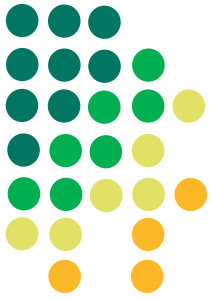
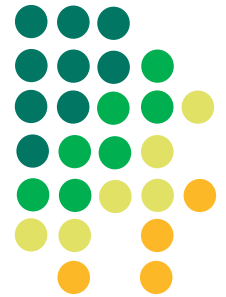


# Agricultural Service Board Strategic Plan

## 2020—2024







# Table of Contents

Introduction	-	4
Agricultural Service Board	-	5
Our Vision	-	8
Our Mission	-	8
Our Values	-	8
Goals	-	10
◇ Environmental Stewardship	-	11
◇ Education and outreach	-	13
◇ Weed Management	-	14
◇ Veterinary Services and Livestock	-	16
◇ Promote Economic Agricultural Viability	-	17
◇ Promote Agriculture To Young Farmers	-	18
◇ Support Agricultural Pest Act	-	19
◇ Support Soil Conservation Act	-	20
◇ Intergovernmental Collaboration	-	21
Conclusion	-	22



## INTRODUCTION

Saddle Hills County is located in the Peace Region of Northwestern Alberta and has a population of 2225 (2016 Census). Of those 2,225 people, there are almost 800 resident farmers within our boundaries. The County is 5,838 square kilometers in size with just under half being crown land, or green zone. There is approximately 477,820 cultivated acres and 184,330 uncultivated (bush pasture) acres in the County.

The County is very diverse within its agricultural community and produces pulses, cereals, canola, legumes, cattle as well as bison, elk, goats and sheep. The most common livestock production is cattle with an estimated total size of ~ 18,000 head.

The County's Agricultural Service Board (ASB) is responsible for protecting the infrastructure from flooding, erosion and weed and brush control within the rights-of-way. The ASB provides annual inspections for prohibited noxious and noxious weeds on private land, public lands and other jurisdictions within the County and manages invasive plants and vegetation on our own infrastructure, such as communications towers, transfer stations, gravel pits and roads. The ASB also provides annual pest and disease inspections for insects and crop diseases and pests and work closely with the Pest Branch to accomplish these tasks.

Saddle Hills County provides many services to its ratepayers including sites for recycling agriculture plastics, Veterinary Services Incorporated (VSI) program, various extension events such as Marketing Outlooks, Livestock Health and Predator Management.

Our ratepayers are very progressive in their farm management, over the past years, succession planning, new technologies and sustainability have become the focus of many agriculture settings within the County.

The County has worked historically with the Peace Country Beef and Forage Association (PCBFA) to support and promote Environmental Education programs and will continue to do so in the future.

Saddle Hills is equipped with modern spray trucks, side by side with mounted sprayers, mowers and seed broadcasters and well-staffed with two full time staff, an Agricultural Fieldman and an Assistant Agricultural Fieldman as well as a part-time Equipment Operator. We will be hiring four Weed and Pest Inspectors and three laborers as seasonal staffing from May to August.



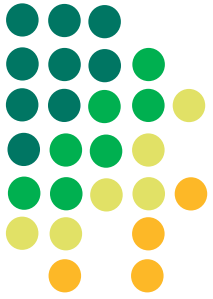


# Our Agricultural Service Board



## **2020 Saddle Hills County Agricultural Service Board**

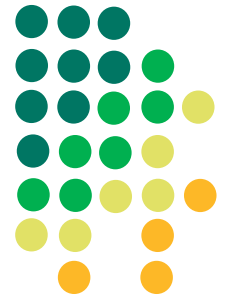
(L to R): Member Kaiser, Member Cheryl Brett, Member Tyson Hessler, Chair Candace Dolen, Vice – Chair Adam Fitzpatrick, Councilor Ken Titford and Councilor Ed Armagost.



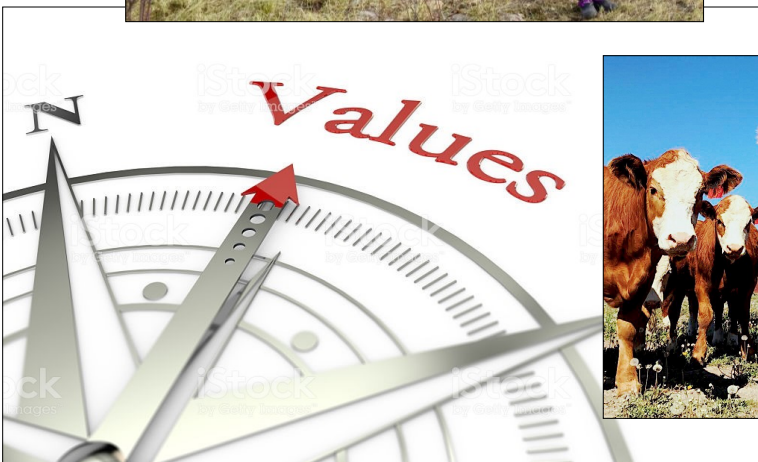
# Our County

2020–2024 Agricultural Service Board Strategic Plan

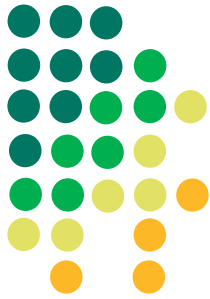




# Our Vision, Mission & Values



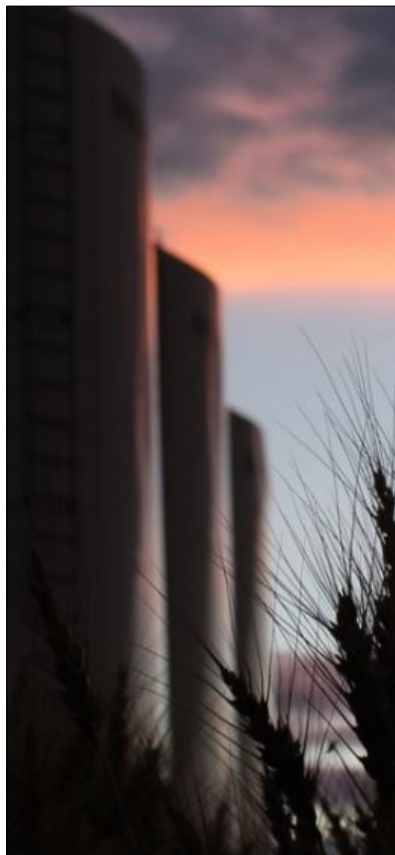




# Our Vision Mission & Values

## OUR VISION

A thriving rural municipality with: a growing population; safe, active communities; and a strong, sustainable, diverse economy.



## OUR MISSION

To enhance our communities by providing and supporting quality services and regional initiatives.

## OUR VALUES

### ◆ **Respect**

To earn respect and be respectful while supporting each other; residents, council members, municipal employees and those working in the County.

### ◆ **Adaptable**

To seize opportunities to grow in new directions, and approach change with creative solutions to overcome challenges in agriculture.

### ◆ **Accountability**

To deliver accountable and responsible governance through open, transparent and efficient delivery of programs and services that benefit our County producers.

## OUR VALUES (Continued)



### ◆ Equality

To ensure our programs and services are delivered fairly and equitably throughout the County.

### ◆ Excellence

To be innovative and creative; embracing opportunities, adapting to our environment, and leading with best practices and continuous improvement.

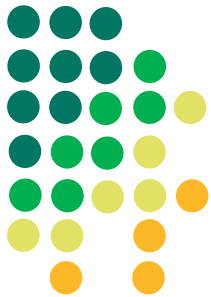
### ◆ Collaboration

To create healthy relationships with regional communities, other levels of government and the private sector.

### ◆ Community Spirit

To support programs and activities that improve the sustainability, wellbeing and quality of agriculture in our County.





# Our Strategic Goals

## Goals

1. Environmental Stewardship
2. Education and Outreach
3. Weed Management
4. Veterinary Services and Livestock Protection
5. Promote Economic Agricultural Viability
6. Promoting Agriculture to Young Farmers
7. Pest Management
8. Soil Conservation
9. Intergovernmental, inter-municipal and internal collaboration





Goal Area 1: Environmental Stewardship

**Goal Area 1: To develop and deliver collaborative environmental stewardship initiatives that result in sustainable growth of Saddle Hills County grain and livestock industry.**

**Strategy**

“To increase Environmental Farm plans and to encourage environmental best practices in Saddle Hills County in collaboration with the Peace Country Beef and Forage Association (PCBFA).

**Actions**

- a. Increase awareness via educational opportunities.
- b. Work one on one with livestock producers where challenges are present.
- c. Educate Ratepayers about recycling ag plastics with Environmental Services Department.

**Performance Measures**

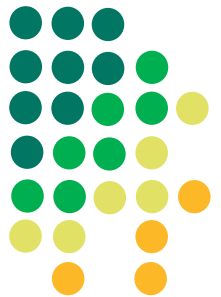
- ◇ To assist with creating two environmental farm plans per year



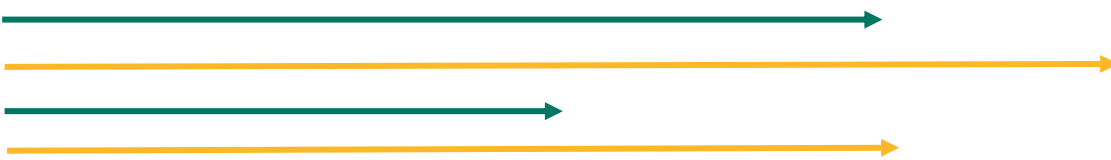
**Goal Area 1: To develop and deliver collaborative environmental stewardship initiatives that result in sustainable growth of Saddle Hills County grain and livestock industry (continued).**

**Performance Measures**

- ◇ Assist Environmental Services department in the development and execution of recycling agricultural plastics
- ◇ To maintain and continue tracking crop rotations within Saddle Hills County
- ◇ To offer a minimum of one workshop per year focusing on environmental stewardship; environmental farm plans, agricultural plastics, shelterbelts and water management and drainage.



Goal Area 1: Environmental Stewardship





## Goal # 2: Education and Outreach



**Goal Area 2: To offer Education and Outreach to Ratepayers focused on livestock, weeds and agricultural services offered by the County.**

### Strategy

“To utilize various social media, the signal newspaper and the County website to provide information regarding challenging areas faced by the agriculture industry.”

### Actions

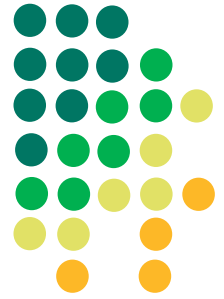
- a. Identify topics of interest for ratepayers for extension events.
- b. Update ratepayers on policy or legislative changes of federal, provincial and municipal governments.

### Performance Measures

- ◇ Increase attendance at workshops and educational events by 10%
- ◇ Increase social media interactions related to Agricultural topics by 10%







### **Goal Area 3: To prevent the spread and prevent the establishment of invasive weeds within the county as per the *Weed Control Act*.**

#### **Strategy**

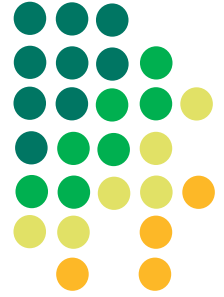
“Weed inspection program, education and outreach, to prevent the spread of invasive weeds and complete annual weed survey.”

#### **Actions**

- a. To hire and authorize four seasonal employees as field scouts.
- b. To educate ratepayers, stakeholders and managers regarding control.

#### **Performance Measures**

- ◇ To complete 1500 weed inspections per year.
- ◇ To educate and train weed inspectors and ratepayers.
- ◇ To monitor weed issues in the county and decrease the number of issues over time with the use of letters and weed notices.

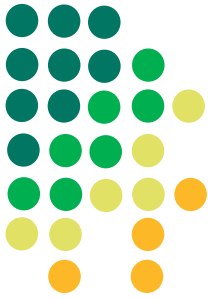


### Goal Area 3: To prevent the spread and prevent the establishment of invasive weeds within the county as per the *Weed Control Act (continued)*.

#### Performance Measures

- ◇ To apply herbicide to 33% of County right-of-ways.
- ◇ To mow a minimum of a shoulder pass on all County right-of-ways.
- ◇ To maintain vegetation on all County owned infrastructure.
- ◇ Utilize early detection rapid response for new introductory weed species.
- ◇ To be proactive in controlling weeds on County infrastructure.
- ◇ 100% of municipal and portable seed cleaning plants inspected within municipality.
- ◇ All prohibited noxious weed sites investigated and controlled.





# Goal #4: Veterinary Services and Live-stock Protection



## Goal Area 4: To support herd health and support the *Animal Health Act*.

### Strategy

“Maintain the veterinarian services industry program, offer a livestock protection program focused on predators and pests and compensation and to support Federal and Provincial Government in the case of an animal health emergency.”

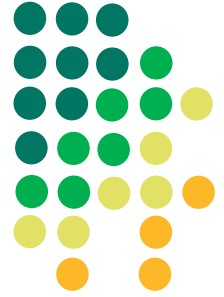
### Action

- a. Collaborate with local Veterinarians to educate livestock producers on challenges.
- b. Participate in Federal BSE testing.
- c. Promote the Destruction and disposal of dead animal regulations.
- d. Offer the Livestock Protection Course.

### Performance Measures

- ◇ Complete three veterinarian visits per year.
- ◇ Train 40 livestock producers annually .
- ◇ Offer a minimum of one livestock focused extension event annually.





Goal #5: Promote Economic Agricultural Viability

## Goal Area 5: Promote Economic Agricultural Viability

### Strategy

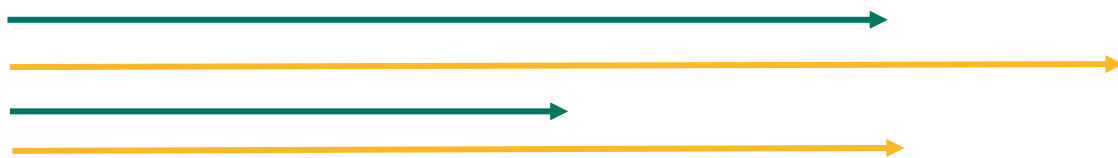
“Provide opportunities and resources to County producers in relation to markets, inputs and succession planning.”

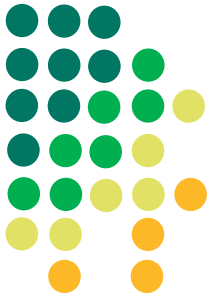
### Actions

- a. Host market outlook workshops for grain and livestock producers.
- b. Provide producers with resources available for markets and succession planning.
- c. Host succession planning workshop every two years.
- d. Provide producers with available resources for agronomic and animal health practices at various events - open houses, workshops, etc.

### Performance Measures

- ◇ Minimum of 30 producers at each market outlook workshops.
- ◇ Minimum of 5 farm families at each succession planning event.





# Goal # 6: Promote Agriculture to Young

## Farmers



### Goal Area 6: To promote Agriculture to young farmers

#### Strategy

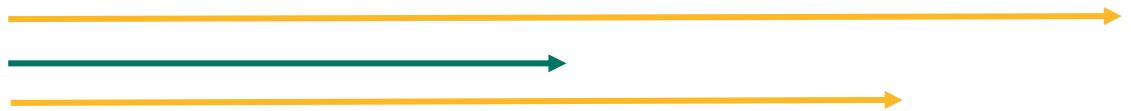
“To collaborate with agencies who specialize in young farmers succession and entrepreneurial goals while working closely with the Community Development department.”

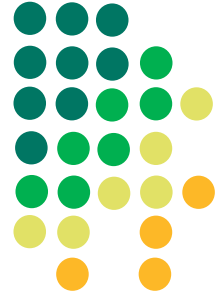
#### Action

- a. Offer Education and outreach to farm families.
- b. Choose a young farm family to attend the Canadian Young Farmers Forum .

#### Performance Measures

- ◇ Sponsor one farm family to attend Canadian Young Farmers Forum annually.
- ◇ Sponsor producers in the County to attend agricultural education events deemed pertinent by the Agricultural Service Board.





## Goal Area 7: Support the *Agricultural Pest Act*

### Strategy

“Authorize four seasonal staff as pest inspectors annually to complete pest surveys within the County and support the Pest Surveillance Branch.”

### Actions

- a. To educate staff, the public and Agricultural Service Board regarding pests within the County.
- b. To follow all pest related Policies.

### Performance Measures

- ◇ To complete the provincial grasshopper survey.
- ◇ To educate, encourage and monitor producers to submit up to five samples for *Fusarium graminearum* testing.
- ◇ To complete any additional surveys needed by the Pest Surveillance Branch.
- ◇ To complete a minimum of 25 surveys annually for Clubroot and Black-leg.





Goal #8: To support the Soil Conservation Act



## Goal Area 8: To support the *Soil Conservation Act*

### Strategy

“To raise awareness of soil, water and watershed in the County and enforced the *Soil Conservation Act* when required. “

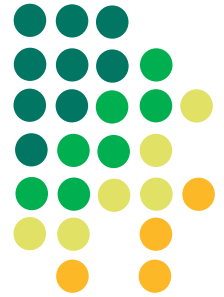
### Action

- a. Train seasonal staff to report erosion events during their field inspections.
- b. Work with Public Works to manage County infrastructure for erosion.
- c. Ensure ratepayers take appropriate measures to prevent soil erosion.

### Performance Measures

- ◇ Work in conjunction with Public Works to prevent erosion in County infrastructure.
- ◇ Provide applicable information to ratepayers about preventing soil erosion on land.
- ◇ Support Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Programs.





## Goal Area 9: To gain efficiencies through inter municipal initiatives at the federal, provincial and municipal level

### Strategy

“Support the Association of Alberta Agricultural Fieldmen (AAAF) and support cross borders initiatives.”

### Actions

- a. All Agricultural Fieldmen will be members of and participate in initiatives of the Association.
- b. Participate in collaboration opportunities.
- c. Raise awareness of weeds, pests, soil erosion, and animal health with County Staff.

### Performance Measures

- ◇ Work with Public Works Department in managing areas of mutual concern for weeds and erosion issues.
- ◇ Maintain AAAF status in the department.
- ◇ Attend a meeting per year hosted by the Peace River Regional District.

Goal # 9: To gain efficiencies through inter municipal initiatives at the federal, pro-

## Conclusion

Saddle Hills County Agricultural Service Board Strategic Plan for 2017 - 2019 focused on needs with the Agricultural industry of the County. Since that time, the makeup of the Board has changed to include 5 members of the public along with two appointed Councilors. There are now an Agricultural Fieldman, an Assistant Agricultural Fieldman and a part-time Operator to ensure County and provincial needs are met. Tracking programs have been adopted to track live chemical usage. Most recently, Saddle Hills County has shifted from paper data collection to digital collection for weed and pest inspections which has streamlined data collection and allowed for tracking crop rotation.

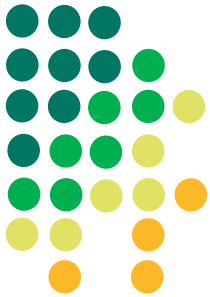
The previous 2017— 2019 Strategic Plan goals are listed below with basic comments regarding achievements:

Goals	Accomplishments
Environmental Stewardship	Saddle Hills County assisted with the development of over 10 Environmental Farm plans while also hosting a Dugout workshop and a Canadian Agricultural Partnership Overview workshop. Annually, crop rotations were tracked within the County. The County also applied to be a part of the pilot program for recycling of agricultural plastics.
Education and Outreach	In 2019 - with only three workshops we had over 100 ratepayers in attendance! We also saw record numbers of interactions on social media regarding agriculture.
Weed Management	Over 1500 weed inspections were conducted annually. There has been an increase in positive ratepayer interaction in regards to weed issues.
Veterinary Services and Live-stock Protection	Continue to maintain relationships with local veterinarians in the area. Increase in extension and outreach focused around livestock health and protection.
Integrated Pest Management	There has been a decrease in heavy weed infestation populations.
Promoting Agriculture in Young Farmers	Had 3 young family farms attend the Canadian Young Farm Forum.
Pest Management	All pest surveys were completed. There is an increase in the number of producers submitting cereals for Fusarium graminearum surveys.
Soil Conservation	Collaboration between departments for soil erosion in County ditches continues to be a priority.
Intergovernmental, Inter-municipal and internal collaboration	Saddle Hills County Agricultural Fieldmen are actively involved the Association of Alberta Agricultural Fieldmen. The County has done collaborations with other municipalities in regards to education and extension events as well.



Conclusions





Mail RR1 Spirit River, Alberta, T0H 3G0 | Tel 780-864-3760 | Fax 780-864-3904 | Web [www.saddlehills.ab.ca](http://www.saddlehills.ab.ca)

## 2020–2024 Agricultural Service Board Strategic Plan