

# Integrated Vegetation Management and Weed Control

## **Objectives**

- 1) Protect municipal infrastructure
- 2) Reduce liability and enhance public safety on roads
- 3) Manage noxious and prohibited noxious weeds
- 4) Enhance the aesthetic appeal of the municipality through vegetation management on roadsides

## **Resources**

### **Staffed through ASB General**

3 Licenced Pesticide Applicators (Agriculture, Industrial, Landscape) and ~~3~~<sup>4</sup> Authorized Assistants (seasonal)

## **Environmental Requirements**

Environmental Code of Practice for Pesticides and Pesticide Regulation (under EPEA)

## **Annual Budget**

Expenses: Approx. ~~\$373,000~~<sup>\$435,000</sup>

Revenue: \$0

Net Cost: Approx. ~~\$373,000~~<sup>\$435,000</sup>

## **Implementation and Service Level Standards**

Appoint 6 Weed Inspectors annually

Herbicide control of weeds and brush on both sides of 1200 km of road annually (~2000 ha/year) to ensure management of all roads once every 3 years

Control regrowth on brush mulched areas of roadsides within 2 years

Manage noxious and prohibited noxious weeds on County property (roadsides, gravel pits) and private lands

Inspect and licence 3 Seed Cleaning Plants annually

Enforce Weed Act on private & provincial land

Mow shoulder of all Class A and Class C roadsides annually (550 km/year)

Maintain option for No-Spray Zones and Hay Agreements on roadsides

**Opportunities/Potential Program Expansion**

Increase weed inspection on County properties

Increase weed inspection program on non-County properties

Biocontrol program for noxious weeds

Expand equipment rentals

Subsidized control program for specified weeds

**Challenges**

Lack of staff poses significant challenge to weed inspections and enforcement of Weed Act

Budget and staff constraints limit noxious weed control on County roadsides

**Supporting Documents**

- 1) AG 016 Vegetation Management Policy (1<sup>st</sup> Revision)
- 2) 2024 ASB Weed Act Service Level
- 3) Weed Control Act
- 4) Weed Control Regulation
- 5) Pesticide (Ministerial) Regulation
- 6) Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act
- 7) Environmental Code of Practice for Pesticides

# SERVICE LEVEL: AGRICULTURE SERVICE BOARD (ASB) – WEED CONTROL

## WHAT ARE OUR GOALS?



Integrated Vegetation Management



Seed Cleaning

## HOW WILL WE ACCOMPLISH OUR GOALS?

Key Strategies

STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION
<b>Protect Infrastructure</b>	Maintain and enhance municipal infrastructure through roadside vegetation and water management.
<b>Reduce Liability and Enhance Public Safety</b>	Maintain driver line of sight and visibility through roadside vegetation management.
<b>Manage Noxious and Prohibited Noxious Weeds</b>	Use Integrated Vegetation Management (spray, mow, hand pull) to control noxious and prohibited noxious weeds on municipal properties. Utilize <i>Alberta Weed Control Act</i> to manage noxious and prohibited noxious weeds on private and public property.
<b>Roadside Spray Program</b>	Conduct the spraying of County roadsides to control of noxious and prohibited noxious weeds and, and brush, maintain the integrity of infrastructure and safety of public by ensuring line of sight.
<b>Roadside Mowing Program</b>	Conduct the mowing of County roadsides and properties to provide vegetation management, for the control of weeds and brush, maintain the integrity of infrastructure and enhance public safety by ensuring line of sight.
<b>Weed Inspection Program</b>	Appointment of adequate Weed Inspectors for enforcement of the <i>Alberta Weed Control Act and Regulations</i>
<b>Seed Cleaning Plants</b>	Maintain alliances with the Seed Cleaning Plants surrounding early detection of weed species and crop pests.
<b>Special Weed Program</b>	Conduct the control of noxious and prohibited weeds such as Scentless Chamomile, Common Tansy and Toadflax on county properties and under special circumstances.

## WHEN & HOW WILL WE DO THIS?

### Actions/Initiatives

ACTION	EXPLANATION	ACHIEVEMENT DEADLINE
<b>Inspection Program</b>	<p>*Enforce the Alberta Weed Act and Regulations through the appointment of adequate Weed Inspectors for the control of noxious and prohibited noxious weeds on County land and roadsides.</p> <p><u>*A team of two seasonal staff will focus on looking for and mapping noxious weed issues on municipal lands and on private lands. The Weed Inspection Program will create awareness with landowners about weed concerns, educate landowners and residents on why noxious weeds are a concern, provide a cooperative program for weed control on private properties with the option to move to enforcement if the cooperative approach does not work to improve control.</u></p> <p>*Inspect reports of out-of-control weeds on private and commercially owned land, railway rights-of-way and provincial highways.</p> <p>*Use co-operative approach between landowners and County to resolve weed concerns on private land where possible. Issue weed notices for the control of noxious and prohibited noxious weeds if needed.</p> <p>*Prepare map of areas with weed issues within County</p> <p>*Provide inspections for the Alberta Weed Free Forage Program as requested</p>	Ongoing
<b>Seed Cleaning Plants</b>	<p>*Conduct annual seed plant inspections to maintain proper licensing.</p> <p>*Inspect 20 seed samples from each of the three seed plants for grading of seed.</p>	Ongoing
<b>Roadside Spray Program</b>	<p>*Conduct the chemical control of noxious and prohibited weeds and brush along County roadsides.</p> <p>*Maintain the efficiency of the spray program through spraying one of three zones annually, visually displayed on a "Roadside Spray Zones" map.</p> <p>*Blanket spray approximately 1200 km (800 miles) of County roadsides annually to control brush, broadleaf weeds and toadflax. Cover all County roadsides within a 3-year rotation.</p> <p>*Control the re-growth of brush by spraying roadside ditches that have been mulched by Public Works as needed. All regrowth from brushing shall be sprayed (if necessary) within two years.</p> <p>*Maintain the working integrity of drainage ditches controlling the re-growth of weeds and brush by spraying annually where possible.</p> <p>*Maintain the annual Spray Program spray locations via an electronic digitized map.</p> <p>*Investigate incidences of over-spray.</p>	Ongoing
<b>Special Weed Program</b>	<p><u>*A team of two seasonal staff will focus on vegetation management including management of County gravel pits and stockpiles, Gas Utility vegetation management, areas of brush mulched by Public Works, noxious weed patches on County roadsides and private landowner noxious weed control spot spray program.</u></p> <p>*Maintain the Special Weed Program by responding to reports of noxious and prohibited noxious weeds on private or commercially owned land, and County roadsides.</p> <p>*Provide targeted control of scentless chamomile, tansy, and toadflax (noxious weeds). Spot spray toadflax and/or tansy on about 100 ha. The</p>	Ongoing

special weed program will follow one year behind the roadside spraying program to manage any herbicide escapes.

\*Use Contracted Vegetation Managers to conduct spot spraying to assist administration in managing patches of noxious weed patches (specifically common tansy and yellow toadflax) on municipal roadsides. Contracted Managers will be used in August to spot spray at least 100+ ha of toadflax and tansy patches that were not completely controlled during the previous year's blanket spray program.

\*The County will help ratepayers control noxious weeds on private lands by providing manpower and equipment free of charge and herbicide worth up to \$100 per ratepayer. The ratepayer will reimburse the County for any herbicide used over \$100. The County will maintain a list of ratepayers requesting private land spraying for noxious weeds. The County's roadside weed control and brush spraying will be the ASB's number one priority, but when equipment and manpower become available, at the discretion of the Ag. Fieldman, the County will contact and assist ratepayers. Spraying done under a Weed Notice is exempt from being done free of charge.

\*The County will help landowners control larger infestations of specified regulated weeds on private lands with a Regulated Weed Control Herbicide Rebate Program, which will provide financial incentives to landowners faced with the issue of purchasing expensive herbicides to control patches of specified regulated weeds. The program will provide a rebate of 50% of the purchase cost of approved on-label herbicides registered to control that weed, to a maximum of \$1000 per landowner per year. The total Rebate Program budget for 2024 is \$8000. Specified weeds for the Rebate include yellow toadflax, common tansy, ox-eye daisy, leafy spurge, scentless chamomile, field bindweed, knapweeds, white cockle, and hoary alyssum.

\*The County of Vermilion River Weed Warriors program will provide an opportunity for non-profit and community groups in the municipality to help combat scentless chamomile, burdock and other noxious weeds. The County will provide a \$500 donation to each group for their assistance and offer two bonus incentives annually: \$100 for the group that picks the most weeds by weight and \$100 for the group with the most team spirit. Group sessions will start with an education session and orientation provided by administration, followed by spending half a day picking weeds with the County Ag Team. Total Program budget for 2024 is \$4800.

\*Cooperate with adjacent municipalities by promoting the control of the spread of noxious and prohibited weeds.

\*Spot spray noxious weeds on Provincial Highways within the Municipality under cost recovery contract for Alberta Transportation.

### **Roadside Mowing Program**

\*Mow County roadsides to improve visibility, improve driver safety, protect the County from liability, improve maintenance of infrastructure, control brush in a cost-effective manner and provide mechanical control of noxious and prohibited weeds along County roadsides. Ensure all Class A and Class C road ditches are mowed once annually between July 15 and August 31. All road ditches will be cut 15' into the ditch where possible.  
\*Use contract mowers to mow 550 km of county roadsides.  
\*Communicate changes in mowing Service Level to ratepayers in advance of mowing.

Ongoing

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**No-Spray Zone Policy**

- \*No-Spray Zone policy allows landowners to assume responsibility for weed and brush control along County right-of-way adjacent to their property by mowing or removing all noxious and prohibited noxious weeds and brush 2m tall and less. A No-Spray Zone Agreement must be signed annually by May 31. The ROW must be maintained (weeds removed and brush kept less than 60cm tall) by June 15, and continuously through the growing season as weeds/brush become visible.
- \*No-Spray Zone agreements must not be used as a buffer to achieve or maintain Organic Status.
- \*All agreement areas will be inspected for compliance by July 1, with enforcement if needed.
- \*County does not spray in front of obviously maintained yard sites, as long as applicator can see that yard is being maintained in time to stop application of herbicide.
- \*Communicate changes in no-spray zone agreements to ratepayers before growing season.

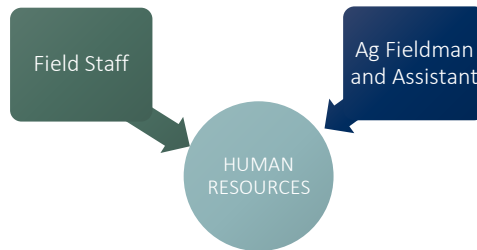
**Roadside Haying Agreements**

- \* Applications for Haying Agreements must be received by May 31.
- \*Applicants may apply annually for a Hay Agreement for County right-of-way adjacent to their property until May 31. From June 1 to June 15, other county residents may apply annually for a Hay Agreement for County right-of-way not claimed by the adjacent landowner.
- \*All haying must be completed by July 15, prior to onset of roadside mowing.
- \*The County has responsibility for vegetation control to protect infrastructure, reduce liability risk and control noxious and prohibited noxious weeds.
- \*Residents desiring a Hay Agreement need to be aware that there may be herbicides or herbicide residues present on roadsides.
- \*Communicate changes in Roadside Haying Agreements to ratepayers before growing season.

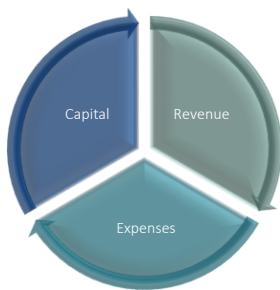
# HIGHLIGHTS OF ACCOMPLISHED ACTIONS/INITIATIVES FROM PAST YEAR

- \*60 seed samples collected and graded. Licences to be issued to 3 area seed cleaning plants.
- \*Gravel pits inspected, and noxious weed control done where needed.
- \*Contractor mowed 552km of road. All roads received a 15’ shoulder cut.
- \*Blanket sprayed 2538km of county roadside for weeds/brush.
- \*Inspected and managed 49 sites (16 ha) specifically for noxious weeds.
- \*Sprayed 24 ha of brush mulch areas outside of the blanket spray area in addition to areas covered within Spray Area 2 during blanket spray.
- \*Vegetation controlled on natural gas regulator stations CVR Gas Utility.
- \*No-spray zone agreements were signed with 6 ratepayers.
- \*Appointed 6 Weed Inspectors.

## HUMAN RESOURCES



## FINANCIAL RESOURCES



	DETAILS
<b>REVENUE</b>	-Annual ASB Grant (\$123,907); private weed control
<b>EXPENSES</b>	- ASB Operating Budget
<b>CAPITAL</b>	-Mowing and spraying equipment - ASB Capital Budget

## REGULATIONS/POLICIES

- A) Agriculture Service Board Act.
- B) Agricultural Pests Act.
- C) Soil Conservation Act.
- D) Weed Control Act.
- E) Alberta Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act.
- F) Industrial Vegetation Management Guidelines.
- G) AG Policies/Management Plans (AG001 – AG016).

## MEASUREMENTS

CATEGORY	MEASUREMENT	GOAL
FINANCIAL	Budget	Operate within budget
ORGANIZATIONAL	Timeframes	Complete actions in allotted time frame
CUSTOMER CARE	Seed samples Mowing Spraying	Collect and grade 20 samples from each seed plant Mow 3200 km Blanket spray 1200 km
VISION	Diversity	

## HISTORY/BACKGROUND



