

SSRP Public Information and Input Sessions

Summary of Stakeholder Input



Government
of Alberta ■

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Executive Summary

The South Saskatchewan Regional Plan (SSRP) Phase I consultation with stakeholders had two objectives:

- Provide information to stakeholders about the SSRP; and
- Gather stakeholder insights, concerns and advice.

The key issue raised in all sessions was water. Stakeholders voiced concerns about water in southern Alberta — its quantity, quality, allocation and conservation. Following water, seven key themes were identified:

- growth and land management;
- authority and decision-making;
- SSRP and its development process;
- environmental conservation and stewardship;
- economic development;
- aboriginal issues; and
- social and cultural issues.

The growth and land management discussions focused on urban growth management; agricultural land; rural land development; and public lands. Authority and decision-making dealt with municipal authority and decision-making; regulation and compliance; and broader issues around inter-municipal and inter-regional matters. The SSRP and process was of vital interest to municipal authorities, who asked questions concerning the plan's legal implications; their role in the process; the integration of existing plans; timelines; and budgetary costs. Environmental conservation and stewardship emerged as a principal theme, with stakeholders interested in initiatives to manage and conserve water, air, land and biodiversity, using tools such as cumulative effects management and ecological goods and services. Discussions about economic development focused on seeking an integrated balance between the three pillars of sustainability: economic, environmental and social. Stakeholders expressed the belief that aboriginal issues need to be addressed in consultation with aboriginal leaders and communities as part of the SSRP process. Aboriginal cultural sites need to be protected by the SSRP. Key social and cultural issues included rural versus urban needs; the social and human cost of the recent boom; and increasing demands on infrastructure and services, in both rural and urban areas.

Stakeholders provided feedback on the consultation process, asking for more advance notification of meeting dates and the provision of information in advance. Concerns about adequate advertising for public open houses were expressed with suggestions made as to how to reach the local public better and generate more interest in the SSRP process. Reports and initiatives that stakeholders

believe the government should take into consideration were identified. Other key stakeholders who should be included in the second round of consultations were identified.

Information that will help inform the next phase of work on the SSRP was provided, and stakeholders showed significant interest in participating in phase 2 of the consultation process.

Overview

Alberta's Land-use Framework (LUF) sets out the new approach for managing public and private lands and natural resources to achieve Alberta's long-term economic, environmental and social goals. The purpose of the LUF is to manage growth and to sustain Alberta's growing economy, while balancing this with Albertans' social and environmental goals. One of the key strategies for improving land-use decision-making established in the LUF is the development of seven regional plans based on seven new land-use regions. Each regional plan will address the current conditions in a region, and will anticipate and plan for relevant development-related activities, opportunities and challenges in that region over the long-term.

The LUF identified the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan (SSRP) as an immediate priority. In May 2009, the GoA appointed a Regional Advisory Council (RAC) for the South Saskatchewan Region (SSR). The RAC has been asked by the GoA through an approved terms of reference to explore the relationship between conservation and development and provide advice on how trade-offs may be reflected in the regional plan. The Alberta government's Land Use Secretariat (LUS) will oversee the development of each regional plan. It will provide policy analysis, research and administrative support to the RAC. A regional planning team, representing Alberta government ministries and agencies, will work under the leadership of the LUS to develop the regional plan for Cabinet approval. The government will also consider input on the regional plan through public, stakeholder and aboriginal consultations.

For the first phase of the SSRP consultation process, public and stakeholder input sessions were conducted in 16 locations across the region between November 30 and December 10, 2009. The purpose of the input sessions was to:

- Provide the public and stakeholders with information about the South Saskatchewan regional planning process; and
- Gather input on some topics that have been raised in the SSRP terms of reference.



Dates and locations for the input sessions are presented in the following table.

Date	Session Location	
Monday, November 30	Vulcan	Calgary
Tuesday, December 1	Claresholm	Strathmore
Wednesday, December 2	Okotoks	Cochrane
Thursday, December 3	Canmore	Airdrie
Monday, December 7	Brooks	Lethbridge
Tuesday, December 8	Medicine Hat	Fort Macleod
Wednesday, December 9	Taber	Pincher Creek
Thursday, December 10	Milk River	Cardston

Stakeholder sessions were conducted in each location over a two-hour afternoon time period. The stakeholder sessions were moderated and a common series of questions and probes was used as the framework for soliciting participant feedback. GoA employees and members of the SSRP RAC attended most sessions to provide participants with information and to answer questions.

During the sessions, the moderator focused on five main topics:

- Response to the GoA presentation regarding the SSRP planning process (i.e., Q-and-A session);
- Identification of significant issues in the SSR;
- Suggested means by which the SSRP could improve the management of air, water, land and biodiversity; and
- Opinions regarding the approach to consulting in phase 2 and 3.

After each stakeholder input session, the verbatim information captured on flipcharts was combined with the recorder notes from the session.

The information and input sessions for the general public were held between 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. In each community venue the GoA setup a series of panels providing background and information about the LUF, the SSRP and the planning and consultation processes.

In total, 365 stakeholders participated in the 16 afternoon sessions. Turnout was particularly high in Lethbridge (52) and Pincher Creek (35). A broad range of stakeholders participated in the sessions, including: municipal (most prominently), industry, environmental organizations, non-government organizations, irrigation districts, planning commissions, agricultural organizations, economic development and landowners

This report provides a summary overview of the key themes advanced during the stakeholder sessions. The report is organized by question reflecting the structure of the moderators' guide.

Question and Answer Session — Key Questions

During each stakeholder session, a GoA representative gave a presentation which provided participants with an overview of the SSRP planning process. A question and answer session followed the presentation. Overall, the questions raised in the question and answer sessions fell into 10 main categories. The following categories are listed in order of frequency mentioned by stakeholders. It should be noted that the first category (SSRP elements and process) comprised the majority of questions.

- SSRP elements and process;
- Water allocation and flood control;
- Conservation credits/system;
- Timelines for the plan;
- Calgary Metropolitan Plan;
- Agriculture and the urban/rural split;
- Cumulative effects;
- Budget considerations;
- Special conservation areas: Kananaskis Country and the Eastern Slopes; and
- Airshed and air quality.

The SSRP Elements and Process

The majority of questions raised in all the sessions were related to how the SSRP will work. Answers to participant-raised questions are as follows:

- The *Alberta Land Stewardship Act* (ALSA) gives authority to the SSRP which prevails over all other existing regulations to ensure better alignment of policy planning and decision-making at all levels of decision-makers;
- The SSRP has authority over other plans, including municipal development plans (MDP). If an MDP is inconsistent with the regional plan then the MDP will need to be amended so that it aligns. If the MDP is already in alignment with the regional plan or does not provide new direction, then no changes to the MDP are required;
- Sub-regional plans can be created through the regional plan and must be consistent with it. Any existing plan can be approved by Cabinet as a sub-regional plan which also needs to be consistent with the regional plan;
- RAC's role is to provide advice to GoA for consideration in the development of the regional plan;



- There is a formal public, stakeholder and aboriginal consultation process that local interests can use to provide feedback into the planning process. These will be publicly advertised;
- Existing rules for compensation under existing legislation will still apply; and
- Existing processes at the provincial, municipal or board levels will be used to deal with disputes.

Water Allocation and Flood Control

Water is a key issue in the South Saskatchewan Region. Many questions were raised concerning water allocation and flood control. Several stakeholders indicated that they were unaware of the separate process that is now underway to examine water allocation issues. Questions around water availability were raised, particularly with regard to Calgary's licence for three million people. Questions about flood control and prevention were raised in areas that experience flooding. It was noted that the government's Flood Damage Recovery Program provided useful information about flood control.

Conservation Credits/System

Questions were raised to clarify how conservation directives would be implemented under the SSRP and what kind of compensation would be provided. Conservation directives can only be used by Cabinet through the regional plan. Compensation by the GoA is available for any reduction in market value a conservation directive causes. The process for developing conservation offsets and transfer of development credits (TDCs) will be developed over the coming year.

Timelines for the Plan

Several stakeholders requested that timing be clarified about the next phases of consultation; the completion of the draft and final SSRP; and when MDPs need to align with the SSRP. The next (second) phase of consultation on the SSRP is anticipated for late spring 2011. Phase 3 is anticipated to take place in the winter 2011/12. The regional plan will clarify timelines for MDP alignment.

Calgary Metropolitan Plan

The Calgary Metropolitan Plan (CMP) was brought up several times. Stakeholders asked about Calgary's veto power. They wanted to know if the CMP was accepted as a sub-regional plan and if it needed to align itself under the SSRP. If the GoA accepts the CMP, it may become a sub-regional plan under the SSRP. If so, alignment between the CMP and the SSRP will occur. Some stakeholders were also concerned that the CMP would strongly influence the SSRP and set out the rules for the rest of the region.

Agriculture and Rural/Urban Interests

Questions about rural/urban interests were raised by a few stakeholders. Stakeholders wanted to know how the SSRP would help manage rural/urban conflicts. The CMP, if approved by the GoA, will help deal with the rural/urban conflicts around the city of Calgary. If specific conflicts are raised through the consultation process, the SSRP can provide the direction required to deal with them.

An individual wanted to know if the right to farm would be embedded in legislation. The *Agricultural Operations Practices Act* is Alberta's right to farm legislation. The future success of the agriculture industry is a key focus of the SSRP.

Cumulative Effects

Stakeholders asked how cumulative effects (CE) will be managed by the SSRP. The terms of reference for the regional plan provides direction on how CE will be managed in the SSRP. Modelling and other support is being provided to the RAC and the GoA to help address this issue of managing CE. ALSA provides the necessary legal foundation to do so.

Budget Considerations

A few stakeholders asked if provincial funding would be available to change their municipal plans to align with the SSRP. The GoA will need to consider the requirement for resources to implement the regional plan during its development.

Special Conservation Areas: Kananaskis Country and the Eastern Slopes

One stakeholder raised questions about the preservation and possible expansion of Kananaskis Country. Another asked questions about the future plans for the Eastern Slopes.

Air Shed and Air Quality

One stakeholder wanted to know if the air shed regions will align with the SSR. The current air shed regions will be used to support the SSR.



Facilitated Questions – Summary of Stakeholder Input

Question

In your opinion, what are the most significant issues in the South Saskatchewan Region? How could the regional plan deal with these concerns?

Discussions concerning the significant issues in the SSR and approaches to addressing these issues were the major focus of the stakeholder sessions. Across the sessions, seven major themes emerged: water; growth and land management; authority and decision-making; SSR plan and process; environmental conservation and stewardship; economic development; aboriginal issues; and social and cultural issues. A summary of the discussions is presented by theme as follows.

Water

Water emerged as a principal theme in all of the stakeholder sessions. Comments most often centred on five key topics: water quality; water quantity and availability; allocation of water; conservation and stewardship; and research and monitoring. In a couple of sessions, flood issues; concerns from neighbouring municipalities; and issues specific to streams and water bodies were raised.

Water quality

Participants discussed a variety of issues pertaining to the quality of surface and ground water, including:

- Point sources of pollution;
- Downstream effects of urban, industrial and agricultural activities;
- Urban septic treatment and storm water management;
- Integrity of headwaters;
- Pharmaceutical pollution; and
- Possible effects of CO₂ sequestration on the groundwater supply.

Throughout the sessions, the issue of water quality protection was raised. Stakeholders called for consistent regulations to restrict or limit development near water bodies. Stakeholders also advocated the provision of incentives and compensation, including TDCs to address the costs and benefits of requiring upstream landowners to change land-use practices for the benefit of downstream users.

Water quantity

The quantity of fresh water resources in the SSR was raised as a significant issue in most sessions. Stakeholders in a few groups stated that sufficient water supplies are essential for continued community growth, food production and recreation. Others emphasized that the economic well-being of the region rests on a viable supply of water. In regard to economic well-being, municipalities expressed concerns about the possible impact the SSRP may have on their future growth if they are required to protect the ecological function of the headwaters for downstream users as part of the regional plan.

A range of other specific concerns related to water quantity were tabled, including:

- Integrity of the headwaters;
- Lack of off-stream storage in the region;
- Effects of climate change on water supply;
- Industrial use in the Eastern Slopes; and
- Pressures on water supply from growing urban and rural populations.

Increasing water storage facilities in the SSR was seen as a viable solution to water supply issues in some sessions. Other suggestions included: disallow industrial use of potable water; provide credits for putting water back into the system; use incentives and new technologies to increase water conservation (also see water conservation in the following section); and make development decisions based on available water supplies.

Water Allocation

Issues related to water allocation received significant attention during the stakeholder sessions. Inequitable water allocations surfaced as a particular concern in several groups. The fact that Calgary has licences to supply water to three million people was frequently raised. Other issues included:

- Lack of established priorities for water transfers;
- Long-term consequences of changing water use through water transfers;
- Impact of moratoriums and grandfathering;
- Continued access and allocation for irrigation;
- Lack of enforcement of the current *Water Act* where inter-basin transfer is occurring;
- Municipal growth restrictions from water allocation closure; and
- Potential for claw backs if full allocations are not used.



A few groups said that water allocation should be addressed as part of the SSRP process, not in a separate process. Suggestions for how issues around water allocation could be addressed in the regional plan included:

- Ensure local people and communities have the ability to provide input about how water allocation is determined;
- Clarify the water allocation transfer and water licensing processes;
- Design a provincial plan for water allocation and clarify that water is a public resource;
- Prioritize domestic water use, especially potable water;
- Harmonize water regulation and water management;
- Allow smaller communities to transfer the allocation of water to a regional provider;
- Balance the distribution of water to rural communities, towns and cities;
- Provide for junior and senior water licensing;
- Revisit the water licensing process in regard to anticipated population growth;
- Allow the marketplace to dictate water allocation for commercial uses;
- Maintain existing water allocation laws, especially “first in time, first in right”; and
- Protect water licences and good standing.

Water Conservation and Stewardship

Stakeholders raised a series of water-related conservation and stewardship issues during the sessions. Discussion topics included: the loss of wetland habitat; protection of waterways; erosion mitigation; water conservation and recycling; biodiversity and wildlife impacts; downstream effects of industrial development; and water wastage. Following are examples of ideas about how the SSRP can address conservation and stewardship issues:

- Set thresholds and targets;
- Develop water conservation policies and regulations;
- Allow more flexibility in licensed water uses to reward conservation measures;
- Increase provincial control and accountability over unrestricted downstream effluent contamination;
- Harmonize water regulation and management;
- Promote an ethic of environmental stewardship;
- Establish regulations and incentives (e.g., monetary compensation) to encourage water conservation;
- Preserve the Eastern Slopes watershed;
- Implement provincial policy for protection and restoration; and
- Maintain a minimum level of water to ensure a healthy aquatic environment (e.g. riparian areas and water quality).

Research and Monitoring

In a few sessions, stakeholders expressed concern regarding the apparent lack of water inventories and information, especially as they relate to groundwater and aquifers. In this vein, some session participants said the SSRP should promote monitoring and evaluation of water resources. They suggested that the SSRP:

- Mandate regular monitoring of water quality in major tributaries and main rivers;
- Dedicate provincial funding for inventories and information gathering; and
- Map water resources in the SSR to determine availability and flow volume.

Flooding

The issue of flooding was raised in a couple of sessions. It was noted that development in an upper watershed can increase the flood risk by changing dynamics in runoff and storage. For example, the municipalities in which the headwaters of the South Saskatchewan River Basin are located stated that the Clearwater River tends to flood and is pushing out of the North Saskatchewan River Basin into the South Saskatchewan.

Stakeholders emphasized the need for a more proactive and comprehensive approach to flood issues. It was argued that flood management should not only be looked at in terms of its human impact, but also in terms of its beneficial aspects, such as groundwater re-storage and aquatic habitat maintenance.

Some stakeholders stated that a better understanding of how floodplains work is needed to develop flood management strategies. These strategies should aim to both protect current populations and limit future growth in flood plains. A few stakeholders indicated that the SSRP should address compensation for damages on land caused by the flooding of water storage facilities.

Streams and Water Bodies, Neighbouring Municipalities

In one session it was suggested that present legislation and policy does not adequately address the rights and responsibilities of landowners adjacent to streams and water bodies. In addition, when subdivision approvals are given near streams and water bodies, problems arise that are not being addressed (e.g., introduction of noxious weeds into streams, changes in river courses). Subdivision approvals may create certain expectations on the part of landowners that cannot be met and may introduce problems that the landowner is not prepared/required to manage.



Growth and Land Management

Land management issues were a topic of concern in most stakeholder sessions. The issues identified focused on urban growth management, agricultural land, rural land development and public lands.

Growth Management

Stakeholders indicated that population growth in the SSR and increased development need to be addressed by the SSRP. Participants said that growth has not been adequately planned and managed. They stated that urban development has taken up too much valuable agricultural land, with a focus on mitigation rather than good planning prior to development. A few insisted that development in the region is overly influenced by Calgary and the Highway #2 corridor.

The strategy recommended most frequently to manage growth was to establish more limits and controls. It was suggested that development caps based on available resources be placed on growth. Some stakeholders recommended that urban centres grow up rather than out and increase densification. A few suggested exploring the option of fixed urban growth boundaries.

Some groups expressed preference for the use of incentives, better planning methods and tools such as TDCs to manage growth. A few stakeholders said growth should be directed or guided to appropriate areas, while other areas should be designated for conservation. A few other stakeholders suggested that the growth around large urban centres be planned on a sub-regional level by the affected municipalities. It was suggested that the SSRP should support best practices; identify better criteria for development; and define mechanisms for sharing regional infrastructure.

Agricultural Land

Rural land fragmentation from acreage development and oil and gas activities was identified in a number of sessions as a critical issue. In some cases, fragmentation of rural land was said to be seriously infringing on agricultural production and farm viability. Agricultural producers cited a range of challenges, including: conflicts with adjacent acreage owners; lack of a viable land base; weed infestations; soil conservation issues; and transportation and power line developments. Some participants said that these issues are a reflection of the low priority given to the agricultural industry in the region.

A few stakeholders identified some farming practices as an important issue in the SSR, such as feedlot operation practices and agricultural chemical use that can cause pollution.

Rural Land Development

A number of participants were concerned that growth management strategies may control or prohibit the subdivision of rural land. This was considered unfair because it prevents farmers from selling their land as they near retirement, and thus benefiting from acreage development. Stakeholders also insisted that small communities should continue to have the opportunity to increase their population base and grow through the provisions of country residential zones.

In some sessions, municipalities and landowners in watershed headwater areas expressed concern that environmental protection requirements placed on water sources and aquifers may limit the ability to develop their land. Stakeholders indicated that compensation for loss of development opportunities is necessary. A few expressed doubts that the Cabinet and government bureaucracy could be trusted to compensate landowners fairly.

Some rural participants expressed discontent with what they perceive to be an imbalance between urban and rural needs. They said that urban areas have a greater say in land-use matters based on their population, even though the rural areas have a larger land base.

Public Lands

Issues pertaining to public lands in southern Alberta were touched on in several sessions. Stakeholders highlighted the overall need to manage public lands better. In this context, participants talked of the need to better manage conflicting uses of Crown land, such as conflicts arising between hunting, off-road vehicles, fishing, hiking, etc. Participants expressed the need for increased access to public land for recreational use. A few identified wildlife management on public lands as a concern, such as the overgrazing of land by elk and antelope (on grazing leases), and increased wolf and bear activities. There was also a call for the preservation and expansion of existing provincial parks, parklands and protected areas.

Recommended Solutions to Growth and Land Management Issues

Across the stakeholder sessions, participants suggested numerous solutions to address the issues associated with growth and land management. These fell broadly under the categories of property rights and compensation, rural land regulations, transfer development credits, infrastructure developments and governance. Key suggestions are as follows:

Property Rights and Compensation

- Clarify and uphold private property rights, provincially and within the SSRP;
- Ensure that property rights and licences are not overridden in the SSRP without proper compensation; and
- Establish a mechanism to ensure fair compensation.

Rural Land Regulations

- Preserve prime agricultural land (Class I and II soil), for example, through an agricultural reserve model as utilized in British Columbia or through the establishment of greenbelt areas;
- Use high-density clustering (development nodes) in rural areas with shared green spaces;
- Limit the size of acreages;
- Encourage rural acreage developments toward less productive land;



- Impose setbacks on acreage development to keep this development away from intensive operations and other farming activities;
- Better regulate rural subdivisions;
- Better regulate feedlots;
- Address harmful farming practices (e.g., livestock pollution, nutrient and pesticide management); and
- Enable land-use by-laws that support food production near urban centres.

Transfer of Development Credits

- Include new and existing TDCs in the SSRP;
- Develop criteria and guidelines for the use of TDCs to avoid misuse;
- Prohibit transfer of credits between municipalities; and
- Clarify conservation easements.

Infrastructure Development

- Develop long-range regional and inter-regional planning of utility corridors that aims to minimize land fragmentation, land disturbance and impacts on wildlife corridors;
- Share utility corridors;
- Ensure that transportation and utility corridor plans are clear and available to the public to reduce uncertainty;
- Plan utility corridors so economic benefits can be accessed by more communities, such as those created by wind farms;
- Consider the role of wind farming in the development of the region;
- Plan wind farms to minimize negative visual impact on vistas and viewscapes;
- Link transportation planning to future resource extraction needs;
- Consider high-speed light rail transit;
- Use existing rail lines;
- Use abandoned rail lines, road allowances and abandoned roads for recreational activities;
- Design highways to keep them inside urban areas as much as possible, as opposed to using valuable agricultural land for diversions and ring roads; and
- Provide public education about the need for infrastructure and utility corridors.

Governance

- Improve communications and co-ordination between governmental departments;
- Ensure that existing dispute resolution mechanisms are maintained and, if needed, new ones are built into the SSRP;
- Increase involvement of the local community in decision-making;
- Preserve and protect existing grazing lease rights; and
- Use tax incentives and policies to encourage better care of public land and the donation of private land for conservation.

Authority and Decision-making

Municipal stakeholders made up a significant portion of participants in the stakeholder sessions. Consequently, a number of issues surfaced in most of the sessions related to municipal authority and decision-making; regulation and compliance; and broader issues around inter-municipal and inter-regional matters.

Local Autonomy and Decision-making

Concern over the possibility of losing local autonomy over local land-use decisions was a prevalent municipal concern. Stakeholders were also concerned about the cost of changing local plans to comply with the regional plan. Questions were raised about the availability of government funding for new municipal plans. Municipal participants want more information about the details of the plan. Although some agreed that a unified, overarching planning umbrella was necessary, formulating and implementing the plan would be complex.

Regulation and Compliance

Issues were raised about regulation and compliance. Numerous participants cautioned against imposing too many regulations. They stated that the process appeared heavy-handed. Municipalities already have enough regulations to contend with. These stakeholders also expressed concerns that the new regional plan would bring additional costs and taxes for municipalities.

Some wondered whether the province would withhold funding from municipalities that could not or would not comply with the plan. A few wondered if the GoA had a hidden agenda and was simply using the regional plan to introduce a regional government, as in other provinces.

Inter-municipal and Inter-regional Matters

Stakeholders in all sessions expressed the view that Calgary's population and size may give it more political attention than small municipalities. There was apprehension that the Calgary Municipal Plan (CMP) may take away some of the autonomy smaller municipalities currently exercise.



A few participants also pointed out that the implementation of the SSRP will be challenging across numerous jurisdictions. They said that it will be difficult for municipalities to align their plans with the new SSRP.

Suggestions to deal with these concerns included:

- Provide municipalities with the opportunity for more input;
- Deal with urban/rural conflicts;
- Protect growth opportunities for smaller communities (urban and rural);
- Provide more rural representation;
- Respect local authority;
- Provide more information and clarity about the hierarchy of legislation and regulations;
- Reduce the amount of regulation, use more incentives;
- Capture sub-regional issues and needs in the plan; and
- Reward municipalities that are proactive.

South Saskatchewan Regional Plan and Process

In several of the stakeholder sessions participants offered comments regarding the SSRP, as well as the planning process. Overall, stakeholders were aware of the authority of the SSRP but had little concrete knowledge regarding the possible content of the plan. Therefore, they exhibited some apprehension about what is in the plan.

Much of the discussion focused on the role of sub-regional plans in the SSRP. The CMP surfaced as a specific source of concern. Some stakeholders suggested that the CMP will dominate the regional plan and that neighbouring municipalities will have to follow the direction set by Calgary. In this context, participants noted that the SSR is very large and diverse, and to be effective the SSRP must address unique needs and interests across the region.

A few expressed concern that the RAC membership could adequately represent the region's diversity.

A few participants cautioned that if sub-regional plans are to be integrated into the SSRP, there could potentially be multiple sub-regions that focus on a range of specific issues or geographic areas. Across the sessions, participants advanced a variety of suggestions for addressing issues associated with sub-regional plans in the SSRP, most frequently:

- Explain the difference between an intermunicipal development plan (IDP) and a sub-regional plan;
- Identify the roles and responsibilities of the CMP sub-region related to the region as a whole;

- Identify sub-regions before or as part of the SSRP;
- Clarify how fringe areas around the CMP sub-region will be addressed;
- Include a policy in the SSRP which allows for the formation of sub-regions rather than rushing to identify them before the SSRP is developed;
- Base sub-regions on river basins as well as similar land uses, which have common value; and
- Ensure that the SSRP adequately addresses the complexity and diversity of the region.

Stakeholders also raised a number of issues related to the SSR planning process. Input from the public should be taken seriously and incorporated into the plan. A few stakeholders suggested that a public education component be intrinsic to the SSRP consultation program, aimed (in part) to encourage the public to provide input by demonstrating the importance and personal relevance of the regional planning process. A few stakeholders made a general call for more information to allow them to provide thoughtful and informed recommendations.

In a few sessions, stakeholders were concerned about the short timeline established for the development of the SSRP. Given the importance of the initiative, they felt that the process should not be rushed and the deadline for completion should be open and flexible. A few indicated that the ten-year timeframe for the review process is too long; they argued that the plan should be a living document open to changes and adjustments as circumstances dictated. During discussions, a few called for a long-term commitment to the regional planning process, indicating that they have seen regional plans before in Alberta that did not last.

In a few sessions, participants stated that they did not like the name “South Saskatchewan Region” and suggested adding either “River” or “Water Basin” to the name of the regional plan. Their argument was that the name of the regional plan is not reflective of the location of the planning area (southern Alberta) and is easily confused with the province of Saskatchewan.

The Oldman River Regional Service Commission (ORRSC) Municipal Perspectives: Position Paper of the SSRP prepared by the ORRSC received support from municipalities as they felt that because the report encompasses 52 member municipalities, which represent 75 per cent of the land base, it effectively represents the broader interests and concerns of the region. The SSRP RAC and GoA were encouraged to review the ORRSC position paper to understand which issues are critical for the development of the SSRP.

Environmental Conservation and Stewardship

Environmental conservation and stewardship emerged as a principal theme throughout stakeholder sessions. In one session, stakeholders insisted the environment is the most important of the three pillars, stressing that degradation of the natural environment affects both society and the economy adversely. Another suggested that Albertans need to recognize the positive impact the natural environment has on our quality of life.



Across the sessions, participants identified a range of environmental issues and concerns which generally fell under the following themes:

- Air – air quality; health risk assessment; monitoring of air quality;
- Water – loss of wetlands; protecting significant waterways; degradation of riparian areas;
- Land – damage to, and loss of, fragile and unique landscapes; ecological integrity of native grassland, native prairie and plant communities; preservation of valued landscapes (Kananaskis Country, Eastern Slopes, Badlands);
- Biodiversity – protecting wildlife habitat on public lands; loss of native biodiversity; preservation of functional regional wildlife habitat; maintaining landscape connectivity, habitat connectivity and social separation; and
- Cumulative effects – lack of understanding regarding the cumulative effects of the different demands on the environment by various economic pursuits; absence of an agreed definition of cumulative effects; establish a baseline against which to measure future cumulative effects.

Ecological goods and services (EGS) surfaced to some degree in a number of sessions. Most often, stakeholders saw EGSs as an effective means of fostering a land stewardship ethic by employing market forces and mechanisms to help protect the environment. In a few sessions, stakeholders felt that there needs to be more environmental research and baseline data collected.

Stakeholders offered many suggestions for addressing environmental issues in the SSR; these are presented as follows:

- Put local stewardship committees in place to provide advice to the regional plan and be involved in approval of projects and development;
- Foster an environmental ethic of “do no harm” and a land stewardship ethic;
- Focus on the importance and relevance of ecosystems;
- Develop the EGS model; this provides the necessary link between the land and the economy, using market forces to help protect the environment;
- Recognize the intrinsic value of natural areas along with the EGS they provide;
- Implement a wetlands policy to protect and restore wetlands, (e.g., recognize the ecological function of grasslands in water capture, establish consistent riparian setbacks, etc);
- Support conservation efforts and increase the protection and conservation areas of wetlands, parks, public land, fescue areas, etc (e.g., expand Kananaskis Country);
- Protect significant ecological areas such as the Eastern Slopes (key source of water) and the Badlands; limit oil and gas activities in the Eastern Slopes;
- Develop a baseline inventory and science-based targets/thresholds;
- Define cumulative effects and manage to reduce those effects (e.g., limit oil and gas exploration in the Eastern Slopes to minimize cumulative effects in the region);

- Reduce waste and minimize the size and number of landfills;
- Reduce land fragmentation (e.g., develop managed trails, regulate country residential, etc.);
- Preserve existing air quality standards and create new ones related to human health;
- Educate the public about the need for conservation areas and environmental protection; reducing waste; composting; and
- Establish tax incentives, carbon credits, TDCs and offsets.

Economic Development

In almost half of the stakeholder sessions, participants emphasized the importance of a sustainable economy and sustainable tax base in the SSR. However, there was some debate as to the priority of an economic development plan. Some thought if economic issues are addressed first, environmental and social issues will automatically be addressed throughout the process. Others insisted that taking care of the land first would provide the basis for a healthy economy. Still others suggested that the two pillars need to be addressed simultaneously.

Although it was noted that the SSR is a primary economic driver in the province, stakeholders spoke of the need for economic diversification and job creation in the region, particularly in light of the recent economic downturn. One group described the negative impacts that a small community faces after the primary industry has been shut down. Another group felt the GoA did not support rural economic development initiatives. While stakeholders generally viewed economic growth and diversification as necessary and desirable, a few lamented the trade-offs between growth and the loss of the small town lifestyle and rural values.

There was mixed opinion about the potential for tourism in the region. While some saw opportunity for tourism development in southern Alberta, others suggested that the lack of lakes, and lack of developed recreational areas limit the prospects for a large tourist industry in the region. One group suggested that the benefits of tourism are marginal because tourism-related jobs are typically low paid. In a few sessions, stakeholders talked about the international potential for Aboriginal tourism development and discussed the importance of preserving historically and culturally significant sites. Participants often made a distinction between recreation and tourism.

Stakeholders in a few sessions raised concerns about the pace of oil and gas development in the province and what they perceived to be lax regulatory requirements for the industry. One group suggested that multiple authorities over the land base are also confusing.

Overall, there was general agreement that the SSRP should address economic development and promote economic diversification and prosperity in the region. Across the sessions, participants offered a range of specific suggestions for the SSRP:

- Balance economic development and environmental conservation;
- Demonstrate a clear understanding of the various economic drivers in the region;



- Recognize and protect existing economic sources;
- Recognize the economic linkages between small rural communities (towns) and the broader rural area;
- Recognize and support sub-regional economic development initiatives;
- Provide strategies for attracting industry and expanding the tax base;
- Preserve culturally and historically significant aboriginal sites;
- Explore the opportunity for the use of computer technology to increase remote job opportunities and home-based businesses;
- Protect local tourism resources (such as fisheries);
- Recognize the credentials of immigrant workers;
- Support private ownership, responsibility and incentive;
- Acknowledge disparities within the region;
- Increase focus on renewable resources (agriculture, forestry) and opportunity for alternative energy sources;
- Provide a framework that minimizes or even eliminates jurisdictional confusion; and
- Ensure that regulatory requirements are equitable across all industries.

Aboriginal Issues

Issues specific to aboriginal people and communities were raised in a few stakeholder sessions. Participants indicated that adjacent federal lands, which are exempt from provincial land-use policies and regulations, could potentially diminish the effectiveness of integrated land-use planning on a regional scale, particularly as it relates to water. In this context, it was suggested that the intent of the regional plan regarding conservation should be applied to these lands. The sustainability of aboriginal communities and the preservation of culturally and historically significant First Nation and Métis lands also surfaced as priority issues.

A few participants raised concerns regarding the lack of awareness of the implications of the SSRP process among aboriginal communities as well as the lack of aboriginal involvement in the regional planning process.

Suggestions about how the SSRP could address issues specific to First Nations and Métis included:

- Develop a framework and process for ongoing aboriginal input;
- Work with aboriginal people to develop a strategy to identify, preserve and develop culturally significant sites;
- Raise the priority of the Métis people and their homelands to First Nations status;
- Recognize that aboriginal people are a critical and invaluable resource to the planning process given their long history of providing stewardship over the land; and

- Recognize the tourism draw of First Nation and Métis historical and cultural sites; use this as a tool to develop strategies for sustainable community development for all communities in the region, and for the preservation of these sites.

Social and Cultural Issues

In a few sessions, stakeholders highlighted societal conditions and issues in the SSR which may have implications for the SSRP. These included:

- Increased demands on infrastructure and services associated with a demographic shift toward an aging and increasingly culturally diverse population (housing, public transit, healthcare);
- Anticipated difficulty in gaining social acceptance for increased urban density;
- Increased out-migration of youth in rural communities due to lack of employment opportunities;
- Rising number of weekend residents and recreational users in rural communities;
- Growing challenges associated with balancing traditional small town values and economic growth and development;
- Growing human and social costs associated with fast-paced growth and development; and
- Underlying tensions between private needs and the public good.

A few individuals encouraged the recognition of the importance of community values and the role these values play in the development of individual communities.

In one session, the preservation of historic and cultural resources was seen as a priority issue. Stakeholders called for the regional plan to identify tools and mechanisms to protect these resources.



Question

How could the regional plan improve the way we manage our air, land, water and biodiversity?

Stakeholder groups were asked to provide feedback on the management of air, land, water and biodiversity. This question was not addressed in four stakeholder sessions because respondents felt that it was adequately answered in the context of the previous questions. The remaining groups tended to expand upon what they discussed earlier.

Air

A couple of stakeholders stated that air sheds need to be monitored, especially in areas where there are oil and gas operations.

Land

Urban sprawl was mentioned by a few stakeholders as a key issue in land management. Urban areas should be managed to grow up instead of out, with increased densification in the cities. Growth nodes need to be identified and developed. One stakeholder suggested that education about the benefits of increased densification is important because most people enjoy their space and do not want a high-rise apartment or condo next door. A few stakeholders indicated that the agricultural sector is taking good care of the land, as compared to industry and urban areas.

Water

Water management is a primary issue in southern Alberta. Stakeholders made the following recommendations about water management:

Conservation of Wetland and Riparian Areas

- Implement a policy to protect and restore wetlands that plans for less fragmentation, less invasive species and more conservation areas; and
- Determine a baseline to monitor future developments and cumulative effects.

Watersheds

- Implement a policy to protect and restore watershed areas;
- Plan for population growth;
- Support the “purple pipe” program (a system which delivers grey water into homes for non-potable uses such as flushing, lawn watering, etc);
- Establish appropriate setbacks;
- Balance water supply and consumption; and
- Protect and conserve the Eastern Slopes.

Water Treatment

- Assess where and how water is treated (e.g., consider European methods of filtering storm water through wetlands);
- Monitor and regulate waste water from the oil and gas industry; and
- Use grey water for industry, and not potable water.

Biodiversity

Biodiversity was raised by many stakeholders. Their key ideas pertained to:

Conservation

- Maintain wildlife habitat and environmentally sensitive areas through tax incentives; conservation efforts; the development of managed trails; and the protection of public benefits on both private and public lands; and
- Maintain fescue grasslands and native prairie habitat through carbon credits; monetary incentives for the preservation of fescue; and transferable development credits and offsets.

Preservation of Agricultural Land

- Preserve good agricultural lands and rangelands through bylaws and regulations; the development of local renewable energy resources; tax incentives; and climate change plans.

Regional Plans

The topic of regional plans as a tool to manage air, land, water and biodiversity was raised by a number of stakeholders. The suggestions made included:

- Establish a baseline against which impacts and cumulative effects can be assessed;
- Design a regional plan that is a broad, flexible tool under which local authorities can manage issues that are specific to their locale;
- Delineate performance standards that need to be met by the SSRP, and let local municipalities devise means to meet the standards;
- Use experts on local, regional and provincial issues to interpret trends and evaluate their merit; these experts can provide information to the regional plan to address key issues concerning air, water, land and biodiversity;
- Acknowledge the inter-connectivity of air, land, water and biodiversity in the SSRP;
- Improve multi-departmental co-operation and communication between government departments;
- Establish boards with representatives from various groups using a consensus model; the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) and the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties (AAMD&C) were recommended to sit on the board; and
- Establish monitoring methods to assess impacts.



Flipchart Questions – Summary of Stakeholder Input

Question

Have you developed any initiatives/plans/reports that would be important to consider in the development of the plan? What are they?

Question

How does your organization or community want to be consulted in phase 2 and phase 3 of this consultation?

Question

Are there other stakeholders or organizations that should be included in the consultation process?

A flipchart for each of these three questions was posted at the end of the session and stakeholders were invited to record their responses to the questions once the stakeholder session was concluded. In some cases, the facilitator continued the discussion and wrote the answers provided by the group during the session.

A summary of the input received from the flipcharts is presented in the following matrix.

	Q - Initiatives, plans or reports	Q - Preferred consultation approach	Q - Other stakeholders or organizations
Calgary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watershed management plans • Southern Foothills Study • Quarterly meetings between Calgary, Rocky View and Cochrane • Parklands & Pathways plan • Monthly inter-municipal meetings • Calgary Regional Airshed Alliance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct consultation with Alberta Foothills Fescue Restoration Forum, watershed planning and advisory councils (WPACs) • Community/organization sessions for drawing in a diverse range of stakeholders • Sessions with specific stakeholder groups where possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alberta Electric System Operator • Western Stock Growers Association • AB Cattlefeeders Assoc. • AB Beef Producers • Foothills Fescue Forum • AB Meat and Livestock Commission • Rural groups who live and work on the land • Calgary Area Outdoor Council • Calgary Regional Partnership • First Nations • Alberta Low Impact Development Partnership • Oil and gas advisory groups
Vulcan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mutual developments and initiatives between municipalities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representation from and direct consultation with Oldman River Regional Service Commission (ORRSC) • Process along the lines of this session (phase 1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ORRSC • Other groups not identified
Strathmore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starland County level I and II stream storage studies • Cows and Fish studies on riparian health of streams • Small business study in Strathmore 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations with Q-&A's, round table discussions • Engage all stakeholders with an interest (industry, agriculture, urban, developers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural service boards • Field men from each municipality • Local chambers of commerce



	Q - Initiatives, plans or reports	Q - Preferred consultation approach	Q - Other stakeholders or organizations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watershed Advisory Council management plans for Red Deer River, Medicine Hat • Agri-environmental Partnership EGS project team papers • Institute of Agriculture, Forestry and the Environment 		
Cochrane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearwater River Study • The work done by the Rocky Riparian Group • “Reckless Growth” on CanadianGuerilla.com • Wetland policies and riparian land policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion forum • Workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family & community resources centres
Claresholm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal Development Plans from each municipality • ORRSC’s position paper regarding the SSRP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afternoon forums with information provided by the Land Use Secretariat and group Q-&A’s (like phase 1) • Ensure consultation opportunities are advertised well in advance • Access to high-speed Internet in rural areas is limited; providing input online is not viable • Send out direct invitations to elected officials, who can then let rate payers know about SSRP open houses/consultation process; ratepayers can 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oldman River Watershed Council • Irrigation Districts • Pekisko Group • Castle-Crown Wilderness Coalition • Southern Alberta Land Trust Society (SALTS) • Land owner groups • Ratepayers

Q - Initiatives, plans or reports	Q - Preferred consultation approach	Q - Other stakeholders or organizations	
	<p>be advised by email or through mail-outs (such as inserts in utility bills, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post notices and posters in post offices 		
Okotoks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High River Cluster Development Plan • Okotoks Feasibility Study for Aquifer Storage • Brad Stelfox cumulative effects studies for Eastern Slopes, Chief Mountain/Southeast Slopes and Upper Bow River Basin • Highwood Water Management Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send out information to the public with monthly utility bills to ratepayers from the MD and the municipalities • Use flyers, local newspapers, multi-media sources (e.g., newspapers, brochures, radio, TV, etc.) to advertise meetings in advance to the public • Use open house forum • Develop a sustainability committee in each municipality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The key stakeholder is the public • Municipalities
Airdrie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated Watershed Management Plan Terms of Reference - Red Deer River WPAC • Red Deer River State of the Watershed Report • Mountain View County Municipal Development Plan • Red Deer River Municipal User Group - Water Assurance Study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Round table discussions • Face-to-face round table • Directly to the 300+ members or board of the WPAC Red Deer River Watershed Alliance • More NGOs and environmental groups at the table • Directly as a strategic alliance with the agricultural industry sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture, Industry, Tourism, Developers, Fish & Game, Transportation • Ellis Bird Farm • MEG Lobal from Dubai • Sylvan Lake stewardship societies • Central Alberta Economic Development (CAED) • Red Deer College • Red Deer municipal user groups



	Q - Initiatives, plans or reports	Q - Preferred consultation approach	Q - Other stakeholders or organizations
Canmore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GreenTrip • Bow River Basin Council (BRBC) • Calgary Regional Air Shed Zone (CRAZ) • AAMD&C • Calgary Metropolitan Plan • Bow Valley Waste Management Commission • Bow Corridor Ecosystem Advisory Group planning documents • Particulate Matter and Ozone Management Plan (PMO3) • Southeastern Slopes municipalities • Clean Air Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information regarding consultation meetings should be provided two weeks before the designated date • Report submissions • Provide a platform for rural perspectives • Forum that brings urban and rural perspectives together 	
Lethbridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oldman River Regional Services Report • Nature Conservancy of Canada Natural Area Conservation Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion forums • Written submission 	
Brooks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ORRSC position paper • Inter-municipal Development Plan between the county of Newell and the city of Brooks. • County of Newell Sustainability Plan • Newell Regional Services Corporation Regional Water System 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder and public sessions (same as phase 1) • One-on-one consultation with individual groups or organizations • Provide information (e.g., vision statement) two weeks ahead of the session 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult with smaller municipalities • Agriculture representation • Livestock producer groups and intensive livestock groups • Bow River Basin Council • Brooks Fish and Game Club

	Q - Initiatives, plans or reports	Q - Preferred consultation approach	Q - Other stakeholders or organizations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location of development concepts that are currently being considered • City of Brooks Sustainability Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific topics will generate more feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canadian Badlands Association
Fort Macleod	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combined with Pincher Creek 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combined with Pincher Creek 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combined with Pincher Creek
Medicine Hat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inter-municipal development plan between the town of Redcliff, Cypress County, and the city of Medicine Hat • Suffolk Military Base Sustainable Development Plan • ORRSC position paper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder and public sessions (same as phase 1) • Provide information to participants two weeks ahead of the session • Direct notification of upcoming sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grassland Naturalists • Canadian Badlands Tourism Initiative • Tourism Medicine Hat • Local Industrial Group • Palliser Airshed Society (PAS) • The South Eastern Alberta Watershed Alliance (SEAWA)
Pincher Creek	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southern Water Users Association CEP Plan 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southern Water Users Association • Alberta Film Commission, Calgary • Crow Snow Riders • Foothills Restoration Forum
Taber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ORRSC position paper • Irrigation sector Conservation Efficiency and Productivity Report • Oldman Water Council State of the Watershed Report • AAMD&C 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder and public sessions (same as phase 1); • Advertise in local post offices, local newspapers and on town billboards • Advertise well in advance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public • Airsheds and more water groups • WPACs • Alberta Surface Rights Federation • Landowners • MLAs



Q - Initiatives, plans or reports	Q - Preferred consultation approach	Q - Other stakeholders or organizations	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk River Watershed Council State of the Watershed Report • Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) report pertaining to how the LUF impacts sustainability planning by municipalities • Prairie Conservation Action Plan • Alberta Land Advisory Association Protected Property Rights Report (Alberta Land Advisory Association) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct invitations to municipalities for one-on-one meetings • Provide information and discussion questions one month in advance of session • Link in rural areas to meetings through their libraries 		
Cardston	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chief Mountain Study 	No answer	No answer
Milk River	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal land-use bylaws and IDPs • Environmentally significant areas of the province • Watershed Management Plans (WPAC – State of the Watershed Reports) • Integrative watershed management plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggestions for good means of advertising upcoming consultations included: posters in Tees and Jeans shop and coffee shop, town hall news letters (e.g., Warner, Milk River), local radio, provide flyers at post office, contact by email, ads in the Western Producer and the Advisor • Contact the people who are responsible for the reports that are being submitted • Provide information one month ahead of sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alberta Grazing Lease Holders Association • WPACs • Local grazing associations or co-ops • Wind power companies • Local southern Alberta outdoorsmen • Canadian Badlands • Gold Springs Park Society • Water co-ops • Gas co-ops