

WEED AND PEST SURVEILLANCE AND MONITORING TECHNOLOGY GRANT

- WHEREAS:** Agricultural Service Boards (ASBs) advise on and help organize direct weed and pest control;
- WHEREAS:** ASBs promote, enhance and protect viable and sustainable agriculture with a view to improving the economic viability of the agricultural producer;
- WHEREAS:** ASBs promote and develop agricultural policies to meet the needs of the municipality;
- WHEREAS:** All ASBs must report weed and pest monitoring and surveillance as part of their grant requirement;
- WHEREAS:** The compilation of data collected from the 69 different Agricultural Service Boards requires extensive labour and time on the part of Alberta Agriculture and Forestry and municipalities;
- WHEREAS:** The information received may be for up to 2 growing seasons and has become dated for municipal and provincial use;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

THAT ALBERTA'S AGRICULTURAL SERVICE BOARDS REQUEST

that Alberta Agriculture and Forestry provide a technology grant and personnel resources to assist municipalities in establishing a provincial pest and weed surveillance and monitoring system to improve timely access to data for all the Agricultural stakeholders.

SPONSORED BY: Woodlands County

MOVED BY: _____

SECONDED BY: _____

CARRIED: _____

DEFEATED: _____

STATUS: Provincial

DEPARTMENT: _____

BACKGROUND

A Provincial/Municipal Pest and Weed Software initiative would reduce administration cost and also give the Province an “up to date” view of what is going on in the province. Considering the current process for 2019, the files will be gathered and sent to Alberta Agriculture and Forestry (AAF) in spring of 2020 then compiled and released by mid to late summer. This becomes difficult for the municipalities, producers, and industry partners to make informed decisions and secure market access when pest and weed data is dated and up to two growing seasons old.

Many counties and municipalities are using various software or methods to track weeds and pests for their ASB operations. The software provides data information including maps, data sets, and other attributes that can greatly help for surveillance and monitoring activities and help make decisions based on actual field data. Currently, many counties and municipalities do not possess GIS software to track weeds and pests as it is cost prohibitive. The use of hard copy county maps and excel tables to track activities is common in these municipalities. Tracking software can range from \$10,000 to \$20,000 for initial setup fees and additionally involve an annual subscription fee of \$10,000. If each municipality were able to obtain a uniform and compatible software system, the entire province would be able to collect cumulative data that can be used for various surveillance and monitoring purposes (e.g. rate of spreading of weeds or disease, pinpoint specific area in case of outbreak, etc.). This uniform software would provide full assurance for the industry for market access and strengthen surveillance and monitoring activities while at the same time assisting decision makers regarding policies and management activities to reduce the cost of their operation of controlling weeds and pests.

Sharing this data would also reduce municipal and provincial administrative duties as the access to limited information could be regularly and perhaps automatically shared. ASB's in turn, could monitor situations locally, regionally and provincially with more ease.

This would allow for identification of trends and concerns so the local ASBs could more effectively as per the ***Agricultural Service Board Act Section (2) a,b,d,e***

- *act as an advisory body and to assist the council and the Minister, in matters of mutual concern, (with both parties having the same information)*
- *advise on and to help organize and direct weed and pest control,*
- *promote, enhance and protect viable and sustainable agriculture with a view to improving the economic viability of the agricultural producer, and*
- *promote and develop agricultural policies to meet the needs of the municipality*

Concerning privacy protection, access to information would be limited to broader, less focused details. This information could be uploaded or accessed remotely by AAF quite easily and still provide privacy protection. The sharing of information would have no bearing on how a municipality would address any infestation for Pest or Noxious Weeds. One municipality could

still issue notices while the neighboring municipality could have a different communication strategy, program and policy.

Providing grant support for the purchase and maintenance of a uniform and Provincially compatible monitoring software system would increase bargaining power for municipalities in accessing the system. Such a system would be mutually beneficial for both municipalities and the Government of Alberta with increased accuracy, timely data delivery, decreased workload and reliable data for secure market access.