

Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity Network Sector Workshops and Outreach Sessions

Municipal Sector Workshop Summary

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Introduction

The Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity Network (ESBN) is a multidisciplinary group of experts working to build the knowledge required to assist with the implementation of an Ecosystem Services (ES) approach in Alberta. ES are the benefits that humans receive from nature including provisioning (e.g. food, fuel, fibre, fresh water), regulating (e.g. air quality, climate regulation, erosion control, water quality), cultural (e.g. spiritual enrichment, recreation, aesthetic experiences) and supporting services (e.g. production of oxygen, soil formation).

Over the past several years many organizations, various levels of government, academia and industry have been exploring ways to integrate ES into planning and decision-making on working landscapes in Alberta. An important element of this approach is to identify current and future information needs. To meet these needs, solutions need to be developed that are practical, science-based, easy to understand and communicate.

In response, the ESBN developed a series of sector-based workshops to support the development of a recognized, comprehensive ES approach that can be adopted by governments, resource-based industries, landowners and land managers, and conservation organizations. The Municipal Sector workshop brought together representatives from urban and rural municipalities, both elected and staff, with interest in ecosystem services and the option to draw closer linkages between ES programming and municipal planning and development.

Principles for Sector Participant Engagement

The proposed program and process for participant engagement is based on the following principles:

1. Use sector focused workshops to ensure use of common language, understanding, knowledge, experience, regulatory frameworks and consistent approaches.
2. The involvement process will be designed to respect the requirements to address the project outcomes as well as to meet the needs of the participants in sharing their informed perspectives.
3. Participants will be provided the opportunity to be meaningfully engaged, increase and share their knowledge and feel that the event has been valuable to their learning.
4. The use of the results from the workshops will be clearly explained to participants.

The aim of the workshop was to bring together agriculture leaders to discuss and review the following core elements of the ESBN Roadmap:

1. Focus on five ESBN Roadmap building blocks.
2. Reference ecosystem attributes (Provisioning; Regulating; Cultural and Supporting Services).
3. Review and provide feedback on proposed approaches that have been developed to date.
4. Identify gaps, additional needs and opportunities to advance implementation of ecosystem services in support of regional land use plans.

Workshop Desired Outcomes

The workshop series was designed to help address the following outcomes:

1. Increase the awareness of the Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity Network, the work sponsored to date and identification of areas for future research and collaboration.

2. Enhance the awareness and understanding of past and current landscape and watershed planning efforts and develop a clearer understanding of opportunities for collaboration on public and private land conservation initiatives.
3. Identify partners who can assist with the development of an expanded suite of ES tools.
4. Enhance the understanding of existing landscape planning and implementation programs currently delivered for the conservation and restoration of natural assets in targeted landscapes of Alberta.
5. Enhance the understanding of an integrated and operational ES market and the identification of gaps along with additional information and research needs.

Workshop Participant Discussion Summary

Assessment – Opportunities

- Discuss the potential for new models that can be developed (i.e. water storage, recreation.) Think about the opportunities to have modules that connect better to people instead of policy, getting more connected to things like cultural values.
- Build capacity and understanding within municipalities. Take advantage of opportunities to have experts come into municipalities and teach them how to do an assessment so they are all on the same page.
- Municipalities should look for common goals across jurisdictions so they can share funding where opportunities are available.
- There are opportunities to build on industry goals and productivity, as well as linking sustainability into the assessments. This is also a good place to look for common goals across jurisdictions.
- Identify the gains and losses of which practices are suitable – looking at BMPs and management actions at a provincial level may not be as effective as looking at it from a regional level.
- Stakeholder engagement, find out what is important to key stakeholders now to assess in the future.

Assessment – Gaps

- Reconciling scale and various levels of information
- Translating to on the ground assessment, being able to measure on specific site
- Data going into assessments may not be effective starting points (i.e. water purification)
- Understanding the Ecosystem Services Assessment. Common language is needed. Build common understanding through this common language.
- Addressing the audience
- Looking at the landscape character so it resonates with everyone. This goes beyond the geology of the landscape, to looking at it also in terms of history and cultural heritage. When we focus on geology do we detract from the cultural heritage?
- Data deficiency in certain areas
- Linkages to human health
- Linkages between inputs and outputs in water quality
- Ability to adjust to what's being monitored on a quicker scale

Assessment – Recommendations

- Plain language outreach
- Focusing on why people should care
- Engage with municipalities. Municipalities have a lot data regarding residential land
- Find a system to incorporate finer detail
- Make sure whatever we are assessing is resonating with those paying for the ES (supply/demand)
- Having people prioritize ES –rate which values are more important to them

Assessment – Risks/Barriers

- Building a system that might not end up being used
- Political interference
- Liability for monetizing values
- The risk that modelling does not accurately depict what's on the land
- Extrapolating from the broader data, could lead to inaccurate interpretation of the data
- Not being tied to appropriate management or policy application
- Public perception may not easily translate to what the assessment is capturing
- Privacy of information – There's a reluctance to release information (i.e. the government)

Data and Information Management – Opportunities

- Existing priority areas and the ability to add database and retrieve data that is applicable to the user
- Integrate data management tools
- There is a need for greater clarity around who will use the data, what is the use of the data and any reasons why not to use data
- Data for specific areas should be kept up-to-date and in real time
- Continue progress towards a single data source
- Opportunity to consider additional modules – i.e. incorporating wetlands
- The ability to add municipal data

Data and Information Management – Gaps

- Need to consider that data may be too generic for local use
- Data is ignored if it doesn't fit into a region (for example, agriculture in LARP)
- GIS compatibility in GIS exchange
- Scalability
- Data management – keeping a data library, and the process of updating and reliability
- Proprietary ownership creates limits.
- Collaborative efforts between data sets
- Funding and support for updating and managing data after its collected
- Lack of Jurisdictional consistency – Federal, provincial, municipal
- There's a need for more regular updates of data (i.e. monthly instead of annually)
- Lack of data from First Nations/Indigenous communities

Data and Information Management – Recommendations

- More workshop events that stimulate collaboration
- Investment in staff retention

- Need standard data collection methods – compatible ways for municipalities to enter data
- Merging other data sources (for example, Itree in Calgary)
- Incorporate indigenous knowledge
- Ongoing stakeholder outreach and involvement
- Address governance of information
- Data vetting with stakeholders
- Sharing data from similar situations that occurred previously.
- Traditional information: non-indigenous, local knowledge
- Build in more ‘cultural’ data
- Data should be perceived as a ‘tool’ for landowners.

Data and Information Management – Risks and Barriers

- Provincial data doesn’t translate locally
- Local data doesn’t get considered
- Legal implications of working with indigenous people
- Confidentiality and property rights – need more clarity on how data will be used and what does it mean to the landowner
- Uptake with municipalities using the data
- Lack of funding for implementation
- Liability with inaccurate data and old data
- Single source of data being susceptible to political decision making/loss of capitalization

Market Infrastructure and Enabling Policy – Gaps and Risks

- There’s a lack of consistency in using data sets in policy direction
- Public engagement and media awareness
- Policy - Understanding what people value
- Lack of understanding around how will markets actually be calculated
- Policy makers do not understand the things they’re making policy about

Market Infrastructure and Enabling Policy – Recommendations and Opportunities

- Continue to utilize the ALUS program
- Identify liabilities municipalities might have for lands
- With regards to markets: There is a need for oversight and governance, as well as coordination to help bridge buyers and sellers, It also needs to be transparent and easy to verify
- With regards to policy: it is worth exploring tying ES to food security policy and social license.
- It is difficult and expensive to verify how many ES units are being created – something to consider, is whether we are better paying for outcomes or for management action? – An opportunity here would be to accepting payment for actions instead of getting too caught up on outcomes.
- For Policy: Muti-jurisdictional support and alignment is important
- For Market: it is worthwhile to report the ‘good news’ stories, communicating better the positive outcomes

Engagement and Outreach – Gaps and Risks

- Finding the right people, creating a list of people to target and reach out to

- Stakeholder involvement needs to be respected and tied to decision making
- Be willing to listen to what participants are saying
- There are a lot of stakeholders, but often the most funded one or the loudest one is the one who gets heard, not necessarily the one being impacted most.
- There's an apathetic society. Little buy-in in terms of what is going on in LUF. This may be either from burnout or frustration, but many don't see the personal connection.
- Time and money
- How do you get the information to those who are going to be effective on the ground level?

Engagement and Outreach – Recommendations and Opportunities

- Getting input and engagement from school age children
- Coordinating existing programs and use the 'train-the-trainer'
- Find a Champion within target constituencies
- Creative use of demonstration sites and case studies to showcase projects/processes to engage people
- Financial resources and infrastructure for municipalities to build capacity within their municipalities
- In terms of the Network, it may be beneficial to have a face who is responsible
- Engage through groups that are already engaged. For example, have the Ag services board to reach Agriculture stakeholders (or as we already have AEPA reaching Agriculture stakeholders). It is also worthwhile to go through AAMDC and other resources to connect to the right people.
- Increase social media to reach landowners in municipalities
- Measure and quantify the value of outreach efforts
- AUMA – value proposition for municipalities is around infrastructure. This is a good topic for us to be engaging on.

Appendix A – Evaluation Summary

Workshop Objectives

1. I was able to identify gaps that may affect implementation of an ecosystem services approach to land and resource management
 - Strongly agree =
 - Agree = 11
 - Neutral =
 - Disagree =
 - Strongly Disagree =
2. I was able to identify additional needs to advance implementation of ecosystem services
 - Strongly agree =
 - Agree = 6
 - Neutral = 5
 - Disagree =
 - Strongly Disagree =
3. I had an opportunity to increase my awareness of the elements to implement Alberta’s ecosystem services approach
 - Strongly agree = 1
 - Agree = 9
 - Neutral = 1
 - Disagree =
 - Strongly Disagree =
4. I was able to learn about the 4 elements to implement Alberta’s ecosystem services
 - Strongly agree = 1
 - Agree = 8
 - Neutral = 2
 - Disagree =
 - Strongly Disagree =
5. Opportunities to continue to build on success to enable the elements to implement Alberta’s ecosystem services were identified
 - Strongly agree =
 - Agree = 9
 - Neutral = 2
 - Disagree =
 - Strongly Disagree =
6. Gaps that may affect support for delivering on the elements to implement Alberta’s ecosystem services were identified
 - Strongly agree = 1
 - Agree = 9
 - Neutral = 1
 - Disagree =
 - Strongly Disagree =
7. Realistic barriers to enabling the implementation of the elements to implement Alberta’s ecosystem services were provided
 - Strongly agree = 2
 - Agree = 7

- Neutral = 2
 Disagree =
 Strongly Disagree =
8. The Agenda accurately reflected the workshop process
 Strongly agree = 3
 Agree = 8
 Neutral =
 Disagree =
 Strongly Disagree =
9. The instructions during the workshop were clear
 Strongly agree = 4
 Agree = 7
 Neutral =
 Disagree =
 Strongly Disagree =
10. I had an opportunity to participate and contribute my ideas
 Strongly agree = 4
 Agree = 7
 Neutral =
 Disagree =
 Strongly Disagree =
11. Overall, the workshop met my expectations
 Strongly agree =
 Agree = 11
 Neutral =
 Disagree =
 Strongly Disagree =
12. Additional Comments and Feedback
- Once you are further along in your process contact municipalities
 - I felt i was expected to have more background knowledge than I did - would have liked more education not just input. Great format and facilitation though