



Special Areas Board



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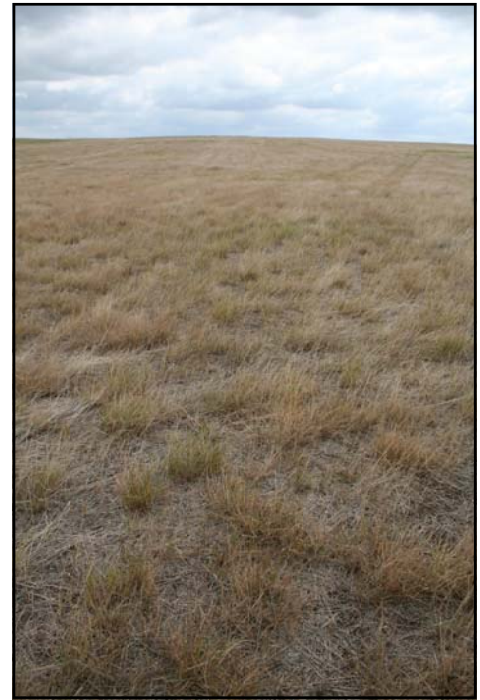
Board Declared Agricultural Disaster Area

In response to drought conditions prevailing over most of the Special Areas, the Special Areas Board made a motion to declare the region as an Agricultural Disaster on June 23, 2009. The Board developed a drought mitigation action plan to recognize and address the issues, factors and opportunities that may offer relief from the effects of recurring drought.

Part of that plan included contacting our MLA, the Honourable Jack Hayden to inform him of the ongoing evidence of drought conditions within the Special Areas and request his assistance in conveying the conditions in our area. The plan also included a recommendation of tax deferral which was granted Federally on July 22, 2009 in a press release by Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz.

We are still working on water pumping programs with Albert Agriculture and Rural Development and hope to be able to include shallow pipelines in the Water for Life program .

Visit www.specialareas.ab.ca for more information.



Things to Note:

- **Drought** was declared by the Federal Government on July 22, 2009.
- **Gooseberry Spray Park** Grand Opening was held June 25, 2009.
- **100 Year Farm Family Award** Applications are now available.
- **Rummage Sale**—in Consort Sept 12 call 577-3523 for more information.
- **Rummage Sale** in Hanna is October 3, 2009.
- **Have an idea** for this newsletter? Contact Us!

2009 Mill Rate

For 2009, the Special Areas Board increased their portion of the Municipal Mill Rate by 0.50. Factor this with the changes in the School and the Acadia Foundation's required mill rates, and there is a slight decrease in the residential rates and a slight increase in the commercial rates in comparison to 2008. See the chart below for a more detailed comparison.

| TOTAL MILL RATES | 2009 | 2008 |
|---|------|------|
| Farm and Residential Property | 8.14 | 8.26 |
| Non-Residential with I.D. Allocation | 9.55 | 9.53 |
| Non-Residential without I.D. Allocation | 9.49 | 9.47 |
| Machinery and Equipment | 5.81 | 5.29 |
| Electrical Generation Equipment | 5.81 | 5.29 |

For more financial information please visit www.specialareas.ab.ca and click the Financial and Statistical Information link

New Faces in the Hanna Office

The Special Areas office has seen a number of personnel changes in 2009 and we would like to introduce you to some of the new staff in the Hanna Office. In January, Michele Corry-Smith started with the Special Areas Board as their new Field Services Administrator. She works closely with oil and gas companies in site selection, reclamation and other environmental matters.

March saw the retirement of two key personnel, Maria Faupel, the Chairman's Secretary and Melba Fabick the office receptionist. Together they provided the Special Areas with tremendous support and were a wealth of knowledge. The Chairman's Secretary position was filled by Shyanne Shannon who has been a Hanna resident just over a year. She brings experience from working at the University of Lethbridge.

In April, Maeghan Chostner was hired to be the Secretary for the Director of Municipal Services. This is a new position which encompasses the Directors portfolio including Big Country Waste Management Commission. Maeghan brings her experience from the banking industry as well as ranching north of Craigmyle.

In May, the office started preparing for Carol Olsen, Human Resources Supervisor, to retire. Carla Johnson stepped up to take over the role. She will be on a year's maternity leave starting in August and Brenda Schnurer from the District Office is filling the Human Resources Supervisor position. Diane Bannister from Accounts Payable moved down stairs to be the District Office Manager. Deb Hoffman has come from the Oyen office to take care of the Accounts Payable position until the maternity leave expires. May also saw Tally Quaschnick, a former summer student, return to a full-time position with the Assessment department.

In June Chelsie Frere took over the as the Secretary for the Director of Finance & Administration. Chelsie's role also focuses on the contract tendering procedure and keeping the website updated. Eric Haldorson, an Agriologist, also started in June. He works with the Carolside and Deadfish irrigation systems as well as working with Jordon and Michele on industrial rangeland inspections.

So when you call the Hanna Office don't be surprised if you hear a new voice.

Healthy Range Condition *by Jordon Christianson*

It may seem like a strange year to be talking about good pasture management, as much of the Special Areas is facing the worst drought in recent memory. However, during years like this, healthy range condition can pay dividends. Remember, it is far easier to prepare for a drought during years experiencing above average precipitation than it is to react to the problem once it arrives. The following is a brief description of some basic grazing principles that ranchers should consider, not only during years such as this, but also every year before the cattle are turned out onto summer pastures.

On native range, a good rule of thumb to follow is to "take half, leave half", meaning you should only graze half of the current year's grass production. This allows for a layer of litter (or carry-over) to build up, which helps the pasture in a number of ways. This litter provides shade that keeps the soil surface temperature cooler. This helps to conserve moisture during periods of drought. As well, it protects the ground from hot dry winds that dry out soils further. By leaving half of the current year's grass production, you are also providing the plants an opportunity to build strong, deep roots. A strong root system will help range maintain productivity further into a drought cycle.

There are a couple of factors that can affect the amount of litter on a native pasture. The main factor is obviously the stocking rate.

The more animals grazing the pasture, the more material is removed.

Another factor to consider is timing of grazing. Most native grass species respond to hot weather and may not begin to actively grow until early-mid June. For this reason, it is a good idea to delay grazing native grass until this point.

Repeated, early grazing can have severe impacts on the long term productivity of a pasture.

After a prolonged drought it may be necessary to reduce the stocking rate of a pasture as well as to delay entry to allow the pasture to recover properly. This is a brief description of some basic grazing principles. If you would like to discuss this further, please call Jordon at (403)854-5618.

"Take half, Leave half"

Community Pasture Updates

by Jordon Christianson

There are five community pastures within the Special Areas. These pastures cover approximately 175,000 acres and have capacity for roughly 7,000 head of cattle. These pastures are great examples of the Dry mixed grass prairie that once covered all of south-eastern Alberta.

The Special Areas Board manages the pastures in such a way as to balance multiple uses. The primary use of the pastures is obviously cattle grazing, however, other uses of the pastures include oil and gas development, and wildlife habitat.

2009 has presented some interesting challenges for the pastures. A dry, open winter, followed with a dry spring created some concerns early in the grazing season. Both the Bullpound and the Sounding Creek Community Pastures were of particular concern. However, July and August have brought some rains and things look more promising now than they did in June.

Buffalo-Atlee Community Pasture

Overall, the Buffalo-Atlee Community Pasture is in GOOD-EXCELLENT condition. Litter levels average around 500-600 lbs/ac. Buffalo-Atlee has received a reasonable amount of precipitation so far this spring and through the summer therefore it is in good shape going into the fall.

Bullpound Community Pasture

Overall, the Bullpound Community Pasture is in GOOD condition. Litter levels are excellent; ranging from 250-400lbs/ac. Rains came too late at Bullpound this year to do any good for early season grass growth. For this reason we spent the early part of the grazing season, grazing last years' growth, which is not a sustainable practice over the long-term.

"These pastures have capacity for roughly 7,000 head of cattle."

Remount Community Pasture

Remount Community Pasture is in GOOD-EXCELLENT condition. Litter levels are good, ranging from 200-500 lbs/ac. Precipitation levels have been decent around the pasture this year. Remount is in good shape to finish the '09 grazing season.

Sounding Creek Community Pasture

Pasture

The Sounding Creek Community Pasture is in FAIR-GOOD condition. The pasture was hit hard last year with hail and has received very little rain early in the growing season this year. These factors combined to put the pasture at a considerable disadvantage. Like Bullpound, we have been grazing last years' growth for much of the season. Late rains have helped to encourage growth and conditions have improved considerably since June.

Richdale Community Pasture

At Richdale, there is no shortage of grass, the issue here is water. We rely heavily on spring run-off from Contracosta Lake to fill dugouts. Unfortunately, we have not been lucky enough to fill the dugouts in the pasture and so we are now forced to pump water to finish the season. However, grass condition is GOOD.

100 Year Farm Family Award

by Shyanne Shannon

The Special Areas is proud to offer a 100 Year Farm Family award to families who have homesteaded land and have been working that land for 100 years or more. Settlements began in Special Areas around 1908 and a number of families have continued to farm the same lands.

It is an achievement and show of tenacity to have stayed in this area and worked this land throughout the past 100 years. The land has tested residents with lack of moisture in the spring and summer months to bitter cold with blowing winds in the winter. Having families stay in the area and continue to prosper is a grand accomplishment.



Get Your Application Today!

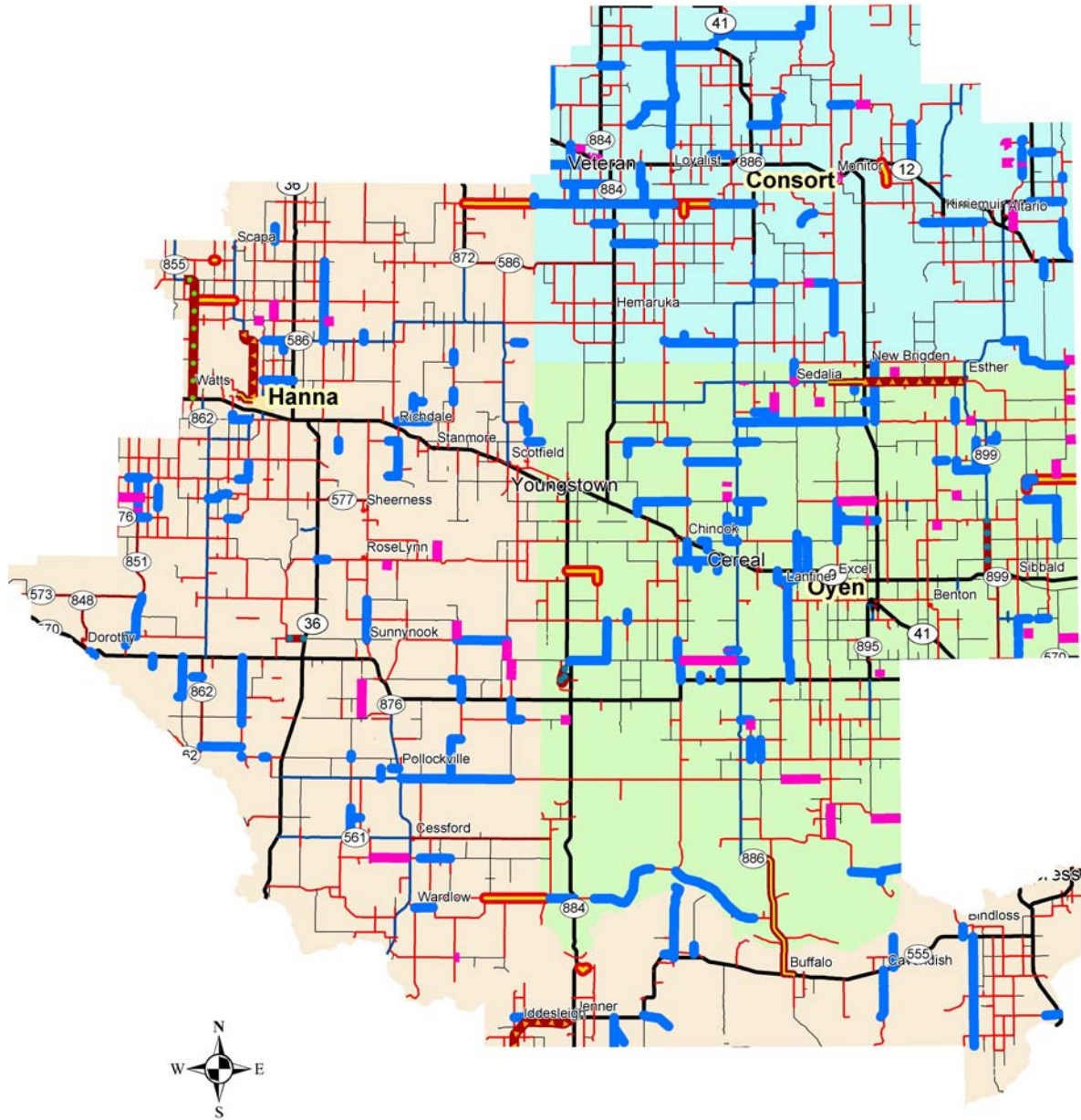
Applications are available from each District Office.

Or you can call 403-854-5601 and request an application faxed, mailed or emailed.

Or email shyanne.shannon@gov.ab.ca and request an application.



2009 Road Program



| Road Surface | Road Improvements |
|----------------|---|
| --- GRADED | 2009 Trail Repair Proposed |
| — GRAVEL | Oil Fogging |
| — GRAVEL - SEC | Soil Stabilization and Chip Seal (2 Coats) |
| — OILED | Chip Seal (2 Coats) |
| — PAVED | Soil Stabilization and Chip Seal (2 Coats) - Contract |
| SA2_Boundary | Proposed Graveling 2009 |
| SA3_Boundary | Construction - Special Areas Board |
| SA4_Boundary | |

7.5 3.75 0 7.5 15 22.5 30 37.5 45 Kilometers

2009 Road Improvement Plan



For more information please visit us online at: www.specialareas.ab.ca

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