

Saskatchewan Watershed Awareness Initiative Project

Provincial Council of ADD Boards

Background Info and Objective:

In Saskatchewan Environmental Farm Plans (EFP's) have proven to be effective in raising producer awareness and understanding of a broad range of environmental risks and benefits associated with individual farm enterprises. However, the EFP approach may not be as effective in addressing regional environmental issues beyond the farm gate; mainly because it is undeterminable that individual actions resulting from EFPs will align themselves against a particular environmental issue within a specific area.

While an individual EFP will help a producer become more aware of a broad range of environmental issues on their particular farm, it does not provide a good understanding of how his actions at the farm level can have a negative cumulative effect within a watershed. Watershed-based Agri-Environmental Group Plans (AEGPs) focus awareness and resources towards protection of surface water quality beyond the farm gate and help align individual actions towards a positive cumulative effect. This is done by emphasizing awareness regarding agriculture's impact on surface water quality and by providing local technical support and incentives for Beneficial Management Practices (BMPs) that help address these impacts.

The basic principles of planning (assessing the environment, identifying issues, and taking action); are applied in both the AEGP and EFP processes and both approaches are designed to increase awareness and promote adoption of BMPs. As such, these two approaches are fully compatible and fully complementary.

The Saskatchewan AEGP model recognizes the synergies that are created when local producers, who manage land within a planning area, lead and take ownership of their group plan, and work with a variety of government and non-government agencies to bring technical and administrative support to the project.

The Saskatchewan AEGP model is seen to have great potential for improving the sectors environmental performance in the future. The limited time period available for AEGPs to be implemented prior to the end of the APF was much too short for this potential to be fully demonstrated. It is anticipated that there will be opportunity to develop this approach further in the next generation of agri-environmental programming and to see it made generally available to watershed groups across agricultural regions of the province. It is expected that watershed groups developed under this initiative will be a strategic part of the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority (SWA) source water protection planning initiatives.

The lack of watershed awareness and the relatively adolescent state of producer based watershed groups within Saskatchewan has been identified as one of the key constraints to the future of watershed based AEGP development within Saskatchewan. The objective of the Watershed Awareness Initiative is to increase watershed awareness and the capacity of locally-based groups to develop and manage an AEGP within rural Saskatchewan.

Delivery Framework:

The project will be implemented in 3 phases over a 3 year period:

- **Start up Phase** (January to March 2008)
- **Transition Phase** (April 08 to March 09), and
- **Full Implementation Phase** (April 09 to March 2013).

The start up phase will be under PCAB's existing APF agreement. Subject to secured funding the last two phases will be funded out of extension and Growing Forward dollars.

The focus on delivery will be on a more small scale than existing AEGP activities. Therefore, targeted areas may include sub-regions of the existing larger watershed. Producers within that region will be the primary target, and awareness initiatives will be directed towards a more local level by targeting groups such as local ADD boards, Rural Municipalities (RMs), and existing watershed groups.

Some of the start up goals and deliverables will include:

- **Regional targeting:** In collaboration with SWA, PCAB will target pre-defined strategic watershed areas within an ADD Board Region. PCAB will also consult with FNACS, regional and local ADD Boards, other watershed groups, Conservation and Development districts within the area, and RMs.
- **Producer Contact and Networking:** In addition each region should have addressed 100 individuals through one on one contact and watershed workshops.
- **Workshops:** Regional PCAB staff will work with local leaders and groups to implement watershed awareness workshops within their regions. The components of the workshops are as follows:
 - 1) What is a watershed (45 minutes)
 - Understanding scale and functioning of watersheds
 - Ag impacts on watersheds in relation to other impacts
 - Susceptibility of watersheds
 - 2) Understanding AEGPs in relation to EFPs in Saskatchewan (25 minutes)
 - 3) Process required to develop an AEGP (20 minutes)

Presentations will be developed with assistance from SWA, SA, and AAFC-PFRA. **AEGP messaging (presentations and resource materials) will take into account lessons learned from the AEGP initiative in Saskatchewan.**

- **AEGP Capacity:** By March 31, 2008 each region to have one group that wishes to work towards development of an AEGP in the future.