

Agricultural Service Board History - Last Revised October 2008

March 23rd, 2006 marked the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the Municipal District of Pincher Creek's Agricultural Service Board. Ours was the 19th such board established by a rural municipality under Alberta Agriculture's groundbreaking Agricultural Service Board Program.

Farming operations around Alberta were expanding in the 1940's, and Alberta Agriculture was hard pressed to manage and support their staff of provincial weed inspectors, who were up against weed and erosion issues around the province that were numerous and growing. While federal experimental farms attempted to find better ways of preventing and managing weeds and erosion, and provincial District Agriculturalists staff did their best to demonstrate locally some of these emerging management techniques, the problems simply worsened. Rural municipalities became increasingly concerned as lands became heavily weed infested and eroded, rendering them unproductive, and ultimately abandoned, with taxes unpaid.

Meetings between Alberta Agriculture and rural municipalities yielded a consensus that these issues could best be managed by the local government, as they were closest to the problem. In 1943, through the efforts of Dr. O.S. Longman, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, and Arthur Wilson, Field Crops Commissioner and President of the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts, the MD's of Red Deer and Conrich (now RockyView) volunteered to set up special "agricultural committees" to find more effective ways of coping with weeds and erosion. These committees were each comprised of two municipal councillors, two "good farmers" in the area, and the District Agriculturalist. Alberta Agriculture provided seed money for weed and soil management programs, and each municipality appointed a full-time weed inspector, who worked closely with Harry Mather, Provincial Supervisor of Weed Control and Soil Conservation.

The new approach proved to be far superior compared with earlier attempts to deal with these problems. Knowing a good thing when they saw it, municipalities pushed the province to expand the concept, and in February 1945, the legislature passed the Agricultural Service Board Act which stated its aim of "providing for extension of agricultural services in association with municipal authorities". This enabling (not mandatory) legislation, still unique in North America after 60 years, provided for a coordinated and cooperative effort between the two levels of government in developing agricultural policies and programs deemed to be of mutual interest and concern. William (Bill) Lobay was employed by the provincial agriculture department based in Edmonton, and was appointed supervisor in charge of ASB organization and development. His devoted efforts gained him the affectionate title of "Father of Agricultural Service Boards". Under his watch, which ran from the late 1940's to the mid 1970's, nearly every rural municipality in Alberta established an ASB.

ASB's retain their initial mandates, and have added many other duties and services, which have included:

- Weed and brush control - private land enforcement and municipal lands control measures
- Soil conservation - private land enforcement plus demonstrations on sustainable farm practices
- Rural pest management including grasshoppers, gophers, and warble flies, just to name a few
- Roadside seeding and seed handling policies, including provision of direct seeding equipment
- Tree distribution and shelterbelt planting, including provision of tree planting equipment
- Encouragement and inspection of seed grain cleaning plants
- Livestock improvement projects and disease control, including brucellosis and anthrax
- Provision of specialized weed control, pest control, and livestock handling equipment

More recently, as Alberta Agriculture closed their provincial network of district agriculture offices, ASB's have to varying degrees picked up on the provision of services those offices and staff used to provide, including:

- Referral and/or access to agricultural/environmental specialists
- Representation for our area on agricultural/environmental issues to all levels of government & industry
- Agronomic and horticultural advice including fertility, diseases/insects, etc
- Environmental, crop pest, and crop production monitoring data for provincial and federal governments
- Assistance to farmers in accessing provincial and federal government program forms and information
- General agricultural/environmental education and information availability to students & general public
- Interviews and articles for local/regional/national media on various agricultural and environmental issues

Central to the success of ASB's are the Agricultural Fieldmen, who develop, implement, and manage programs designed to carry out priorities and policies set by their Agricultural Service Board. In addition, they are appointed as inspectors or regulatory officers enforcing provincial legislation for weeds, rural pests, and soil conservation. Agricultural Fieldmen are uniquely qualified to manage the diverse ASB programs across Alberta. Many members have university or college degrees in agriculture, biology, environmental technology, and/or business administration. Several are Professional Agrologists or Certified Crop Advisors. All AAAP members have an extensive applied agricultural or environmental science background. All share a common tie to the diverse world of agriculture, & believe in the importance of the industry to society's well being.

Local ASB History 1946 to 2006

The Agricultural Service Board of the Municipal District of Pincher Creek was established March 23rd, 1946. Council set up a board comprising two councillors, two farmer appointed members, and the local District Agriculturalist from Alberta Agriculture.

The first ASB members for the MD of Pincher Creek (during its first year of 1946):

- Councillor William Walls (Chair)
- Councillor Thomas V. Hammond
- Farm Member J.W. Fortier
- Farm Member George Pelletier
- Farm Member Thomas E. Murphy
- Farm Member Wallace R. Hanson
- Field Supervisor (Agricultural Fieldman) - D.J. Cyr

The Board was originally struck to battle the weedy plant species Hoary Cress, of which there was estimated to be about 5000 acres infested within the municipality. Soon after the ASB expanded into warble fly and brucellosis (bangs) control, which were serious threats to the local livestock industry.

1946 - 1950

- Cost of spraying by the ASB in 1947 was \$2.25/hour for machine and one operator, plus herbicide costs
- Treatment on hoary cress began with chlorate, very soon replaced by sinox, and soon after that with 2,4-D
- Eugene O' Neil replaced D.J. Cyr as Ag. Fieldman in May 1946; Ray Kylo replaced him in 1948; he was in turn replaced by original ASB Member George Pelletier in 1949 - a popular job in those early years!
- Need for improved seed cleaning was called for by the ASB; also need expressed for a resident veterinarian
- D.L. Steed, Alberta Agriculture District Agriculturalist joined the ASB in 1948 and served until 1968

1951 - 1955

- Noxious weed targets included Hoary Cress, Leafy Spurge, Russian Knapweed, Field Bindweed, & Toadflax
- Special meeting to coordinate efforts to establish restricted areas for two livestock diseases - tuberculosis and bangs - within the shared boundaries of the MD's of Argyle (now Willow Creek) and Pincher Creek
- Coyote control program began
- Walter Cleland became Ag. Fieldman in 1951 until 1955
- Gulf Oil well sites were an area of concern for weed control; fall road mowing program initiated
- Bangs vaccination/tuberculosis testing the key livestock-related programs; veterinarian Dr. C.A. Smith arrived to help serve the farm community

1956 - 1960

- 1956 featured no less than four different Ag. Fieldmen - Melvin Leishman, Hugh (Pat) Watson, Elmer McNellis, and Ray LaGrandeur (who retained the post until 1961).
- Rural pest control was incorporated into the Ag. Fieldman's ASB duties; weed control still large priority
- Seed drill survey was conducted to better evaluate current farm practices
- Tall wheatgrass was used to control saline seeps on local farmland, enabling the salts to be used up
- Soil erosion was again a growing concern during this period - "Save Our Soil" campaign established
- ASB purchased a tree planter to encourage farmers to plant shelterbelts for inhibiting erosion potential
- Brucellosis and tuberculosis restricted areas were established, including signage
- Drainage ditches were considered for water erosion control

1961 - 1965

- Weed concerns still included Hoary Cress, Leafy Spurge, Russian Knapweed, Field Bindweed, & Toadflax
- Federal brucellosis control area designation and funding were applied for
- Revised Soil Conservation Act passed by Alberta legislature; soil erosion was still a concern locally
- Council passed bylaw restricting stubble burning in the municipality to prevent soil erosion
- Grasshoppers were a problem at this time; so bad that the ASB subsidised chemical control of hoppers
- William D. Cyr took over as Ag. Fieldman in 1961 and continued on for the next five years
- Pocket gophers (locally and incorrectly referred to as moles) were a growing concern for forage growers; to combat them the ASB purchased a burrow building machine to distribute poisoned grain to control them

1966 - 1970

- First portable livestock handling equipment purchased - portable scales in 1966 - no charge for 4-H use!
- Agricultural Fieldmen's Association began to meet annually for a week of technical training updates
- Warble grubs in cattle were a growing concern - ASB discussed subsidizing warble control locally
- 1968 marked the appointment of Robert (Bob) Lyons as Pincher Creek's District Agriculturalist for Alberta Agriculture. He was appointed to the ASB, on which he was to continuously serve for the next 30 years
- Duncan Kettles took over as Ag. Fieldman in 1966; he later became MD's Assistant Secretary-Treasurer
- 1969 saw a return of grasshopper problems in the Summerview area
- ASB began to do more agricultural test plot work, including trials of sanfoin and trefoil in 1970
- Ongoing programs in this period were noxious weed control, coyote control, erosion control, bangs testing, and the shelterbelt tree program, which planted 26,000 trees in 1970 alone

1971 - 1975

- Compulsory warble fly control program was established by the ASB in 1971 - ranchers were required to treat their cattle for this pest; ASB facilitated and enforced the treatment program
- Rabies concerns in the local skunk population were investigated
- Spraying equipment for roadside weed program were upgraded
- Heinz Shultz assumed the Ag. Fieldman role from 1971 - 1973
- Rodney J. Cyr assumed the role of Ag. Fieldman in 1974, and was known for his keen interest in test plots work and herbicide trials on weeds. Rod is now the current ASB Chairman, and has served on the ASB as an MD Councillor continuously since 1998
- Priority programs in this period were weed, coyote, warble, bangs, and soil erosion control
- Coyote-livestock predation provincial compensation program started 1974; the Fieldman inspected all kills

1976 - 1980

- Regional ASB meetings between multiple municipal jurisdictions began to be held in an effort to deal with concerns on a more consistent regional basis; our ASB hosted such a discussion in 1976
- Weed targets included previous species mentioned, but Common Burdock and Perennial Sow Thistle were newer concerns noted by the ASB. Weed control crew numbers began to expand in this period
- Elk damage on forages were an increasing concern to producers
- Grain moisture testers were purchased by the ASB to assist farmers in testing for harvestability
- More spraying and livestock handling equipment were purchased for rental to local citizens
- Soil reclamation projects were encouraged; the ASB would pay up to \$500 on approved local projects
- Dale Uhrbach became Ag. Fieldman in 1979, and eventually Secretary-Treasurer for the MD
- 1980 saw Alan Jacklin's start with the ASB crew, working with the weed control and other programs.
- Priority programs in this period: weeds, coyotes, warbles, and soil erosion control (bangs was phasing out)

1981 - 1985

- Alberta Agriculture "froze" provincial grant funding of ASB's in 1981, and grant levels remained the same from 1981 to 1997 (nearly two decades) necessitating increased MD funding of the ASB programming
- Knapweed (3 different species) became recognized as a serious threat to rangeland, and the ASB dedicated a summer crew to deal exclusively with this weed, which had overtaken lands in B.C. and Montana
- An increasing number of different noxious weed & pest species began to be considered in ASB programs
- ASB took advantage of provincial funding to construct a pesticide container recycling centre at the local sanitary landfill, as well as developing a temporary collection site at Pincher Station
- The ASB facilitated the forwarding of provincial grant dollars to the Municipality of Crowsnest Pass (who were not eligible to establish an ASB) on the condition they maintained a noxious weed control program
- The portable livestock handling equipment array available for rental by producers continued to grow
- "Conservation Programming" including a series of federal/provincial funding schemes was beginning to work its way into the ASB program - early focus remained on preventing soil erosion through equipment demonstrations, awareness, and education
- Tree planting continued to be a huge program during this period, with the ASB doing most of the planting
- Warble inspections were also still a huge part of the Fieldman's duties during this time
- Despite the increased focus on erosion awareness, the 1980's were a notorious decade for drought, and there were many troubling erosion events for the ASB to deal with. Fortunately, the other trend that was becoming the norm was continuous cropping rather than summer fallow, which tended to protect a greater percentage of area farm acreage as more producers changed their cropping systems
- Coyote control continued to be a busy program, one that necessitated Fieldman inspections on all dead livestock in order to determine qualification for provincial predator-kill compensation funds
- Gopher and ground squirrel control by landowners were also facilitated through the ASB during this time
- 1985 was a banner year for grasshoppers, with provincial assistance programs run through the ASB targeted at helping producers control their hopper problems. Grasshopper damage and drought conditions also led to more eroded fields in the district

1986 - 1990

- 1986 marked Alan Jacklin's move from ASB crew member to Pincher Creek's first official Assistant Ag. Fieldman, a position he held for only one season, as he replaced Dale Uhrbach as Ag. Fieldman in 1987
- 1987 also was the 1st year for Kelly Cooley working on the weed control crew as a summer student
- Pincher Creek Co-op Seed Cleaning Plant was established
- Despite frequent drought at this time, noxious weed control continued to be the dominant ASB program
- Drought, however, continued to favour proliferation of grasshoppers and gophers, while decimating crops and causing subsequent soil erosion issues for the ASB to cope with
- The dry conditions also prompted the ASB to get into the business of water pumping, which involved provision/setup of irrigation pumps & trailers of water pipe to help farmers in maintaining dugout levels
- Conservation programming of the day continued to focus on prevention of soil erosion through education
- The widespread availability of systemic insecticides in the 1980's drastically reduced the need for the ASB to continue to inspect and insist treatment for warbles, so this program was phased out over this period

- Also diminishing in priority during this period was the tree planting program, as local need for the service reached its peak in the early 1980's, and the drought hampered new tree belt establishment
- The ASB took possession of an eroded quarter section of farmland just north of Cowley, which eventually became known as the ASB's "Cowley Demo Farm". Demonstrations were undertaken during this time by the Ag. Fieldman and his staff, which soon became a challenge when considering all the other ASB duties
- 1990 marked the end of the provincial Livestock Predation Compensation Program; though the Ag. Fieldman remained busy helping producers in managing coyote predation of their livestock

1991 - 1995

- Dry turned to wet during this period, as the rains returned to South-western Alberta after a dusty decade
- Alberta Agriculture closed its district agriculture office in Pincher Creek; the ASB was not impressed and were quite vocal in expressing their displeasure with the department at this decision. Long-time District Agriculturalist & ASB Member Bob Lyons was forced to relocate to the Cardston District Office, though he continued to sit on our ASB as a member
- Alan Jacklin continued as Ag. Fieldman; Kelly Cooley became full-time Assistant Ag. Fieldman in 1993
- Noxious weed control continued as the dominant program of the period, albeit a challenging one as much of the traditional off-road control work was hampered by very wet conditions
- Conservation programming became an increasing focus for the ASB - the overall shift to continuous cropping had thankfully reduced soil erosion overall, and the theme of "sustainable agriculture" shifted education focus towards chemical & nutrient management by farmers (fertilizers & pesticides) and ranchers (manure). Another new emphasis was grazing management on stream systems (riparian areas)
- The Cowley Demo Farm was rented out during this period to local farmers
- The ASB first got "wired" in 1993, incorporating personal desktop computers into the administration and promotion of ASB programming, prompting the Ag. Fieldmen to add computer skills to their repertoire
- Another big change was the complete relocation of ASB facilities from their traditional dual locations at the MD Administration Office and Public Works Yard, out northwest to the Pincher Creek Municipal Airport, which had been recently acquired by the MD
- Other ASB programming during this time included facilitating rural pest control, coyote predation management, shelterbelt tree program delivery, empty pesticide container collection, spraying and livestock handling equipment rental, and trying under protest to make up for the demand for services that had previously been provided by the aforementioned closed provincial agriculture office

1996 - 2000

- Health concerns forced Alan Jacklin to relinquish the responsibility of being the Ag. Fieldman in 1997. The situation was managed by the ASB appointing Kelly Cooley as Ag. Fieldman, with Alan remaining a vital part of the ASB through switching to the Assistant Fieldman's role
- Bob Lyons, who had served the ASB as an Alberta Agriculture representative since 1968, retired from the department and the ASB in 1998 - a full 30 years of continuous service. His capable replacement on the ASB was (and continues to be) Jim Hansen, who works for Alberta Agriculture out of the Cardston area
- The ASB continued strong emphasis on education of staff & citizens in all programs, which was instituted during Alan Jacklin's tenure as Fieldman the past decade, & was a key part of the ASB Business Plan
- The increasingly strained relationship between Alberta Agriculture and ASB's was not eased much by the 10% increase in provincial grant funding of ASB's, as it was the first increase of any kind since 1981 (nearly two decades previous). As the municipality was increasingly paying the bills for the ASB, they became much more influential than the province in directing and prioritizing ASB programs and activities
- The computerization of agriculture became pervasive during this time, and the ASB was no exception, with the first cautious steps into digital mapping of weed control activities, the incorporation of the internet as a communications & research tool, and increasing administrative demands as the myth of the paperless office continued to be debunked by the mounting evidence on the Fieldmen's desks and shelves
- The Cowley Demo Farm took on a newly featured role, with an agreement struck between the ASB and the Southwest Conservation and Marketing Club. The club was a group of area producers who wished to demonstrate that conservation farming could be profitable on eroded land like the Cowley Demo Farm, yielding decent economic returns while restoring ecological health to the land. Many successful demonstrations and tours came out of this unique partnership which spanned this period of time.
- Conservation programming continued focus on range, riparian, chemical, & nutrient management, stressing potential negative impacts misuse of those resources could cause to soil & water quality
- Noxious weed control remained a top priority of the ASB, as it was clear that increased disturbance of municipal lands due to industry and recreational growth was leading to more opportunities for weed introduction and spread. ASB spraying equipment was again modernized, more seasonal crew were hired, and a greatly renewed focus was put forth on the various preventative measures aiding weed management
- The ASB became increasingly aware that their programming and services were now relevant to and desired by a new type of area landowner - the country residential (non-agriculturally focused) citizen

2001 - 2008

- The new millennium so far has featured the continuing digitization of the ASB and the agriculture industry as a whole, with high-speed internet access providing new challenges and opportunities for education and market access to the rural residents the ASB serves
- Integration into the municipal Geographic Information System (GIS) and the adoption of Global Positioning System (GPS) technology into ASB equipment and programming is well underway
- Program prioritization necessitated the discontinuation of equipment provision for dugout filling and zero-till seeding, though the ASB continues to provide specialized equipment for noxious weed spraying, portable livestock handling equipment, rural pest management, and tree planting
- The past five years have featured extreme stretches of wet and dry weather, which allowed the spectre of soil erosion to return to the district, with extreme winds & flooding catching a few producers ill-equipped to protect their land, which lacked adequate snow and/or stubble protection from these elements, particularly in early spring and winter months. The ASB continues to stress to its citizens, particularly its agricultural landowners, that soil erosion is not a concern of the past - we are still likely the most vulnerable region in Alberta to degrading our soil resources - and we have a responsibility to protect them
- The ASB entered into a new partnership with the municipalities of Willow Creek and Ranchland to form the Southwest Conservation Partnership to deliver much of its conservation programming. Jeff Porter, Conservation Coordinator working for the Partnership under the supervision of the Ag. Fieldmen from all three municipalities, is intended to be the key resource person for the three communities citizens. The partnership has facilitated the development of several community-based watershed groups, and has helped them to secure funding from a variety of sources towards sustainable land and water management
- The decades old friction between Alberta Agriculture and the ASB finally was reduced through the two-year long process of the ASB Provincial Review, a cooperative endeavour between the province and municipal ASB's. Your ASB took a key leadership role in this process through written submissions and vocal participation in developing the framework of a renewed partnership in ASB program delivery between the two levels of government. This new partnership was underlined by a long overdue, but nonetheless substantial increase in provincial ASB grant funding, which was announced in 2005
- After 60 years of serving the community, your ASB is striving to make the best use of the renewed commitment from the province by continually revisiting its current strategic plan:
 - With the renewed funding will come greater input and influence from Alberta Agriculture, and we will be expected to retain and perhaps enhance our traditional mandates of noxious weed management, soil & water conservation, rural pest management, and livestock disease prevention
 - Conversely, the ASB will ensure that this area has a voice that will speak on its behalf provincially, nationally, and internationally concerning issues under our mandate
 - Finally, the ASB will strive to facilitate the timely transfer of general agronomic, horticultural, and environmental information to all its citizens, with the goal of assisting them in sustaining economic and environmental prosperity

Looking forward to the next 60 years...from your Agricultural Service Board Members and Support Staff:

Rodney Cyr - ASB Chairman

Ted Smith - Councillor

Bjorn Berg - Councillor

Dean Kennedy - Citizen Ranch Member

Dallis McGlynn - Citizen Farm Member

Jim Hansen - Alberta Agriculture (Advisory - Non-Voting)

Loretta Thompson - MD Chief Administrative Officer

Kelly Cooley - Agricultural Fieldman

Alan Jacklin - Assistant Agricultural Fieldman

Jeff Porter - Southwest Conservation Partnership Coordinator

Thanks To Elected/Appointed ASB Members And Other Who Served The ASB Past and Present:

William H. Walls - Council Member (1946)

W.J. Fortier - Council Member (1946)

George Pelletier - Farm Member (1946 - 1949)

Wallace R. Hanson - Farm Member (1946-1947)

Thomas E. Murphy - Farm Member (1946 - 1949)

Thomas V. Hammond - Council Member (1946 - 1954) and (1970 - 1974)

Harry Smyth - Farm Member (1948 - 1969)

Henry Schultz - Farm Member (1949 - 1961)

Del L. Steed - District Agriculturalist (1948 - 1968)

A. Noel Cox - Council Member (1949 - 1951)

Ken Phillips - Secretary (1950 - 1986)

William F. Bruder - Council Member (1951 - 1957)

Hugh Ferguson - Council Member (1954 - 1966)

John Robertson - Council Member (1957 - 1962)

William E. Bird - Farm Member (1961 - 1970)
Alfi Chiesa - Council Member (1963 - 1965)
Gordon Stuckey - Council Member (1965 - 1971)
Otto Fischbuch - Council Member (1966 - 1969)
Jack Yorgason and David Jantzie - District Agriculturalists (1967-1968)
Robert (Bob) J. Lyons - District Agriculturalist (1968 - 1998)
Hugh Lynch-Staunton - Farm Member (1970 - 1974)
Hugh Bonertz - Farm Member (1971 - 1976) and Council (1993 - 1995)
Robert (Bob) Toney - Council Member (1971 - 1977)
Henry Hammond - Council Member (1974 - 1983)
Robert Burles - Farm Member (1974 - 1979)
Leonard McGlynn - Farm Member (1977-1981)
Jim Johnson - Council Member (1978 - 1980)
Berny Zoratti - Farm Member (1980 - 1981)
Tom Ferguson - Council Member (1980 - 1998)
Rick Jack - Farm Member (1981 - 1986)
Harry Welsch - Farm Member (1981 - 1986)
Howard Davis - Council Member (1983 - 1992)
Shane Poulsen - Roadside Sprayer Operator (1985 - present)
Roxanna Nielsen-Stewart District Home Economist (1984 - 1986)
Dale Uhrbach - Secretary (1986 - 1990)
Reno Welsch - Farm Member (1986 - 1991)
Lorne Cooley - Farm Member (1986 - 1993)
Dale McRae - Council Member (1986 - 1989)
Iris Armfelt - District Home Economist (1987 - 1991) and (1993)
Joanne Bailer (Evans) - Secretary (1990 - 1995)
Darryl Carlson - Farm Member (1991 - 1996)
George Huddleston - Council Member (1991 - 1992)
Christine Poss - District Home Economist (1992 - 1993)
Milton Weiss - Weed Inspector (1992 - 1995)
Jon Elton - Farm Member (1993 - 1998)
Jim Hansen - Alberta Agriculture (1998 - present)
Robert (Bob) Jenkins - Council Member (1995 - 2001)
Richard (Dick) Hardy - Farm Member (1996 - 2001)
Robert Wolbert - Farm Member (1998 - 2001)
Rodney J. Cyr - Council Member (1998 - present)
Brian Hammond - Council Member - (1999 - 2007)
Rod Zielinski - Council Member (1999 - 2001) and (2004 - 2008)
Susan Aris - Council Member (1999 - 2001)
Keith Brady (Weed Inspector) (2000 - 2004)
Loretta Thompson - Chief Administrative Officer (1999 - present)
David McNeill - Council (2001 - 2004)
Neil Stewart - Council Member (2001 - 2007)
Ted Smith - Council Member (2001 - present)
Malcolm (Mac) Main - Farm Member (2001 - 2007)
Dallis McGlynn - Farm Member (2002 - present)
Jeff Porter - Southwest Conservation Partnership Coordinator (2002 - present)
John Russell - Council Member (2007 - 2008)
Bjorn Berg - Council Member (2007 - present)
Dean Kennedy - Farm Member (2007 - present)