

Alberta Wetland Replacement Program Memorandum of Understanding**Report Purpose**

To introduce Council to the new provincial Wetland Replacement Program (WRP) and formalize the resources required to realize opportunities for wetland restoration with Strathcona County.

Recommendation

THAT the Memorandum of Understanding, as set out in enclosure 2 of the September 8, 2020 Planning and Development Services report, be approved.

Our Prioritized Strategic Goals

Goal 4 - Ensure effective stewardship of water, land, air and energy resources

Goal 5 - Foster collaboration through regional, community and governmental partnerships

Goal 2 - Manage, invest and plan for sustainable municipal infrastructure

Report

Wetlands are a vital part of Alberta's ecological landscape and necessary for a sustainable economy and healthy communities. The Alberta WRP aims to re-establish wetlands in partnership with Albertans by providing resources for collaborative restoration projects across the province. Under the Alberta Wetland Policy and the Alberta Wetland Mitigation Directive, the WRP will offset wetland habitat loss due to development activities. A priority of the Alberta Wetland Policy and the WRP is to replace wetlands within municipalities and watersheds that have had the highest amount of lost wetland area and value since 2015, as well as areas of high historical loss. The WRP will focus on fostering partnerships with municipalities that have a vested interest in wetland replacement. Working together, Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) and municipalities will help achieve shared outcomes for wetland replacement and conservation.

The guiding vision, mission, goals and policies that Strathcona County has in place, as well as the dedication to the Beaver Hills Biosphere and the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance, demonstrates a commitment which aligns with the goals and purpose of the WRP. Strathcona County has been participating in the development of the WRP and has committed to an inter-departmental committee to formalize the resources required to realize opportunities for wetland restoration on our landscape. While this is a new program, Strathcona County has been working with AEP since 2010 and the development of the Alberta Wetland Policy. The province has recognized Strathcona County as an innovative municipality – with the resources and the resolve to test their new program.

Strathcona County was provided a draft of the Memorandum of Understanding in April, which was reviewed by Legislative and Legal Services. The MOU enclosed is a culmination of the review and discussion process to date. The next step for implementing the WRP in Strathcona County is to sign the MOU with AEP prior to October 2020. The MOU is non-binding and reviewed annually. By signing the MOU, Strathcona County would agree to an initial three-year commitment to the WRP and collaboration with AEP to directly access funds dedicated to wetland restoration on our landscape.

By committing to the WRP we can more thoughtfully plan, design and construct replacement wetlands with funding from the province on our landscape. No municipal funding is required for the WRP. The work required to identify projects and prepare proposals will be done in-house by the WRP Committee members. Funds to complete projects will be provided by the

province. The purpose of the WRP is to access funds already collected in-lieu of wetland losses on the landscape which are held by the province. Proposals submitted and approved by AEP, will be subject to a Service Agreement outlining payment amounts and payment schedule.

Council and Committee History

March 3, 2020 Council approved SER-009-041 Conservation of Biological Diversity (2020/56)

Other Impacts

Policy: n/a

Legislative/Legal: Commitment to partnership via Memorandum of Understanding.

Interdepartmental: Initiation of the WRP Committee, consisting of representatives of Planning & Development Services, Transportation Planning & Engineering, Transportation & Agriculture Services, Utilities, and Corporate Finance.

Master Plan/Framework: n/a

Communication Plan

A detailed communications plan will be developed to inform the community of the WRP and the partnership with the province. A variety of communications tools will be used including social media, information release, and the website.

Enclosures

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| 1 | WRP information package |
| 2 | Memorandum of Understanding |