

Alberta Community Partnership Grant Resolution for the Beaver Hills Initiative**Report Purpose**

To request that Council approve a resolution to submit an Alberta Community Partnership Grant and enter into a conditional grant agreement with Municipal Affairs and act as the managing partner for the funds on behalf of the Beaver Hills Initiative.

Recommendation

THAT an application for an Alberta Community Partnership Grant to support implementation of the Beaver Hills Initiative Strategic Plan 2016 – 2019 be approved; and that the Chief Commissioner be authorized to enter into a conditional grant agreement with Municipal Affairs to allow Strathcona County to act as the managing partner for \$350,000 on behalf of the Beaver Hills Initiative.

Council History

November 21, 2000 – Council was given a presentation by Elk Island National Park (EINP) promoting the idea of a multi-jurisdictional approach for the conservation of the greater Beaver Hills area (Resolution #725/2000).

January 21, 2003 – Council agreed to enter into, and abide by the terms of a Conditional Grant Agreement with Alberta Municipal Affairs, regarding the use of the grant funds provided to the Beaver Hills Partnership and agreed that Strathcona County be designated the managing partner, on behalf of the participating municipalities or approved participants, for the purposes of administering, reporting, and accounting of the grant funds provided to the Beaver Hills Partnership (#56/2003).

February 8, 2005 – Council authorized Strathcona County to enter into, and abide by the terms of a second stage Conditional Grant Agreement with Alberta Municipal Affairs, regarding the use of the Municipal Affairs Implementation Grant funds provided for the Beaver Hills Initiative; Council authorized Strathcona County to be designated the managing partner, on behalf of the participating Member Municipalities Councils or approved participants, for the purposes of administering, reporting and accounting of the grant funds provided to the Beaver Hills Initiative; Council authorized Strathcona County to contribute \$15,000 towards the required 25% financial contribution component of the Implementation Grant for the Beaver Hills Initiative. The County's contribution of \$15,000 is to be funded by the 2005 Operating Budget: Cost Centre 1801, Object Code 8800.

November 20, 2012 – Council authorized Strathcona County to enter into, and abide by the terms of a Conditional Grant Agreement with Alberta Municipal Affairs, regarding the use of the Municipal Affairs Implementation Grant funds provided for the Beaver Hills Initiative; Council authorized Strathcona County to be designated the managing partner, on behalf of the participating Member Municipalities Councils or approved participants, for the purposes of administering, reporting and accounting of the grant funds provided to the Beaver Hills Initiative.

Strategic Plan Priority Areas

Economy: The Beaver Hills encompasses municipal, provincial and federal parks and protected areas, and the foundation for Nature Based Tourism.

Governance: The Beaver Hills Initiative is a multi-stakeholder collaboration comprised of four municipalities (Strathcona, Lamont, Beaver and Leduc Counties), the Federal and Provincial governments, Indigenous communities, academia, non-governmental

organizations and industry. The four municipal members provide funds and resources in public support of the 2016 – 2019 Strategic Plan.

Social: The Beaver Hills “sense of place” is inclusive of cultural, historic, and quality of life values based on the natural environment. These values contribute to the social well-being of citizens who live, work and play in the Beaver Hills.

Culture: The Beaver Hills “sense of place” is inclusive of cultural, historic, and quality of life values based on the natural environment.

Environment: The Beaver Hills distinct moraine landscape was a catalyst for stakeholders to come together in 2002 to promote a bioregional approach to conservation planning. The Beaver Hills Initiative works together voluntarily through shared initiatives and coordinated action with the belief that decisions regarding sustainable development within the Beaver Hills should be consensus driven and science-based.

Other Impacts

Policy: Strategies developed under the Beaver Hills Initiative Strategic Plan 2016 – 2019 may result in land use policy or procedure development.

Legislative/Legal: The Beaver Hills Initiative is neither a non-profit, nor legal entity. Strathcona County is the fiscal manager for the Beaver Hills Initiative, as per a Memorandum of Understanding (updated August 2015).

Interdepartmental: Planning & Development Services, Transportation & Agriculture Services, Economic Development & Tourism, Recreation, Parks & Culture, Strathcona Emergency Services.

Summary

The Beaver Hills Initiative (BHI) is a multi-stakeholder collaboration comprised of four municipalities (Strathcona, Lamont, Beaver and Leduc Counties), the Federal and Provincial governments, Indigenous communities, academia, non-governmental organizations and industry. By recognizing the Beaver Hills distinct moraine landscape, these members came together in 2002 to promote a bioregional approach to conservation planning, while integrating social, economic and cultural elements. The BHI works together voluntarily through shared initiatives and coordinated action with the belief that decisions regarding sustainable development within the Beaver Hills should be consensus and science-based.

The BHI has submitted an application for the Beaver Hills to become a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Biosphere Reserve to acknowledge that sustainability and biodiversity can coexist in this area. The submission represents the combined support of countless individuals and organizations with the collective belief that the Beaver Hills is an area of ecological importance deserving protection and international recognition. We are expecting a decision in March 2016.

In anticipation of the Biosphere Reserve designation, the BHI developed its 2016 – 2019 Strategic Plan through a significant member engagement process. The intent was not only to update the business plan, but to reaffirm existing members’ needs, include new members, ensure UNESCO Man and Biosphere (MAB) Objectives were met and confirm that Actions are based on a bioregional approach to conservation planning. The resulting Strategic Plan has four Focus Areas and associated Goal statements:

1. **Healthy Environments** - Maintain the ecological integrity and landscape character of the Beaver Hills.

2. **Healthy Communities** - Ensure that the Beaver Hills ecosystem is a foundation for economically, environmentally and socially healthy communities.
3. **Capacity Building** - Knowledge and pride of the Beaver Hills will be shared throughout the biosphere's network and the broader region.
4. **Climate Change** - Ensure planning within the Beaver Hills will include potential impacts from, and contributions toward, global climate change.

The purpose of this grant fund application is to support implementation of the BHI Strategic Plan 2016 – 2019.

Under the focus areas, there are a total of 85 actions assigned to seven working groups that support the BHI Executive Committee and Board. Actions are prioritized based on resource capacity and need and have been consolidated under Research, Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting, Active Conservation, Knowledge Transfer, Awareness, Education, Liaison, and Collaboration Objectives. Priority outcomes summarize the actions resulting from the development and application of:

- **A Framework for Traditional Ecological Knowledge** using the Alberta Cultural and Environmental Information Management System technology, a spatial database that contains GIS data and media (video, audio, documents). It is used to collect, maintain and report data and can be used as a community-based monitoring technology, currently an important focus in Alberta.
- **Protected Areas Cooperation Plan** (2008) update to reaffirm the goals previously identified and organized around three dominant themes: biodiversity conservation, sustainable development and capacity building.
- Annual or issue specific **Knowledge Transfer Events** - Beaver Hills Day, Beaver Hills Tour, Friends of the Beaver Hills Forum.
- **Nature Based Tourism Strategy** based on an update of the Tourism and Development Opportunities Assessment (2011) to reaffirm the need for sustainable tourism and integrating the role of federal and provincial parks and protected areas to enhance these opportunities.
- **FireSmart Strategy** that includes a Wildfire Risk Assessment and FireSmart Community Plan as per the Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta (FRIAA) for the Beaver Hills.
- **Climate Change Strategy** that will be based on gathering information and research from members, seeking expertise through networking and partnership, forming an adaptive management plan, implementing mitigation strategies, and using success measures to monitor, review and share with the Beaver Hills community.