



Presidents Report

The Land Use Conference 2002 is history and it was a tremendous success. There were 700 people registered for the conference and 24 exhibitors in the showcase. Action for Agriculture joined with seven other like-minded groups to form "Organizations Preserving Farmland" and sponsored a booth. This was one of the most popular booths at the showcase.

There was an excellent turnout of both councilors and staff from the municipal districts and counties around Alberta. Forestry, agriculture, oil and gas, fish and game, tourism and urban developers were also at the conference. Most of the 700 participants went home with one question on their minds...when is the next land use conference?

The speakers that were brought in for the conference did not disappoint the delegates. 'Fabulous', 'awesome' and 'fantastic', were the words overheard following the presentations.

What do we do now? Of course the answer is, have another land use conference. We are looking forward to making this an annual event. Obviously the need and interest is there. A big thank you to all supporters, especially the volunteers.

Make sure you attend our Annual Meeting February 11, 2002 at the Balzac Hall. We are looking forward to seeing you there.

-Harvey Buckley
President, Action for Agriculture
Chairman, Land Use Conference

'Alberta, you have success, but you have also looked the other way. That's embarrassing. Alberta is rich in resources, you have everything you need to prosper and have sovereignty. Your vision must be extended, you must step away from the self-interest and look for the process to keep your land (assets) in place.'

Alan Musselman,
Presenter - Land Use Conference 2002

Excerpt from Land Use Conference 2002 Keynote Address by Dr. Jack Ward Thomas

In my 67 years of living and 46 years as a natural resources professional dealing with wildlife, forestry, and range issues, I have seen and been involved with much conflict that perennially boils over natural resources and the environment. I have seen too many dramatic turn-arounds in how we relate to our environmental challenges in North America and elsewhere in the world for me to become a pessimist. I have seen much that leads me to an almost (I have my dark moments) continuous resolute optimism.

We, now, speak with serious intent of implementation of such emerging concepts as "sustainable land management" or "ecosystem-management". In reality, these "new" concepts are but the reincarnations of ancient truths. In sustainable management lies the long-term consideration of what theorists call "intergenerational equity". That simply means that each generation can, legitimately and ethically, only take from the land that which does not impair the ability of future generations to do the

same. Ecosystem- management is merely a recognition that land treatments do not occur in isolated vacuums. One ecologist/philosopher put it in very simple terms - "Everything is connected to everything else and there ain't no free lunch." So, land management will increasingly take place with consideration of cross-boundary effects and more complete consideration of ecological, legal, social, and economic concerns.

I contend that our two Nations, along with the peoples of numerous other nations, have and are making considerable in coming to grips with the realities of the closure of the frontiers related to territorial expansion and development. Now, we must live, and we hope, prosper on the land that we have.

If that were the end of striving, I too, might end toward pessimism. But as land frontiers have closed one by one, new frontiers could be seen on the horizon - three in number. The first includes the frontiers of learning, development of technology, and its appropriate

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applications. The second is the spiritual development that broadens ethical considerations from human kind to include the land itself. The third is the education of upcoming generations as their role and responsibilities as stewards and discerning users of the earth's bounty.

Clearly, we and all our fellow creatures have always had to do – and will always have to do – exploit our environment in order to live. There is no question of that. The challenge, then, is to live within the constraints of that environment so as to pass on to future generations similar opportunities to those that we inherited. There is potential magic here; alchemy of ever-increasing knowledge mixed with enhanced technology with a significant pinch of the divine spark that resides in the human mind and spirit.

The trick will be to bring rapidly expanding knowledge, increasing understanding, and burgeoning technology to bear on environmental problems. Success in that endeavor will rest largely in the realm of politics, economics, law, and in religion and philosophy – and perhaps, most importantly in the realms of education, research and application.

Such understanding as exists is fostered by present day education – either in school or in the media – that far too often – portrays forestry, ranching, farming, mining, oil and natural gas extraction, fishing, and other actions as “evil” and carried out by greedy, uncaring people.

Wait a minute. The people engaged in these activities produce the base resources upon which we depend to live and live the “good life”. More and more people – adults and children alike – have no first hand experience with where such resources originate. For many – too many – of them, food comes from the grocer, cars from the dealer, gasoline from the service station, natural gas from the pipe that comes in behind the garage, and electricity from the power lines.

There are millions of our citizens that care about these issues and millions more that can be enticed to care. They come to their caring by different and circuitous routes – some are hunters, some are fishers, some care about clean water, some about clean air, some about scenic beauty, some about maintaining a way of life, and some about sustainable management of natural resources. But, they all care – and more and more care deeply. And, most significantly, they care not only for themselves but also for others – not just for today, but for tomorrow and all of the days after that.

We are coming to grips with our place in and relationship to nature. We are

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nothing else – matters.

making progress, too little, but progress nonetheless. We will do more and faster. And, that will continue and even accelerate. Things are not hopeless. I believe that these times may very well be the most exciting and promising times in human history to be alive – and to be alive with a chance to make a difference.

The punch is that the future of successful natural resources management lies in cooperation and collaboration across disciplinary and operational lines. Much promise lies in the developing concepts of “team approaches” to the management of natural resources including the human aspects of those endeavors.

It is our job – those of in this room today – to lead as get on with the business of living sustainably on space-

ship earth. We have the most important jobs in the world. For, if we fail, nothing else – absolutely nothing else – matters. We deal with, exploit, care for, nurture and husband natural resources. That, in turn, is the foundation upon which all human endeavors are structured.

So, it comes down to a question of focus, of will, of understanding, of setting priorities, and of caring. Each of those factors is subject to change. I believe that each will change – but only if the people understand what we are up against and know that we can change focus, that our efforts can be effective, and that we can will it so.

We can, at least to a significant extent, repair the mistakes of the past and prevent such mistakes in the future. I do know this can be done and have thousands of colleagues and fellow citizens that feel the same. There is a widespread and increasing awareness of our problems and opportunities. We are moving forward, much too slowly, but forward nonetheless, to attack environmental problems. We can and should and will do more. Such is not only possible, it is imperative. And, as such, those things that need to be done will be done, by those who view life as a challenge and do not choose to go quietly into the darkness. Life is good. It can be even better.

All of these things can be. But they will be only if we care enough and do enough for long enough.

**-Dr. Jack Ward Thomas
Boone and Crockett Professor
of Wildlife Conservation,
University of Montana
Chief Emeritus,
US. Forest Services**

Opening Address - Land Use Conference 2002 by the Honourable Shirley McLellan

This important conference has been developed as a direct result of the Ag Summit process, which began about two years ago.

Ag Summit was conceived because of the need to ensure the agriculture and food industry was positioned to meet global changes. We brought our industry together because we recognized that the future of agriculture was changing and that we needed to chart a new course for this vital Alberta

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industry – an industry that contributes \$16.6 billion – yes that's a 'b' for billion – in primary and value-added products, as well as tens of thousands of jobs.

The Land Use Core Action Team was one of those teams formed out of the Summit and was charged with the responsibility of developing strategies to address challenges surrounding the loss and fragmentation of farmland in Alberta.

Since that time, this Action Team has really taken action by putting together this conference and bringing all of you together to debate, collaborate and develop strategies addressing land use and preservation of Alberta's rural landbase.

We are seeing the greatest pressure along the Edmonton – Calgary and

Calgary – Canmore corridors. Within these corridors, one of the biggest concerns has been the loss of prime agricultural land to urban sprawl and commercial development.

We cannot afford to continue making land use decisions that do not consider the long-lasting effects those decisions have upon our future. As you will hear from one expert who is here this week, Brad Stelfox, each land use decision leaves a very heavy footprint upon our landscape. We must ensure we are encouraging smart, managed growth.

I expect to see some new and innovative ideas arising from this conference and look forward to working with all of you on this important subject.

Honourable Shirley McLellan
Deputy Premier
and Minister of Agriculture,
Food & Rural Development

Recent Poll Checks Public Support of Agriculture

A recent poll undertaken by American Farmland Trust, questioned the values of the American public with respect to agriculture and farmland preservation. While broken down into several regions nationally, the results from the Mountain Region (comprising Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming) were very revealing.

- 71% felt that too much ranch and farmland is being developed.

- 80% value farmland for its scenic beauty.
- 86% value the land for the habitat it provides to birds and other animals.
- 77% of residents surveyed favored payments that protect farmers from low market prices.
- 89% approved of payments that offset weather damage.
- 87% would like to see payments tied to a farmer's willingness to take steps to protect land and water resources.
- 57% would pay higher taxes to help farmers protect water.
- 65% would give up a portion of a tax refund if the money were diverted into programs to protect waterways, wetlands and wildlife habitat.

Would Albertans feel similar?

What We're Reading

Globalization, Government and the Transformation of Rural Communities
-Roger Epp & Dave Whitson
University of Alberta Press

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NOTICE

Action for Agriculture Annual Meeting

Monday, February 11, 2002 – 7:00 pm
Balzac Hall (west of Hwy # 2 overpass on Hwy # 566)

Guest Speaker:
Dr. Brian Bietz, Chairman
Natural Resources Conservation Board
'The Future of Barns and Feedlots in Alberta'

Six Signs of Sprawl in the Neighborhood

1. No Center – the neighborhood has no clear center focused on activities of commerce, culture, and governance (e.g. a true 'downtown')
2. Longer Than Five-Minute Walk – the local resident is always much farther than a five-minute walk from the ordinary needs of daily living: living, working and shopping.
3. The Street Network – the streets are not formed in a grid pattern, often with many cul-de-sacs, walking routes are scarce and traffic is concentrated on a small number of highways.
4. Wide, Car-Oriented Streets – with so few streets to accommodate traffic, they are made wide to handle traffic flow, often a sidewalk on only one side of the street, few trees and buildings insulated from the street by garages.
5. Single-Use – local zoning allows for only 'clumps' of single-use lots, encouraging the segregation of living, working and recreation spaces, and increasing the dependence on the automobile.
6. No Special Sites for Special Buildings – no unique sites are devoted to civic or cultural centers, thus downgrading the collective identity and aspirations of community and social structure.

Adapted from Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream by Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck

From the Quote File

'The countryside, meanwhile, is coming to serve two new and very different purposes – playground and dumping-ground – as the traditional rural economy declines.'

– Roger Epp & Dave Whitson

'We have not inherited the earth from our fathers, we are borrowing it from our children' – Native American Proverb

'Burn down your cities and leave our farms, and your cities will spring up again as if by magic; but destroy our farms and the grass will grow in the streets of every city in the country' – William Jennings Bryan

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