

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Topic: Alberta Wetland Replacement Program Funding

Introduction:

This report provides an overview of Alberta's Wetland Replacement Program (WRP) and the benefits that participation will provide to the County's infrastructure and ALUS programs.

Background:

Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) has funding available for eligible wetland replacement projects. The funding comes from money transferred to the Province for wetland-affecting activities, primarily during the development process. AEP is seeking to establish partnerships with eligible municipalities and formalize these partnerships through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Once an MOU has been signed, municipal partners will be able to submit project proposals for funds to support wetland restoration projects as part of the County's infrastructure and ALUS programs. If projects are approved, funds will be provided for all stages of the projects including planning, implementation and monitoring. Funds equivalent to current land rates will also be negotiated for the landowner as compensation for the area consumed by the wetland replacement.

Analysis:

Administration has undertaken a thorough review process of the program and associated documentation, as well as conducted a number of conversations with AEP via conference calls. The following points have been considered:

- Parkland County falls into AEP's high priority area for funding.
- Due to the limited number of MOUs being signed in 2020, a greater amount of funding and program flexibility is available to Parkland this fiscal year.
- Signing the MOU requires no financial or project proposal obligations.
- An MOU must be signed by July 9th in order to access 2020 funding.
- WRP funding has potential to support road and drainage programs using natural infrastructure.
- WRP funding has the potential to support ALUS producers through water management and land compensation.
- A number of potential 2020 projects have been identified with ALUS farm families and along drainage routes.

Financials:

- \$500,000 is currently set aside for Parkland County in AEP's 2020 budget. The County has the potential to access up to \$2,000,000 if eligible projects exist.
- No additional costs to administration as fund should compensate for work already being undertaken.
- Income would support farm and County infrastructure/operations through land compensation and improved drainage/water management.

Conclusion/Summary:

Administration supports Parkland County's participation in Alberta's Wetland Restoration Program by entering into a Memorandum of Understanding with Alberta Environment and Parks.

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