



# Lower Athabasca Regional Advisory Council

## Meeting Notes – Meeting #6

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**Date:** August 4-5, 2009  
**Place/Time** Fort McMurray, AB. (Radisson Hotel)  
**Next Meeting:** September 2-3, 2009  
Bonnyville, AB.

**Attendees:** **Regional Advisory Council Members:**

Cecilia Quist, Melissa Blake, Glen Semenchuk, Rick Pawluk, Roy Vermillion, Howard Ewashko, Heather Kennedy, Clarence Makowecki, Doug Parrish, Eric Butterworth, Hildy Hanson, Don Pope, Lanny Coulson, Dave Theriault, Marc Stevenson, Peter Koning

**Regional Planning Team:**

Simon O'Byrne, Bonnie McInnis, Terry Koch, Shawn Bravender, Jonathan Mackay, Scott Milligan, Mike Sullivan, Diane Simsovic, Jennifer Steber, Toby Schneider, Selena Cole, John Zylstra, Crystal Damer, Justin Ellis, Dave Hervieux

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### Introduction

Vice Chair Hildy Hanson called the meeting to order, introduced the agenda and requested acceptance of the July meeting minutes. Heather Kennedy assumed the role of Chairperson at noon.

The objectives of the meeting were to discuss:

- Feedback from Ministerial Working Group (MWG).
- Make recommendations to Regional Planning Team (RPT) and MWG on the following:
  - Conservation:
    - Decision on map that conserves 20 per cent of the Lower Athabasca Region (LAR).
    - Direction given on the recommended strategy of how to conserve 20 per cent of the LAR.
    - Strategy to consider exceeding the conservation of 20 per cent.
  - Recreation and tourism map(s) and management and strategy plans.
  - Forestry map(s) and long-term forestry land-use and policy considerations.
  - Agriculture with respect to preservation of the agricultural economy within the LAR.
- › Focus on what considerations need to be made on the following:
  - Economic development



- Best Practices model using production level of four million barrels per day (mbd).

### LARP Report Update

- Members were advised that the SharePoint site has been set up and has been populated.
- Members were advised that report writing is now taking place. The document is updated weekly, with new content and revisions highlighted.

### Regional Economic Development

- Regional economic development agencies were defined, and an overview of the Provincial Energy Strategy was provided.
  - There is not enough involvement from local economic development offices within each First Nation.
  - Athabasca Tribal Council (ATC) is working with First Nations to develop economic strategies.
- Request information/presentation on municipal finance.
- Request to see population projections.
- Presentation requested on royalty system and technological change in the oilsands.
- Discussion of oilsands, upgrading, investment, royalties and technology.
  - Capital investment is behind; infrastructure is an enabler of growth.
  - Companies are investing billions in long-term investments (in for the long term), province is currently lagging (at two mbd). What about increased production in future?
  - At 1.7 trillion barrels, based on two/four/six mbd this equals hundreds of years of production, maps et al indicate decline in 50 years.
  - Challenges of supplying labour, infrastructure (social, municipal, residential, etc.) balanced with cost of living.
  - Aging infrastructure must be considered
  - Pace of development vs. level of development – the pace is the critical factor. “Build for Christmas Day shopping or average day.”
  - Viability of agriculture in lieu of future growth. Challenges include labour costs, increased fuel prices, land allocation etc.
  - If plan limits production, will this also limit technological advances?
  - Investment and income – any other industry in the world comparable? Fair economic rent, quest for bitumen rut.
- Discussion on managing the resource better, not all at one blow. Inherent risks of

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slowing the pace of production, benefits of paralleling production with proportional development.

- Most important sector of the Canadian economy.
- Discussion on infrastructure security and emergency planning – further discussion in September’s RAC meeting

**MWG Update**

- Revisions to the terms of reference were explained.
  - NOx and SOx threshold numbers pulled; dates changed to seasons (“Nov.” now “winter”).
- RAC to conclude activities in November/December.
- Outcomes and Objectives to come back to MWG in September.
- First Nations consultation discussed.

**Conservation, Tourism and Recreation**

- Traditional use areas – request that First Nations have input and choose own conservation and recreation areas
- Maps will go out in draft form for public and First Nations feedback. RAC may make further recommendations resulting from that feedback
- Discussion on conservation of caribou
  - Caribou areas continuing to shrink, minimum sizes have any value, synergies of adjacent land uses.
  - Perception of “token” conservation areas to be avoided.
  - Discussion of predator control.
  - Conservation areas recommendations for post bitumen landscape.
  - Protection of caribou main concern, considering status as legally defined species at risk, obliged to protect.
  - Solution is complex as it involves multiple efforts, no single silver bullet solution.
  - Objective to maintain the overall herd population of individual localized herds?
  - Scientific knowledge should be coupled with traditional knowledge.
- Restrict access to wild lands, while acknowledging prior uses.

**Conservation Areas (One through 13)**

- Individual areas discussed.
- Lower Athabasca Regional Plan (LARP) will provide management intent ‘skeleton’; implementation though Wildlife Act, Parks Act, Public Lands Act.



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- Conservation offsets may or may not be applicable to this region.
- First Nations input requested.
- Briefing on Cold Lake Air Weapons Range needed.
- Missed areas: Lakeland Park; Bird Sanctuary; Sand River Area, River Valley setbacks, South of Christina River, AI-Pac FMA.
- Post-reclamation land uses should be considered (i.e. after resource extraction).

Recreation and Tourism Areas

- Conflict resolution regarding recreation areas to be addressed in September including 'best fit' map.
- First Nation discussion
  - Request for an 'Aboriginal Values' map, and additional input on conservation areas.
  - Information needed regarding the preparation of the 'Areas of Aboriginal Importance' map.
  - Proposed information includes all information gathered/contributed to date – further First Nations information is needed.
  - First Nations capacity to provide information is limited.
  - Challenges: First Nations government to Alberta government consultation required. LARP process not recognized.
  - Fort MacKay conservation values have been considered.
  - Treaty Rights encompass entire LARP area.
- Areas brought forward for further consideration and RAC recommendations.
  - Gypsy Gordon Lake Campground
  - Lac La Biche canoe circuit
  - Lakeland Country
  - Jackson Lake and surrounding area
- Discussion of letter from Treaty 8 requesting 30 per cent conservation land target and specific lands (available on SharePoint site).

Conservation Areas – Beyond 20 per cent

- Concern with excluding areas due to forestry – there are options to include these areas.
- Discussions with Cold Lake Wing Commander are pending.
- Conservation may equal economic restriction, should be cautious.
- Forty per cent to be set as a target.



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- RAC's original work – merge two maps together for next meeting.
- Suggest need to address economic impact of area by area basis.
- Triad (Zones 1, 2, 3) approach suggested – should be demonstrated on a map.
- Conservation areas post bitumen – time component.
- Using CDI definition of 'conservation'.

### Forestry

- Reclaimed lands may or may not have been a Boreal forest. Reclamation is complex – how do you create a bog etc.
- First Nations values of lands include berries, trees, grasslands, etc.
- Discussion on the targeted 25,000 hectares:
  - Arbitrary?
  - Less than one per cent of agricultural lands
  - Not the whole package
  - Economic loss
- Need to look at modelling assumptions.
  - Delineation is bigger than actual operations – should be reflected in model.

### Agriculture

- Discussions on market gardens, charred wood fertilizer, land classification.
- Questions regarding Beaver River watershed – bring back suggestions in September.
- RPT suggestions for protecting agricultural land requested.
- Lac La Biche riparian strategy to be provided.

### Biodiversity

- Presentation on biodiversity and impact on fish populations.

### Land-use Framework Initiatives

- RAC should provide advice regarding development around lakes.
- First Nations capacity building – Stantec to provide assistance putting together proposals.
- Bring map of proposed utilities corridors/transportation/rail for next RAC meeting.
- There will be a stakeholder/public consultation process regarding conservation and stewardship.
- Wetland strategy coming from Ministry, and must be consistent with Land-use

**Framework.**

**Deliverables**

- Presentation on municipal finance needed.
- Update on meeting with Wing Commander.
- Modelling results – air thresholds and methodology.
- Review Draft Plan – comments to Stantec.
- Public Input – Vision, Outcomes, Strategies; pending RAC, RPT, Cabinet.
  - RAC may not have opportunity to address public comments
- *Alberta Land Stewardship Act (ALSA)* (copies to be provided on SharePoint), ensure links to LUF.

**Discussion**

- Concerns about progress of modelling, thresholds, water information, pros and cons, alternatives, etc. – needed to make decisions.
- Concern about depth and progress of plan.
- Finishing mapping exercise, Aboriginal significant areas.
- RAC needs to come to decisions wherever possible.
- Concern regarding conservation process.
- "Best practices" is inappropriate. Rather, the assumptions tend to be a mix of a small number of things that can be done today and a longer list of things that might be possible in time as technology develops. Cumulative Environmental Management Association calls this kind of scenario "Innovative Approaches. Another idea is to call them "leading practices"
- Implications for municipalities.
- Treaty 6 First Nations to be contacted regarding value areas and maps.
- Treaty 8 First Nations will not be able to provide maps, but talk about conservation, values, etc.
- Noted that consensus will not be reached on all issues, and that not everyone is pleased with all things.
- Representative for forestry may be needed at the table.

**Closing**

What documents from SharePoint site can be shared:

- *Confidential* – for RAC eyes only.
- *Draft* – Can be talked about.
- *Final* – Can be shared with anyone.

The meeting adjourned Wednesday, August 5, at 5 p.m.



The next meeting to be held September 2-3, in Bonnyville, AB.

The foregoing is considered to be a true and accurate record of all items discussed. If any discrepancies or inconsistencies are noted, please contact the writer immediately.

**Shawn Bravender B.Sc. CET**

Stantec

[Shawn.Bravender@Stantec.com](mailto:Shawn.Bravender@Stantec.com)

**Deliverables for Next Meeting**

Transportation and utilities corridors (TUC)

- TUC will be discussed and a map showing preferred routes will be presented.

Conservation, Recreation and Tourism

- Come back with more detailed economic analysis for conservation, recreation and tourism.
  - Also consider environmental goods and services in that calculation.
- Need to understand caribou recovery strategy regarding areas eight, nine and 10.
- Need 'conflict resolution' regarding recreation areas.
- Request to consider population forecast and recreation capacity (population balanced with recreation supply).
- Come back with a zoning approach (i.e. Zone 1 MGT, Zone 2 MGT & Zone 3 MGT)
- Cecilia Quist to provide Lac La Biche Riparian Strategy.
- How might conservation include the Environmentally Significant Areas identified already – if at all – in the 20 per cent or more range?
- Best Fit for Recreation to come back in September.
- Need a write-up of each conservation and recreation area.
  - Robust description of why each area has been recommended.

Aboriginal

- Request for information from RPT regarding traditional use mapping.
  - How was the 'Areas of Aboriginal Importance' map created?

Agriculture

- Should we expand the agricultural land base, keep it the same, or reduce it?
- Class 4 lands – can it be used for timber shortfalls or further conservation or is



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this land being used for grazing?

- RPT needs to make a suggestion about protecting agricultural land from fragmentation and enhancing its conservation in LAR.
- Link between Beaver River and agriculture.
  - Look at data and see if there is a problem with water quality due to agriculture.

Economic Development

- Do the same numbers for forestry and agriculture that were done in the presentation for oilsands so that ‘apple to apple’ comparisons can be made.

Municipal Finance

- Linking growth to infrastructure.
  - Municipal Affairs to present on how municipal financing and infrastructure are currently linked or not linked to growth.

Other

- Copy of the ALSA to be sent to RAC.
- Debriefing of the meeting with the Cold Lake Wing Commander.