

## Environment Committee

The challenge of COVID-19 has had its impact on CCA-to-government engagement on environmental policy issues. Our target remains firm, to enhance opportunities to partner on policy, especially environmental policy solutions we can crystalize with the federal government. Of course, we aim to counter the negative public misunderstandings related to these beef and environmental issues and liaise with CCA Public and Stakeholder Engagement team on that front. Across 2020 we continued to engage the federal government on a number of key files with an environmental focus seeking meaningful consultation and community-led and managed engagement to achieve positive outcomes.

### Fisheries Act & DFO Aquatic SAR Recovery Plans

CCA has committed to consultations with the Department of Fisheries (DFO) on the regulatory development around the Fisheries Act. As well, CCA continues to engage with Parliamentarians, Senators, and government officials concerning the Fisheries Act. The Act received Royal Assent in June 2019 prior to the regulations being developed. The DFO pledged to consult with stakeholders on the development of standards, codes of practice, and prescribed works regulations. This process will continue out until 2023 if not beyond.

DFO has developed six interim codes of practice, without lead consultations, and we have provided initial feedback on these codes before they are to be finalized soon. Two of these codes raised concerns including beaver dam removal and culvert maintenance. CCA has drafted and submitted to DFO alternative text and recommendations and have sought clarity from DFO on the beaver dam removal code. To date, there has been no response.



CCA is also engaging with DFO for clarity on the development of recovery strategies for specific aquatic species including Bull Trout, Chinook and Coho Salmon and others, as it is unclear how critical habitat is determined.

Despite promises for robust and meaningful consultations with industry on this file, DFO has been slow to implement direct contact and consultations. However, in late December 2020, DFO launched their next phase of engagement with stakeholders, so we do remain hopeful this process will bear fruit in the coming weeks and months.

### SARPAL 2

In August, CCA learned the Federal Minister of Environment Jonathan Wilkinson indicated Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) would commit funding to the next version of SARPAL. CCA was encouraged that we had achieved this milestone and reached out to ECCC to get started on drafting a contribution agreement in order to get funding streams running and boots on the ground. Unfortunately, progress halted at the most senior ECCC levels to draft a template and share how they sought to conduct SARPAL 2.

At the end of September, we received a template and more information, including news that SARPAL 2 would be substantially different from the former version. ECCC is placing significant emphasis on the priority species at risk in southeastern Alberta and southwestern Saskatchewan, namely Greater Sage Grouse (GSG) and less so on a multiple-species approach seen in the former SARPAL program. This translates into a split program; one aspect being the usual approach working on the ground with ranchers on habitat conservation strategies, and other habitat protection and enhancements.

The new second aspect is ECCC's desire to test the waters on term conservation easements with landowners specifically to enhance/protect GSG habitat. After further revisions and communications with ECCC, on December 2, 2020, CCA submitted the draft work plan. At time of writing, negotiations on the contribution agreement continue with ECCC staff.

**TESA Enhancements**

This year marks the 25th anniversary of CCA's The Environmental Stewardship Award (TESA). To celebrate this milestone, significant enhancements are being undertaken. These will not mark the occasion but increase the profile of the award, regional interest in getting nominees and a general awareness among politicians, bureaucrats and the general public regarding the significant stewardship activities of Canada's beef cattle producers as well as the environmental benefits of beef cattle production in the Canadian context.

Enhancements include a revised and expanded communication strategy, alignment with conservation groups as foundational champions of the award and bolstering the judging structure, process and revisions to the eligibility for nomination to better include certain regions of the country. These enhancements will be complete in the first quarter of 2021.

**National Grassland Task Force**

In early 2020, the Canadian Wildlife Federation, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society and ECCC had been discussing the potential to create a national grassland task force with the aim of protecting this endangered ecosystem. CCA staff attended the first briefing session in November. It was noted that the primary entities invited to this session were mostly environmental non-governmental organizations, indigenous organizations and civil servants.

Noting the lack of agricultural representation, CCA requested beef producers be added to this task force understanding beef producers in Canada manage over 44 million acres of grasslands. It was agreed to include producers and Environment Committee (EC) members Lynn Grant and Miles Wowk agreed to be members on this task force and report back to the EC.

**PMRA Strychnine Decision**

At the EC meeting during the 2020 CCA Annual General Meeting, the EC outlined Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency's (PMRA) re-evaluation decision to cancel the registered use of strychnine for the control of Richardson's ground squirrels. In submissions, CCA had made its case noting the science used to back PMRA's decision was likely flawed. With the decision rendered, the PMRA allows those who oppose the decision to file a formal Notice of Objection. The notice, however, can only deal with scientific issues.

CCA, in concert with the Canadian Canola Grower's Association (CCGA), the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM) and the Saskatchewan Stock Growers (SSGA) rallied to share ideas and build individual yet aligned messaging in the Notices of Objections filed to PMRA. CCA also co-signed a letter with SARM, SSGA, Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association and CCGA to Minister of Health Patty Hajdu noting the research cited does not support PMRA's final decision and in

fact, the research shows strychnine to be the most effective and safest way to control these pests. PMRA has yet to render a response on the registration cancellation.

**Committee Members:** Duane Thompson, **Chair**, Miles Wowk, **Vice Chair**, Grant Huffman, Doug Sawyer, Stuart Somerville, Lynn Grant, Reg Schellenberg, Mike Duguid, Gordon Adams, Craig McLaughlin, Holly Thompson, **YCC ex-officio**, Kate Barnett, **YCC ex-officio**.

**CCA Staff:** Larry Thomas

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