

Wetland Replacement Program proposed project sites**Report Purpose**

To provide Council with an update on the Alberta Wetland Replacement Program and seek Council's approval for the proposed project sites.

Recommendation

THAT the four proposed project sites, Uncas, Galloway Park, Silver Birch Hills, and Busenius Estates, be approved for site visits and pre-proposal work in the Wetland Replacement Program.

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 Wetland Replacement Program (WRP) aims to re-establish wetlands in partnership with Albertans by providing resources for collaborative restoration projects across the province.

Since signing the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the province in September 2020, an internal WRP Committee has been initiated and Terms of Reference have been developed. The WRP Committee consists of representatives from multiple County departments, including Planning and Development Services; Utilities; Transportation and Agriculture Services; Recreation, Parks and Culture; Transportation Planning and Engineering; Corporate Finance; and Legislative and Legal Services. A representative from Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) also sits on the WRP Committee.

The WRP Committee has identified a list of projects on County-owned land that meet the intent of the WRP while also providing drainage relief for the surrounding landscape and resiliency within the infrastructure. Education and awareness opportunities have also been identified as priorities for these project sites.

Council has requested that prior to submitting a proposal to AEP, potential projects are brought to Council for approval. Council approval for the following four project sites would provide project opportunities for the initial period of the MOU (2020 – 2023). Proposed projects also require approval from AEP. The internal WRP Committee will work closely with AEP to ensure proposed projects meet the proposal requirements.

Proposed Project Site	Challenge	Opportunity
Uncas 7820647 R NE 21-52-21	Surface water capacity concerns in the neighbourhood.	Partner with the University of Alberta Faculty of Extension in providing the Restoring and Creating Wetlands course. Restoring wetlands along the existing drainage courses would help to increase resiliency in the drainage basin, provide education opportunities, and address water capacity concerns.
Galloway Park 7821739 1 R5 NE 8-54-22	Drainage issues have been documented on the west side of the subdivision. The Ross Creek tributary to the northwest continually spills over the bank in the spring, and the addition of water from the subdivision exasperates many drainage complaints in the area.	Creating a wetland on the reserve within the subdivision would increase resiliency of the drainage basin by increasing water storage capacity, provide education opportunities, and address flooding concerns.
Silver Birch Hills 5048TR 1 R4 SE 12-52-23	Drainage issues have been documented at downstream locations.	Restoring a wetland on the reserve would increase resiliency of the drainage basin by increasing water storage capacity, provide education opportunities, and address flooding concerns.
Busenius Estates 3194TR 1 R16 SW 27-52-22	Drainage issues have been documented in the area, as the reserve consists of a large flat area with two trenched drainage corridors converging.	Restoring a wetland on the reserve would help to increase resiliency, provide education opportunities, and increase water storage capacity in the area.

Once direction on the potential project sites has been received from Council, the WRP Committee will complete site visits with AEP as part of the pre-proposal process to determine which site to submit a proposal for 2021. By identifying more than one potential project site, the WRP Committee will be able to plan for implementation of projects for multiple years, while allowing for flexibility to consider emerging opportunities.

The WRP Committee will develop a proposal to submit to AEP, based on the proposal submission guidelines, including a defined scope and budget. Once the project is approved by AEP, a Service Agreement will be signed. Approved projects are 100% funded by the Province. The Service Agreement will outline payment amounts and a payment schedule which is based on deliverables and milestones. A consultant will be obtained through the procurement process, to complete the first project in the fall of 2021.

Council and Committee History

September 8, 2020 Council approved: THAT the Memorandum of Understanding, as set out in enclosure 2 of the September 8, 2020 Planning and Development Services report, be approved; and THAT a requirement for Council approval of each proposed project be added to the process.

March 3, 2020 Council approved SER-009-041 Conservation of Biological Diversity

Other Impacts

Policy: n/a

Legislative/Legal: Memorandum of Understanding

Interdepartmental: Corporate Finance, Legislative and Legal Services, Planning and Development Services, Recreation Parks and Culture, Transportation Planning and Engineering, Transportation and Agriculture Services, Utilities

Master Plan/Framework: n/a

Communication Plan

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

A specific webpage has been developed for the program:

<https://www.strathcona.ca/agriculture-environment/environment-and-conservation/wetlands/wetland-replacement-program/>

Enclosure

1 Wetland Replacement Program proposed project sites presentation