are extremely grateful to Bill Heidecker, Brian Loewen and Larry Gaultier for their service and time to the board and wish them the best in their future endeavours.

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. We are excited to have province-wide representation on our board for the past number of years. It makes us a stronger organization. There are still some vacancies in the board – one in Zone A1 and one 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 that were passed by the membership at the AGM.

RESOLUTION 2023-01

WHEREAS the work AGLA does on behalf of grazing leaseholders in Alberta is valuable and necessary to protect the rights of leaseholders in Alberta. And

WHEREAS it is important for AGLA to have financial stores adequate enough to mobilize legal and expert services when issues arise that warrant a quick and impactful response.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the current annual membership fee for AGLA be increased to \$100 effective January 2024.

RESOLUTION 2023 – 02

WHEREAS the Alberta grazing lease system is a partnership that has been developed based on a stewardship model promoting healthy rangelands, return on investment and economic viability for those ranching operations who hold them; and

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta currently places a portion of grazing lease fees paid by leaseholders into the Range Sustainability Fund to fund research in range sustainability; and

WHEREAS it is recognized that the leaseholder's investments into on-the-ground improvements can directly benefit range health and sustainability

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that AGLA enter in to discussions with the department on the possibility of opening the accessibility of the Range Sustainability Fund not just for research but other industry initiatives.

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:

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