

WILD ROSE NEWS

Fall 2011

WILD ROSE
AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS

President's Report



I imagine many of you have been wondering why you haven't seen a newsletter from our organization for a while. It's not because we haven't been busy. In fact, it's quite the opposite. It's been a hectic year and consequently, finding time to put pen to paper has been a bigger challenge than it should be.

As you may have heard, we ended 2010 without an Executive Director when Rod Scarlett, who had provided support and leadership to WRAP for 14 years, moved on to new opportunities. Rod's commitment to our organization and agriculture in Alberta cannot be overstated and his work with us was very much appreciated.

To give us time to conduct a thorough search for a replacement, our hiring committee made the decision to bring in an interim director. Eldon Banack was the successful candidate and was immediately put to the test managing our Annual General Meeting in January. Many thanks to Eldon for meeting the challenges we threw at him with enthusiasm and a fresh perspective.

Which brings me to our new Executive Director. Sheryl Rae comes to us with an agricultural risk management background, having spent over 14 years with Agriculture Financial Services Corporation and 5 years in a similar field in the private sector. She has worked on projects with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and international projects for Chile, India, and Ukraine. We've been keeping Sheryl hopping since she started at the beginning of April, and we haven't managed to scare her off yet. This bodes well for our organization.

In February I decided to pursue a position on the Executive of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) and subsequently won a tightly contested election to become 2nd Vice President of that respected organization. My workload has increased, but the opportunity to represent producers from across Canada and to bring a higher profile to Alberta issues was simply something I couldn't pass up.

We held our Summer Council meeting in Spruce View in June. This meeting was a strategic planning session that effectively mapped out what WRAP needs to do to increase our visibility and retain our relevancy in this quickly changing, dynamic industry. We have much work ahead of us, but all the participants seemed enthused by the challenges and opportunities that lay ahead.

The political environment has been lively as well, with a federal election in May and more recently, Alberta's leadership race. We made a point of engaging candidates in both events to find out where they stood on agricultural policy. On the federal front, we circulated a three-question survey among the Alberta Conservative, Liberal, and Green Party candidates and posted their responses

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Wild Rose News
is changing!

Check out the back page to see how we plan to bring you the latest agriculture news more quickly. You could win a fantastic prize.

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Executive Director

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on our website. For the provincial campaign to see who was going to become leader of Alberta's Progressive Conservative Party, we were able to meet with four of the candidates – Doug Horner, Gary Mar, Rick Orman, and Alison Redford – to solicit their views on agricultural issues. We posted the written responses that Horner and Redford provided to our questions about access to lands, checkoff support, the CWB, and investment in cooperatives on our website. Mar and Orman never did get back to us with their feedback. Our congratulations to Alison Redford, who was sworn in as Alberta's 14th Premier on October 7, 2011. We look forward to working with her to continue Alberta's long-standing and internationally recognized reputation as leaders and innovators in agriculture.

In July we were honoured to host farm leaders representing major commodity sectors, cooperatives and every province across Canada in Banff for the CFA semi-annual meeting. A highlight of the meeting was the address by then-Minister of Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Jack Hayden, in which he provided welcome insight into future opportunities for the agriculture industry. He also stressed the importance of the CFA-led and industry wide National Food Strategy and its linkages with Growing Forward (GF2). Many of the discussions and presentations at the semi-annual focused on long-term planning for agricultural policy and more holistic approaches along the entire value chain. A special thanks to all the sponsors who contributed to the phenomenal success of this event.

The Cairns Group is a unique coalition of 19 agricultural exporting countries with a commitment to reforming agricultural trade. With representation from developed and developing countries from Latin America, Africa and the Asia-Pacific region, this group has been influential in agricultural reform for the last 25 years. In early September, I had the opportunity to visit Saskatoon to attend the Cairns Group Farm Leaders' Meeting as well as the 36th Cairns Group Ministerial Meeting. Discussions centered on the WTO Doha Round negotiations on agriculture and other issues that impact trade and how a more open agricultural trading system can be fostered.

Towards the end of October, I am travelling to Poland to participate in the 35th North American and European Union Agricultural Conference. The agenda for this event is diverse and ranges from derivative markets and price stability, to biomass/land use and sustainability, to how farmers' incomes can be improved within the food supply chain. As the operator of a third-generation farm established in 1906 by Polish immigrants, I am looking forward to this trip.

As always, I would like to close by thanking all the board members for everything they do to ensure producers' interests are represented at the many levels where we are called on to provide input.

Please work safely - you are our family.

Farm Safety Advisory Committee

Lee Townsend, WRAP Director, wears many hats – beekeeper, Vice-president of TPLR Honey, Vice President of Alberta Beekeepers, and more recently, member of Alberta's Farm Safety Advisory Committee.

The provincial government appointed 15 members from across Alberta representing a broad spectrum of expertise in business, agriculture, and safety to develop an action plan on farm safety, addressing the coordination and communication needs identified during industry consultations in 2009 and 2010. This diverse group will work on ways to reduce injuries on farms and ranches, and advise the government on how to enhance farm safety education and training. For more information on Alberta's Farm Safety Program, the Farm Safety Advisory Council, and the stakeholder consultations, please visit www.agriculture.alberta.ca/farmsafety.

Workers' Compensation Board - Alberta

**By: Russell Vasseur, Account Manager
Customer Service & Risk Management
Workers' Compensation Board - Alberta**

The Workers' Compensation Board - Alberta (WCB) provides legislated compensation for workplace injury and disease. The WCB is not a provincial government department or crown corporation. Nor does WCB coverage have any impact on a farm's exposure to occupational health and safety legislation.

Funded by employer premiums, WCB provides cost-effective disability and liability insurance. We consistently charge the lowest rates in Canada, pay among the highest level of benefits, and provide employers with complete immunity from lawsuit due to workplace injury and disease. In effect, employers agree to fund the system, and workers agree to give up their rights to sue their employer or other workers covered under the system. Workers are compensated for lost income (90% of net earnings), complete health care costs, as well as a wide range of other costs related to their injury or disease. Coverage is universal for all workers of a business – there are no age restrictions, no health restrictions, and no maximum duration of benefits. The WCB's focus is on a safe and early return to work, and we have many partners in health care and other organizations to support this process.

In Alberta, farms are not required to provide WCB coverage for their workers. Sadly, accidents can and do happen, sometimes with catastrophic results. Without WCB coverage, workers and their families can be severely impacted – for a few

weeks or an entire lifetime. Without workers' compensation benefits, many workers will have no choice but to sue their employer for compensation for their injury. This process is arduous and lengthy, and even with a successful outcome, the worker and his/her family will have suffered needless hardship along the way. Without WCB immunity from lawsuit, if you are found liable for damages it could mean the end of your business and way of life. Even with liability insurance in place, you will still incur legal costs (not to mention time away from your family and business) during the proceedings. WCB coverage means none of these things happen. When you consider that on many farms, members of your own family work on the farm, is WCB coverage something you really want to do without?

Many farms are seasonal in nature, and voluntary farm coverage is available for whatever period of time you want. The cost of coverage is based on a percentage of your payroll (Insurable Earnings), with a minimum premium of \$200 annually. The 2011 farm rate is \$3.28 per \$100 of insurable earnings (3.28% of your worker payroll). Coverage for business owners is a second option, and available for each individual owner at the same rate (starting at \$57/month). For more information, visit www.wcb.ab.ca, or call toll free in Alberta: 1-866-WCB-WCB1.

Advance Payments Program

The Advance Payments Program (APP) is a federal initiative designed to help producers meet their financial obligations by giving them easier access to credit through cash advances. This means improved cash flow throughout the year and better opportunities for marketing their agricultural products. Many producers are not aware that the agricultural products eligible for this program include livestock, crops, grains and oilseeds, fruits and vegetables. Producer organizations deliver the APP on behalf of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC). Producers apply for a cash advance directly through a producer organization - not directly from AAFC.

Program Highlights:

- Eligible agricultural products include livestock, crops, grains and oilseeds, fruits and vegetables.
- The cash advance is based on the anticipated value of the farm product that is being produced, raised, or in storage.
- The limit on cash advances is \$400,000 and the federal government pays the interest on the first \$100,000.
- Producers have up to 18 months (generally April to September of the following year) to repay their cash advances.

For more information, call toll free 1-888-346-2511 or contact your Participating Producer Organization. For a list of Participating Producer Organizations, visit <http://www4.agr.gc.ca/AAFC-AAC/display-afficher.do?id=1290181932797&clang=eng>.

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We need your help – e-Newsletter

We want to bring you the latest news in agriculture as it happens, not according to a quarterly publishing schedule. Add to that escalating printing and postage costs and our budgetary constraints, and the case for communicating through electronic media becomes compelling. So we're moving to an e-newsletter format and we need your help.

You don't have to do much - just send us your email address. And as a thank you for making it possible for us to communicate with you more easily, one lucky person will win a prize that will help them communicate more easily with whomever they choose.

The BlueAnt S4 True Handsfree car speakerphone means you'll be able to comply with Alberta's new distracted driving law, and still be able to make and receive calls on the road - using only your voice. Thanks to Best Buy Red Deer for their generous sponsorship of this prize.

ENTER TO WIN!

Sign up to receive the Wild Rose News by email, and you could win a BlueAnt S4 True Handsfree voice controlled Bluetooth car speakerphone.

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Reminder – Carbon Credits

The Alberta Carbon Offsets Market represents an opportunity for farm producers to be recognized as stewards of agriculture and the land. Agricultural practice improvements that can create carbon offsets include reduced tillage, improved nutrient management (fertilizer and manure), changes to livestock diets and/or feeding practices, and increased energy efficiency.

Currently, farmers in Alberta can claim carbon credits back to January 1, 2002. However, this ability to transact on historical credits will disappear on January 1, 2012. After this date, all offsets will change to go forward credits.

It's not too late to investigate your options for selling historical carbon credits. If you're interested in reading more about this opportunity, the Farmers' Advocate Office has put together a comprehensive series of fact sheets about carbon credits that will likely answer many of your questions. Visit their website at [www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/ofa13477](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/ofa13477).

Mark Your Calendar –

Wild Rose
Agricultural Producers
Annual General Meeting

January 11 and 12th, 2012
Fantasyland Hotel, Edmonton

Come out and participate!