



Alberta Grazing Leaseholder's Association

Box 340 Stavely, AB T0L 1Z0

Dear Alberta Grazing Leaseholder,

It is again time to fill you in on the activities of the past year and highlight some of the issues that are in front of us. Again, we want to remind you that our success is dependant on both your membership and your involvement at our AGM if at all possible. We continue to have a vacancy on our board of directors, so we are looking for volunteers. When we assessed the magnitude of the issues in front of us in the SE corner of the province, the board chose to again hold the meeting in Medicine Hat.

Sincerely,

Alberta Grazing Leaseholder's Association Board of Directors

George Morrison	Debolt	780.957.2594	Ed Curry	Youngstown	403.779.2185
Darcy Wills	Coutts	403.344.4312	Dale Howe	Empress	403.502.1219
Pat Rutledge	Monitor	403.577.2382	*Lanni Bristow	Heinsberg	780.943.2236
Larry Sears	Stavely	403.549.2481	Vacant		
James Hargrave	Walsh	403.937.2128			

** Indicates current term expires in 2014*

Annual General Meeting Notice

The 2014 Annual General Meeting of the Alberta Grazing Leaseholder's Association will be held on Thursday, February 6th in Medicine Hat at the Medicine Hat Lodge.

Annual General Meeting Agenda

12:00 pm	Registration & Coffee	
1:00 pm	Chairman's Report	Larry Sears
1:15 pm	Treasurer's Report	James Hargrave
1:30 pm	Guest speaker	Joe Anglin – MLA Rimbey-RMH-Sundre
2:15 pm	Coffee break	
2:30 pm	ESRD Activity Update	
3:00 pm	Questions & Resolutions	
3:45 pm	Elections	
4:00 pm	Adjournment	

AGLA Chairman's Report

2014 has been an interesting year with many weather challenges starting last spring during calving season, going into flood mode for much of Southern AB in June, then culminating with an early winter and what looks to be record snowfalls in much of central & northern AB. This combination of events is stretching the feed pile and patience of many. The bright spot throughout this has been a rather strong market with good profits in most sectors. Again the feeding & packing sectors have had some turbulence and red ink. Another positive for us has been the announcement of the re-opening of the Balzac packing plant under the banner of Harmony Beef. Many of us hope & believe that the added competition will help strengthen and buoy the entire industry. A marketplace solution for a stagnant template is a welcome signal. We need this to deal with the regressive approach of MCOOL legislation being implemented now. It is doubtful that we will see a legislative fix to this in the US Farm Bill.

The South Saskatchewan River Regional Plan

Your board, as well as many of you as individuals, attended meetings in 2012 and gave feedback to the government on their initial plan. It came back this fall with some changes, much of it watered down from where it was, but our concern still exists in many areas, especially when it comes to economic impacts. Overall, I think one could sum up the plan as a very expensive, inefficient, top down attempt, resulting in some very impractical proposals. There is a move by Alberta Tourism, Parks & Recreation to expand their reach for recreation on the Eastern Slopes; much of this will be detrimental and conflicting with present allotment holders who have been guaranteed the same number of Animal Units. This is a very contentious issue and just the tip of the iceberg so to speak; as Parks tries to flex its authority into areas they have little understanding of. They are also attempting to be the managers of Heritage Rangelands; again this could spell disaster and many more hurdles for everyone involved, including the neighbors. We attended a meeting with ESRD on these subjects, but I'm not certain that our input was heard on subjects of concern. We are still at risk as leaseholders because compensation is still discretionary for the removal of a statutory consent. Many of us filled out the workbooks with constructive criticism and WSGA has done an extensive review of the plan with alternate win/win solutions. We applaud them for that work.

The Greater Sage Grouse Controversy

For many of you in the SE corner of the province, this issue has been percolating for a while now, but when an Emergency Order For Recovery of the Greater Sage Grouse came by registered mail in early December, followed by a meeting with government, NGO's and landholders, where an RCMP officer was asked to attend, the alarm bells went off for everyone. The slippery slope of Environmental Impact Assessments on any development on Crown Lands had morphed dramatically into "Command & Control" on habitat. While NGO's & government try to dispel the belief that there will potentially be an impact on grazing levels, we know there will certainly be costs complying with the list of prohibitions. There is a huge negative impact in the oil & gas sector, as well as in the City of Medicine Hat, because of the noise & activity prohibitions.

The tipping point for this “Order” came when an environmental group called “Eco Justice” threatened legal action against Environment Canada unless they took meaningful action to save the sage grouse. While many of us can argue the folly of allowing bully groups to activate legislation, it appears to be a moot point at the moment as the feds have caved on that. From an agricultural perspective, a well-managed grazing operation is imperative to maintain habitat for nearly all species, endangered or not. We do not believe for a moment that there is any science to suggest that the problem lies with the habitat. Those who have lived and managed operations in the area for many generations will tell you from observation & experiential knowledge that Alberta is on the northern fringe of the sage grouse habitat, the population varies dramatically and always has. Additionally, inclement weather can impact survival rates while West Nile Virus has also had a negative effect. But perhaps most importantly, the large and diverse numbers of predators on the land are the single biggest challenge for the survival of the grouse. We hope that by shining a light on this and having a meaningful discussion on costs & benefits of this exercise, perhaps some common sense will replace the draconian will of those wanting to repopulate southeast Alberta & southwest Saskatchewan with sage grouse. The Greater Sage Grouse is the present poster child for environmental groups across North America, and given the history south of the border with Endangered Species Act, this is just one more tool to enable some sort of preservation movement to some degree. If the rationale for the grouse issue proves to be similar to the Spotted Owl, Delta Smelt, Desert Tortoise and the Stephen’s Kangaroo Rat then it is entirely disingenuous. Those have merely been tools used to shut down industry across the western US.

Our Predator Rich Environment

As mentioned above, in the southeast corner of the province we have a multitude of predators with the grouse on the menu. The rest of the province finds very healthy populations of cougar, grizzlies and wolves. There is a heavy infestation of wolves in the northern part of the province and they appear to be running out of caribou to eat. There continues to be substantial losses of cattle to these packs at various times of the year; compensation is available but evidence is hard to find, as we all know. The south also has hotspots with wolves, but there is a more concerted effort to control the problem than in the past, so some headway has been made, but vigilance is still required.

The grizzly is the species that has literally exploded under the protective cloak of no hunting and will continue to cause property damage, livestock losses, and I fear someday, more loss of human life. When their numbers get as high as they are, and they have no fear of a human, they have no respect and there will continue to be conflicts until there is an acknowledgement that the numbers are high enough to harvest some. The bottom line is predators need management too!

Report Card On ESRD

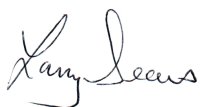
I’m sure all of you are aware that Sustainable Resource Development was moved under the umbrella of Environment in spite of our requests to be dealt with under Agriculture where there would at least be a common culture, understanding, and appreciation for what we do. As we enter the 2nd year of this experiment, we have found

that much of the expertise and morale that formerly existed within SRD has retired, moved on, or exited to other departments with a better fit. We are finding it difficult to maintain the level of advocacy required within this department to develop sensible policy and regulations that fit with today's changing world of agriculture. We see examples of families who can't keep the land together because of tax implications, families who want to keep the land for emotional reasons but don't have the management capability, older operators looking for help, and families trying to transition into a succession plan. All of these are in need of stewardship and are opportunities for our youth, the innovative, or the expanding operations. Adaptive, rather than restrictive regulations are needed.

"We are fast approaching the stage of ultimate inversion: the stage where the government is free to do anything it pleases, while the citizens may act only by permission; which is the stage of the darkest periods of human history, the stage of rule by brute force."

Ayn Rand

Respectfully submitted,



Larry Sears, Chairman, AGLA

AGLA MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Your membership is now due to be renewed. We have appreciated your support in the past and hope that you will choose to continue to be involved. The goals of the AGLA are to gain support and membership of leaseholders across the province and to communicate with government, the public, and other interest groups on leaseholder's behalf. The annual membership fee is \$20 and that goes towards the administrative costs of maintaining the organization. Please include a cheque for \$20 with this membership form and mail to:

Alberta Grazing Leaseholder's Association – Box 72, Walsh, AB T0J 3L0

AGLA MEMBERSHIP FORM

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

TOWN: _____

POSTAL CODE: _____

PHONE: _____

EMAIL: _____