



Western Stock Growers' Association

NEWS RELEASE
November 6, 2013

The SSRP draft plan left wanting

Recently the Alberta Government released the draft South Saskatchewan Regional Plan (SSRP), the second of seven regional plans for the Land Use Framework. The stated purpose of the SSRP is to set out a template to effectively manage growth and development across the entire region to see the economy of all sectors grow. This is no small feat considering the number of different industries on the land, the fact that 1.6 million people live in the region and the need to sustain the integrity and diversity of the landscape. In fact, the development of such an ambitious plan is a staggering project.

The document itself is over 150 pages but it is what is not contained in those pages that has the Western Stock Growers' Association (WSGA) concerned. "The draft plan seems to be full of broad outcome statements but there is detail lacking in how the government hopes to achieve them," says Aaron Brower, WSGA president. "It's how the various frameworks, plans and strategies within the SSRP are put into practice on the land that will impact the ranchers. It's hard to give approval to a document that seems incomplete."

One thing the draft plan is clear about is the expansion and creation of parks and conservation areas. The amount of protected area in the Eastern Slopes was increased by 50 percent of the existing protected area, from 22 percent to 33 percent.

There is a lot of recreation pressure in the Eastern Slopes as well. The draft plan calls for creating off highway trails, random camping sites and also the enhancement and expansion of fully serviced camping sites. "The landscape is amazing so the recreation pressure is understandable," says Brower. "I think what people don't understand is that the reason the landscape is so amazing is from the stewardship efforts of the ranchers and land managers – a service we have been supplying for free."

The draft plan also commits to the development of market-based instruments for ecosystem services. "This was something we were happy to see the government commit to," says Brower. "The stewardship practiced by the ranchers may finally be rewarded. But again, we are lacking details on what that is going to look like on the ground."

Public consultations on the draft plan start this week. “There are 21 sessions scheduled and we urge everyone to go out and participate,” says Brower. Copies of the draft plan, dates of consultation sessions and the workbook can be found on the land use website: www.landuse.alberta.ca.

Established in 1896, WSGA is a producer organization driven by policy development, focusing on a strong free market approach to production and marketing of livestock. WSGA’s main priority is protection of the livestock producer through advocacy. WSGA encourages interaction within industry leaders that promotes education and helps define philosophical issues in agriculture.

Contacts:

Aaron Brower
President, WSGA
(403) 344-2424
brower@xplornet.com

Lindsye Dunbar
Manager, WSGA
(403) 250-9121
office@wsga.ca