

PARKLAND COUNTY SOLAR FARMS

PROPOSED LAND USE BYLAW TEXT AMENDMENTS



E1NS

FOCUS

- Who we are and our role in this project
- Overview of proposed project sites
- Overview of proposed amendments and rationale
- Conformance and alignment with existing plans and policy

WHO WE ARE & OUR ROLE

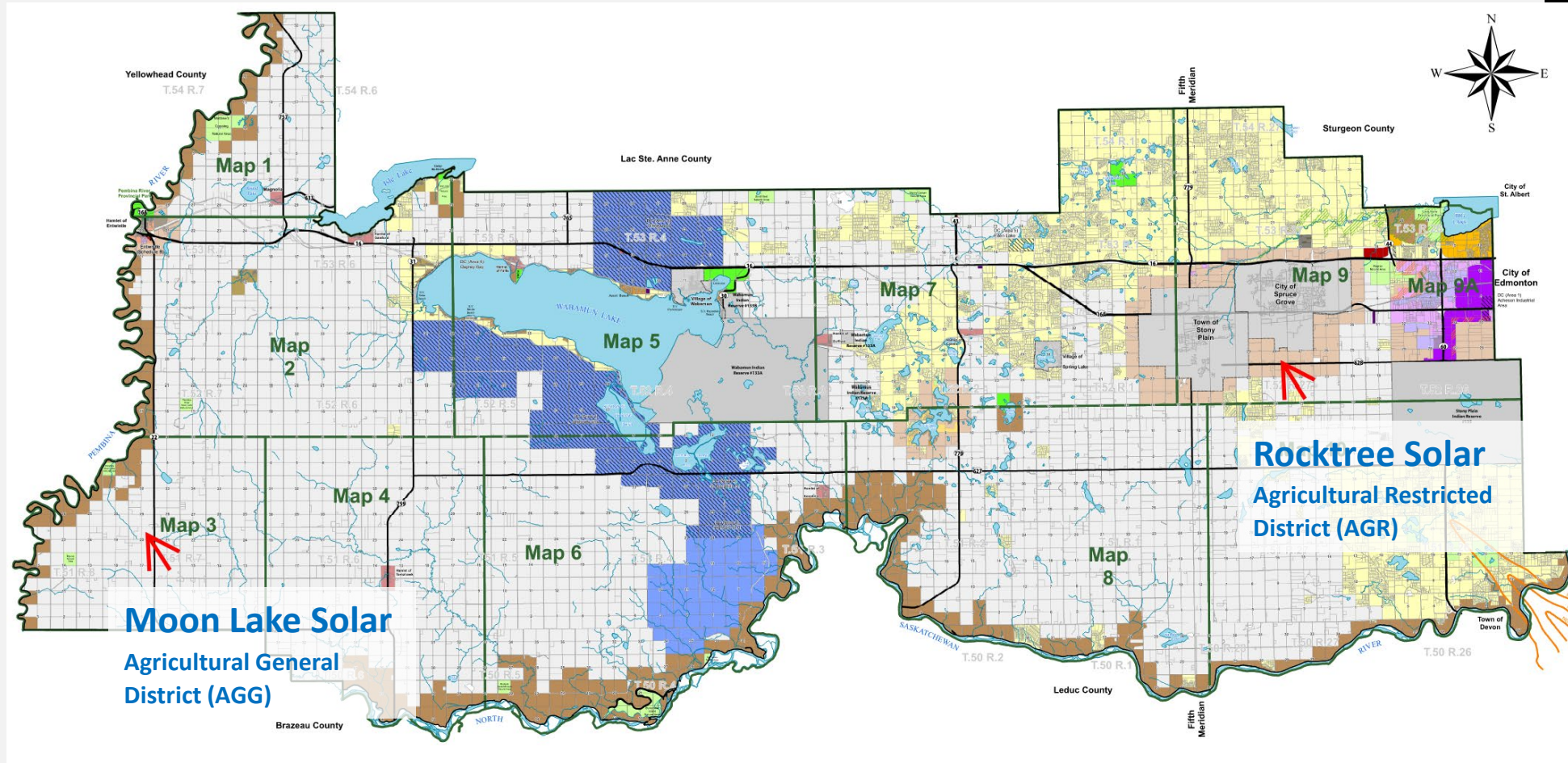
WHO WE ARE

- Land use planning and development consultancy
- We specialize in site design, rezonings/redistrictings, permitting, public consultation and engagement, and project management
- Based in Edmonton

OUR ROLE IN THIS PROJECT

- Conducting background precedent research and analysis
- Reviewing Land Use Bylaw
- Drafting proposed text amendments to the County's LUB
- Working with County staff to iteratively revise text amendments and overall approach to regulating solar farms as a land use

PROPOSED SITES & DISTRICTS



WHY THESE SITES?

- Utility-scale solar projects require specific site conditions for maximum efficiency and feasibility
- Voltarix considers site flatness, proximity to existing distribution systems, and areas where environmental impacts will be nominal
- In Parkland County, these sites tend to be in rural or semi-rural areas, most of which are zoned either AGG or AGR. AGR lands are particularly well-suited due to proximity to high voltage lines
- Through extensive analysis, Voltarix identified the two proposed sites for Moon Lake and Rocktree as being the best options for development

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

- Approached County planning staff in early 2021 with the two sites identified to discuss what the best approach might be to develop these projects
- County staff recommended amending the AGG and AGR districts to allow for solar farm uses as discretionary, rather than opt for a direct-control zone to cover the two sites
- Worked iteratively with County staff throughout the year to craft text amendments that are now before you for consideration

OVERVIEW OF AGG & AGR DISTRICTS

Agricultural General District (AGG)

- Purpose is to protect and enhance agricultural production while accommodating a range of supportive and compatible land uses.
 - Permitted uses include “Wind Energy Converter System – Minor”
 - Discretionary uses include “Wind Energy Converter System – Major”

Agricultural Restricted District (AGR)

- Purpose is to permit agricultural production and related farming activities while providing limited opportunity on a discretionary basis for compatible non-farm related land uses, and to prevent premature or scattered subdivision.
 - Permitted uses include “Wind Energy Converter System – Minor”
 - Discretionary uses include “Wind Energy Converter System – Major”

PURPOSE OF LUB AMENDMENTS

To amend the County's Land Use Bylaw (LUB) to include "Solar Farm" as a Discretionary Use to the Agricultural Restricted District (AGR) and Agricultural General District (AGG) and add "12.31 Solar Farm" to Specific Use Regulations.

Why?

To enable the development of two utility-scale solar arrays in the County that will produce approximately 50 MW of energy per year, the equivalent of 15,000 homes worth of electricity consumption, while also conserving prime agricultural land and ensuring contextual sensitivity to adjacent land uses.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS SUMMARY

1. Add "Solar Farm" as discretionary use to AGG and AGR zones

2. Add Section "12.31 Solar Farm" to Specific Use Regulations

- Require AUC Approval prior to County Development Permit (DP) issuance
- Require Provincial permits and approvals as condition to County DP
- Establish side setbacks and require Alberta Transportation approval for developments near Highways
- Maximum height of 5.0m for Solar Energy Systems
- Require surface drainage plan review by County
- Establish mandatory site security fencing requirements
- Require local fire department accessibility review
- Require weed control plan review by County
- Require decommissioning and reclamation plan outline review by County

WHY INCLUDE SOLAR FARMS IN AGG & AGR?

- Preferred approach of County planning staff
- Solar Farms **do not impact future viability of agricultural lands** and unused spaces could technically still be used for agricultural purposes if deemed appropriate (e.g., fire risk, weed control, etc.)
- **Site suitability** is a major factor for solar farm feasibility and as such they cannot be located everywhere - AGG & AGR as most appropriate
- Alberta Utilities Commission as a major check/balance as far as oversight of operations and decommissioning

ROLE OF AUC

Project	Muni	Solar in Ag Zone?	Policy?
Travers Solar	Vulcan County, AB	Yes – Rural Industrial (d)	Section 33 of LUB – very detailed
Claresholm Solar Project	Claresholm, AB	No ag zone, but ground mounted solar is discretionary in most zones	Schedule 13 of LUB – Alternative Energy
Medicine Hat Solar Project	Medicine Hat, AB	Renewable Energy is discretionary in IB, IG, IH, FUD	Only a definition of Renewable Energy in LUB
Suffield Solar Farm	Cypress County, AB	Yes, solar panels are discretionary in all municipal land use zones	Section 61 deals with Solar Energy
Prairie Sunlight Solar Project	MD of Taber, AB	Yes – discretionary in Rural Agriculture	Schedule 11 deals with Solar Energy Systems
Yellow Lake Solar Project	County of Forty Mile, AB	No – discretionary in Solar Energy Facility (SEF) district	Schedule 82 deals with Solar Energy Facility district

- Findings of LUB scan to understand regulatory approach in other communities is presented to the left
- Many Alberta municipalities with existing utility solar projects largely defer their Land Use Bylaw to other third-party regulators such as the Alberta Utility Commission (AUC) and Alberta Electrical System Operator (AESO).
 - This is true for:
 - Cypress County
 - Vulcan County
 - Claresholm
 - MD of Taber

CONFORMANCE / ALIGNMENT WITH PLANS

- Aligns with County MDP that speaks to the importance of connections – including to emerging economic development opportunities like renewable energy
- MDP also identifies the importance of power generation facilities to local employment (Policy 5.0.8)
- Renewable energy and sustainable development as key for the County to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and diversify its economic base
- Proposed regulatory approach provides the County with flexibility and oversight needed to ensure proposed solar farms do not run contrary to the MDP or other important legislation or policies

CONFORMANCE / ALIGNMENT WITH PLANS

- Aligns with EMRB Growth Plan and policies focused on diversifying the economy, protecting natural areas, integrating land use and infrastructure, and ensuring wise management of agricultural resources
- The EMRB's Regional Agricultural Master Plan, released in August 2021, establishes several policy areas aimed to minimizing the erosion and fragmentation of prime agricultural lands in the region
 - Policy Area 2 recognizes that agricultural and non-agricultural land uses can co-exist provided they can be reclaimed for agricultural uses or, in some cases, rehabilitated for ecological purposes
 - Policy Area 3 recognizes that lands near urban centres currently under production are 'transitional' and should remain in agricultural production until needed for population and employment use

PROPOSED SITES & DISTRICTS

5.2 Land Use

Through the Land Evaluation and Site Assessment evaluation, prime agricultural lands have been identified in the Region. The LESA Map will inform the direction of future growth while continuing to create certainty for the future for agricultural producers in the EMR.

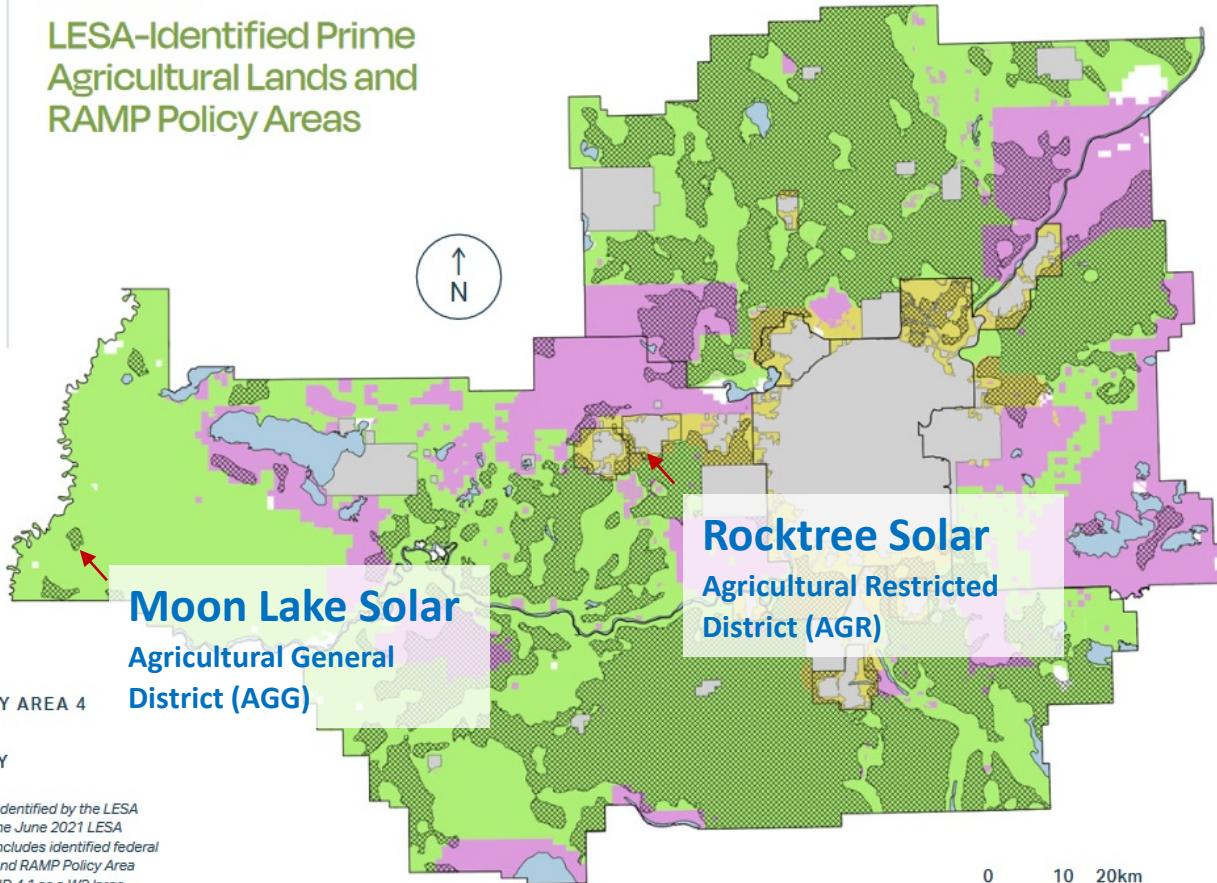
Schedule G

LESA-Identified Prime Agricultural Lands and RAMP Policy Areas

Legend

- PRIME AGRICULTURAL LANDS
- POLICY AREA 1
- POLICY AREA 2
- POLICY AREA 3
- NON-STUDY AREA/POLICY AREA 4
- WATERBODIES
- EMRB-MEMBER BOUNDARY

Data Sources: Prime Agricultural Areas as identified by the LESA model under the parameters specified in the June 2021 LESA Model Technical Report. Non-Study Area includes identified federal lands, non-EMRB member municipalities, and RAMP Policy Area 4. Waterbodies are as identified by AGRASID 4.1 as a W3 large waterbody and are also excluded from the Study Area.



SUMMARY

- Solar Farms as a Discretionary Use provides the County with a high degree of oversight on determining if such uses are appropriate at a site-specific level within these Districts. Balance is struck between deferring to AUC for DP submission requirements and topic areas of particular importance to the County (e.g. fire and weed control)
- Achieves protection of prime agricultural lands while balancing economic development opportunities and maintain consistency with recent County approach to regulating Cannabis Cultivation uses
- Language and approach aligns with the County's MDP and the EMRB Growth Plan, as well as ensures the right level of detail is provided by applicants to the County to evaluate proposed Solar Farm uses.

THANK YOU



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